

THE BRITISH ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CONGO QUESTION  
WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE WORK OF E.D. MOREL  
AND THE CONGO REFORM ASSOCIATION  
1903 - 1913

by

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Thesis

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## Preface

Throughout the Edwardian era --- and extending to the first years of the reign of George V, Congo reform was one of the most popular and remarkable issues before the British Public. Beginning as a contest between a small group of missionaries, humanitarians, and commercants, on the one hand, and the Sovereign of small and neutral Belgium on the other, the battle grew to such proportions that it threatened for a time if not the peace of Europe, at least the structure of the infant Anglo-French Entente, whose birth in 1904 coincided with the debut of the Congo Reform Association.

British involvement on the Congo had been considerable from the time Europe had begun to 'rediscover' Africa in the early stages of the nineteenth century, and, accordingly, this study, though it deals in depth only with the period from 1903 to 1913, makes some attempt to provide this background.

The object of the thesis is to examine the role played by British opinion, both official and otherwise, in securing reform and good government in the Congo. In practice, this involves a study in depth of the Congo Reform Association --- and its indefatigable Secretary, Edmund D. Morel --- both in its role as a pressure group for Congo reform and as a human institution in its own right.

Mainly through British Governmental and popular pressure, Belgium was moved to annex the Congo in 1908, but this annexation was not, ipso

facto, a signal for reform of the monopolist Congo State constructed by Leopold under the pretext of philanthropy. Though every other major Power extended either de jure or de facto recognition to the transfer of the Congo to Belgium, Britain withheld recognition until Belgium gave assurances that reforms would be both drafted and enforced. It was the application of Belgian reforms in the Congo in 1910 and 1911, coupled with favourable British Consular Reports on the effect of these reforms, that marked the turning point in the Congo question.

Though I did not have access, first hand, to the Morel Papers I was fortunate to be able to consult the unpublished doctoral thesis of R. Wuliger in the possession of the London School of Economics in the University of London, which reproduces many of Morel's letters relating to Congo reform.

I have relied heavily upon the Official Organ of the Congo Reform Association from November, 1908 to July, 1913, and have treated this newspaper as a primary source. The same applies for Morel's many books, pamphlets, and articles.

British Sessional Papers from 1896 to 1915 are replete with Congo consular reports and British Government correspondence with both the Congo and Belgian Governments and they have been extensively employed as well.

I wish to acknowledge my considerable debt to my Director, Professor Robert Vogel, for his counsel and criticism though I alone am responsible for the errors committed in this work.

Montreal, August, 1964.

Myron J. Echenberg

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Chapter One

EUROPEAN BEGINNINGS IN THE CONGO

1876 - 1885

# I

While still in Africa, and nearing the end of an epic expedition that had brought him across the heart of the African continent from Zanzibar to the Congo estuary on the Atlantic coast, Henry M. Stanley wrote the following letter to his co-sponsor, the Daily Telegraph,<sup>1</sup> the letter appearing in that paper on 12 November, 1877:

" I feel convinced that the question of this mighty water-way will become a political one in time. As yet, however, no European Power seems to have put forth the right of control. Portugal claims it because she discovered its mouth; but the great Powers --- England, America, and France --- refuse to recognize her right. If it were not that I fear to damp any interest you may have in Africa, or in this magnificent stream, by the length of my letters, I could show you very strong reasons why it would be a politic deed to settle this momentous question immediately. I could prove to you that the Power possessing the Congo, despite the cataracts, would absorb to itself the trade of the whole of the enormous basin behind. This river is and will be the grand highway of commerce to West Central Africa."<sup>2</sup>

Stanley was indeed showing foresight, both commercial and political, for he was anticipating by only a few years the tremendous 'scramble' for Africa that was to engage the European Powers in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Yet, in 1877, no Power appreciated Stanley's insight. Portugal,

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Stanley's newspaper, the New York Herald, had sponsored his original trip to Africa in relief of David Livingstone. This, his second expedition, was under the joint sponsorship of that newspaper and the Daily Telegraph.

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H.M. Stanley, The Congo and the Founding of its Free State, (New York, 1885) i, p.vi.

it is true, was reasserting her traditional claim to the Congo lands, despite the fact that she had shown little inclination to penetrate inland to any degree from her original point of contact at the Congo's mouth.<sup>1</sup> Instead, despite a veneer of civilization applied by Roman Catholic missionaries, the overriding interest of Portuguese traders at the Congo's mouth for over three hundred years had been the profitable slave trade.

By the 1870's, traffic in human chattels was no longer worth the great risks involved. The last decades of the eighteenth century had witnessed the birth of a new anti-slavery sentiment in Europe, sparked by the efforts of Wilberforce, Clarkson and Granville Sharp in England. When Great Britain prohibited her subjects from engaging in the slave trade in 1807, Portugal was forced to seriously consider her African practices. An Anglo-Portuguese agreement in 1810 bound the latter Power to prohibit slave-trading by her subjects except within the limits of her dominions in Africa. The Treaty of Vienna confirmed this obligation and expressed the desirability of eliminating this odious traffic entirely.

Since Portugal preserved the right to trade in slaves within her territories, and since enforcement of the anti-slave trade conventions fell to Great Britain, Portugal was not encouraged to increase her

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The fifteenth century had seen Portuguese captains, under the inspired leadership of Prince Henry the Navigator, touch down at points of the West African coast ranging from Cape Blanco southward to the Ogowe delta. Pushing still further south, Diego Cam's 1484-85 expedition reached the mouth of the Congo for the first time. See J. Scott Keltie, The Partition of Africa, (London, 1893) pp.37-39.

African holdings, and British relations in Africa with her 'oldest ally' became strained.<sup>1</sup>

British distrust of Portuguese intentions in the Lower Congo region, then, were essentially negative; there was no knowledge as yet that the Congo mouth was but the exit to the sea of a mighty inland waterway. To be sure, the presence of the British Navy on the West coast had led to increased scientific knowledge of the Lower Congo,<sup>2</sup> but it was not until 1873 that more of the Congo's deeply guarded secrets were revealed.

Before it was known that Henry M. Stanley had been successful in finding David Livingstone, the Royal Geographical Society had sent Lieutenant V.L. Cameron in search of the wandering Scottish missionary-explorer who was believed to be in the Lakes area of East Africa. Cameron took advantage of this opportunity to explore the Lualaba River, which he recognized to be the Upper course not of the Nile as Livingstone had thought, but of the Congo. Lack of men and materials forced Cameron to turn back, but not before he had concluded treaties with native chiefs giving Great Britain the option of assuming a protectorate over the basin of the Upper Congo.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of incidents between British and Portuguese subjects in the Congo region see R. Anstey, Britain and the Congo in the Nineteenth Century, (Oxford, 1962) p.51.

<sup>2</sup> In 1816, Capt. James K. Tuckey had penetrated two hundred miles up the Congo, charting as he went, before disease and the jungle forced him back. R. Anstey, op. cit., pp.8-9.

<sup>3</sup> In fact, Cameron had actually declared a British protectorate over the Upper Congo basin on 28 December, 1874, subject, of course, to official approval. He had then submitted the treaties and the proclamation to the Foreign Office, which in turn passed the documents on to the Colonial Office for their scrutiny. Ruth Slade, King Leopold's Congo, (Oxford, 1962), p.24; A. Berriedale Keith, The Belgian Congo and the Berlin Act, (Oxford, 1919), p.27.

It fell to Stanley to verify Cameron's theory. He followed the Lualaba to Stanley Falls and on to Stanley Pool; finally the Congo estuary was reached, bringing to an end an arduous nine hundred and ninety-nine days of African exploration.<sup>1</sup>

Stanley had 'opened up' Central Africa and the stage was now set for a European 'scramble' for the Congo basin. In addition to Great Britain and Portugal, Dutch trading interests had been established in the Congo mouth for some time, and a German, Captain von Homeyer, was reported to have suggested annexation of the region by Germany, still to make her official imperial debut in Africa. France, too, was interested. Her explorers had been working inland from the Gabon; indeed, she seemed the most energetic of the Powers in West Central Africa at that time.<sup>2</sup>

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## II

Given such a situation in 1877, who could have been so bold as to suggest that neither Great Britain, France nor Portugal, but a private group of financiers and speculators, led by Leopold II, King of Belgium, would emerge as the successful party in what was to become a contest

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Henry M. Stanley, Through the Dark Continent (London, 1878).

2

H.H. Johnston, George Grenfell and the Congo, (London, 1908), i, p.83.

for Central African territory?

As the Duke of Brabant, Leopold had embarked upon a world tour in 1855, during which time his interest in schemes of overseas expansion for Belgium was aroused. During the course of the next twenty-five years he was to consider possibilities in such remote corners of the globe as the New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands, the Philippines, Formosa and Moçambique.<sup>1</sup>

It had become Leopold's conviction that Belgium, if it were to survive, would need imperial markets for its products and that a way must be found for a once subject people to shed their inbred insularity. Coupled with this conviction was a lust for greatness and power for himself and his nation that was unbecoming the constitutional monarch of a small democratic state. Even during a period of intense imperialism, Leopold's visions of grandeur were remarkable:

"Si la patrie demeure notre quartier general, le monde doit être notre objectif. Il n'y a pas de petits États, il n'y a que de petits esprits."<sup>2</sup>

With the failure of his efforts to procure the Philippines, Leopold wrote to Baron Lambertmont:

"I intend to make discreet inquiries as to whether there is not something to be done in Africa."<sup>3</sup>

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A recent work, based upon the papers of Baron Jules Greindl, who served as Leopold's agent in an attempt to purchase or lease the Philippines from Spain from 1869-75, serves to show that Leopold was no novice in the art of territorial horse-trading when he began to concentrate his attention upon the Congo. See L. Greindl, A la recherche d'un État Indépendant: Leopold II et les Philippines (1869-75), (Brussels, 1962).

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Roger Anstey, review article, Journal of African History, Vol. IV, November, 1963, p.140.

3

R. Slade, op.cit., p.36.

And thus began Leopold's Central African adventure. Acting first on a rumour that Cameron had cut short his expedition through lack of funds, in December, 1875 he wrote the Royal Geographical Society offering to pay the expenses of Cameron's return journey to England.<sup>1</sup> When the rumour proved to be without foundation, he next approached his cousin, the Prince of Wales, in an effort to secure British representation at a proposed Conference at Brussels, to which geographers from all the interested countries of Europe would be invited.

In England, the Royal Geographical Society received the suggestion enthusiastically and sent a nine man delegation headed by Sir Rutherford Alcock. Delegates from France, Belgium, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Russia also attended.

These unofficial representatives -- for they in no way represented their respective governments -- met in Brussels for three days, from 12 to 15 September, 1876. The main result of this gathering was the formation of an International African Association, to be composed of the several National Committees, and with a Central Committee to act as its executive. Furthermore, the Conference declared itself unanimously in favour of such joint ventures as might be planned to open up Central Africa to civilization, thereby avoiding the folly of duplicated effort.<sup>2</sup>

The Central Committee held its first and only plenary session on

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R. Slade, *Ibid*, p.36.

2

D.C. Boulger, The Reign of Leopold II, (London, 1925), i, p.130.

21 - 22 June, 1877, at Brussels, at which time it approved of a special flag designating the Association and sanctioned a plan to establish a chain of stations from Zanzibar to the lakes area of East Africa.<sup>1</sup>

From Leopold's point of view the Association was far from being a failure, despite its poor record. It served him as a nominally international body, humanitarian and non-political constitutionally, by means of which the King was able to remain close to the African scene until an opportunity presented itself. Thus, when news of Stanley's momentous discovery of the trans-African nature of the Congo River reached Europe in late 1877, Leopold was not only quick to realize the significance of Stanley's findings, but also in a position to approach Stanley for his assistance in promoting the ventures of a body that was international in name, if not in fact.

Weary from his African exertions Stanley had politely refused an offer of Leopold's to come to Brussels for talks, informing Leopold's emissaries who met him at Marseilles that he might accept the Belgian King's kind offer in the near future. When Stanley was unable to arouse any support for some type of commercial venture in the Congo during his stay in England, he met with Leopold in June, and again in

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Over the course of the next four years four African expeditions were sponsored by the Central Committee, all of them failures. The personnel involved in these futile efforts --- mainly inexperienced and poorly equipped Belgian officers --- illustrated the nationalist stamp with which the International African Association became marked.

While Leopold dominated the Central Committee and personally financed its efforts, the various National Committees became, implicitly or explicitly, agents of their own countries' imperial self-interest. See J.S. Keltie, *op.cit.*, pp.120-23 for an account of the activities of the various Committees.



August, of 1878.<sup>1</sup> By November, Leopold's plan had taken shape. On the twenty sixth of that month a meeting between Stanley and a group of international businessmen was held in Brussels, at which time it was agreed to subscribe funds for a Comité des Études du Haut-Congo, whose purpose it was, according to Stanley, to 'consider what might be made of the Congo River and its basin.' Stanley was requested to return to Africa, this time to found stations, to purchase or lease lands adjacent to thses sites and to examine the feasibility of building a railway from the rapids of the Lower Congo to Stanley Pool.<sup>2</sup> At subsequent meetings held on 9 December, 1878 and 2 January, 1879 it was decided, that, should Stanley's findings prove positive, the Comité would form two companies, one to build a link between the Upper and Lower Congo, and the other to develop the Upper Congo area commercially.

Leopold, it soon transpired, had further intentions for Stanley's expedition. After Stanley had left Europe for the Congo, he received a letter from Colonel Strauch, the excerpts of which remain in the form of Stanley's reply. Whereas Stanley was originally required to explore commercial possibilities and establish stations, he was now to extend these into an independent confederation of free Negroes, with Leopold reserving the right to appoint the President who was to reside in Europe. Such a confederation, Strauch went on, might grant concessions or raise loans for public works in the manner of Liberia or Sarawak. Stanley politely commented on the remoteness from reality

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<sup>1</sup>  
H.M. Stanley, The Congo..., i, p.21.

<sup>2</sup>  
H.M. Stanley, Ibid, i, pp.26-28.

of the suggestions, given the condition of the native tribes in the Congo region, "with their own degraded customs."<sup>1</sup>

Clearly, Leopold was already attempting to transform a commercial venture into a political one. By 1882, he had transformed the Comité des Études into the International Congo Association, still preserving the original Association's flag and international veneer,<sup>2</sup> despite the fact that membership in this new group was now almost totally Belgian, after foreign subscriptions had been recalled.<sup>3</sup>

All was not going so smoothly in the Congo, however; Stanley, delayed at Vivi, had arrived at Stanley Pool only to find Count Savorgnan de Brazza, at the head of the French National Committee's expedition, already establishing the site of Brazzaville and claiming the north shore of the Upper Congo for France. Stanley had no recourse but to work the south bank, where he established Leopoldville on the southern shore of Stanley Pool, conclude several native treaties, and return to Europe.

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<sup>1</sup> H.M. Stanley, The Congo..., i, pp.52-54.

<sup>2</sup> Leopold's action was entirely arbitrary and secret. Most authorities cite 1882 as the date for the conversion of the Comité des Études into the International Congo Association, for it was to the latter body that Stanley reported upon his return from the Congo in the autumn of that year. R. Anstey, op.cit., p.81.

<sup>3</sup> In November, 1879, Leopold had bought out foreign subscribers to the Comité des Études on the grounds that two-thirds of the original capital had been exhausted and a new subscription was needed. Taking most of the financial burden upon himself, the King had no difficulty in persuading two British financiers --- J.F. Hutton and William Mackinnon--- to sell out by offering them a profit on their original investment and, more enticing, a promise of preference in future commercial ventures in the Congo. See R. Anstey, op.cit., pp.66-67; 79-80.

## III

In addition to competition from the French, Leopold was faced with the growing threat of an Anglo-Portuguese agreement on the Congo whereby Portugal would gain recognition for her claim to the Lower Congo, thus depriving Leopold's International Congo Association of access to the sea. Accordingly, it became the King's policy between 1882 and 1884 to muster as much pressure as he could against such an Anglo-Portuguese understanding.

For several years, and especially after Stanley's voyage had brought home to Europe the immense potential of the Congo as a waterway into the heart of the Continent, Portugal had been seeking formal recognition from Great Britain of her traditional claim to the Congo region.

When, in February of 1876 the Colonial Office advised against the acceptance of further territorial responsibility in Africa by rejecting Cameron's treaty,<sup>1</sup> Britain was forced to carefully review the Portuguese claim, since there were other Powers who seemed prepared to fill the territorial vacuum in the heart of the Continent.

Having rejected annexation for herself, British alternatives were few. France, her chief imperial rival, would have to be curbed by some other Power, and, since Leopold's Association was not held to be a viable political entity, Portugal seemed the logical choice, provided

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<sup>1</sup>  
Supra, p.3f.

that she would liberalize her trade policies and thus gain the acceptance not only of the other Powers but also of British trading interests in the region.

In the spring of 1883, then, Anglo-Portuguese negotiations entered their final stage, after preliminary talks had begun in 1879 only to be broken off two years later as much owing to the irritating manner of the British Minister at Lisbon, Morier, as to the seeming reluctance of Portugal to look favourably upon free trade guarantees.<sup>1</sup> By 1884, Portugal relented, meeting the stiff British terms in every respect, and Granville felt free to sign a treaty recognizing Portuguese claims to the Lower Congo of 16 February.

Whereas the only impediment to such a treaty in 1881 had been Portuguese hesitancy, by 1884 a new obstacle had presented itself, one that no doubt accounted for the Portuguese volte-face. Leopold, whose International Congo Association would be doomed by such a treaty's ratification, had begun a highly effective behind-the-scenes lobby of British opinion against Portugal. To British traders, he compared Portugal's protectionist history with his Association's avowed free trade philosophy; British Protestant missionary societies were invited to contrast the conservative Roman Catholicism of Portugal with the new Association's solemnly altruistic posture, in which unrestricted

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<sup>1</sup>

R. Anstey, op.cit., pp.96-100.

support for Christian missionaries of all denominations was inherent.<sup>1</sup>

No British government could ignore such widespread feeling as was generated for Leopold and against Portugal; consequently the final treaty approved by Portugal went much further than merely promising free trade. Portugal was forced to agree to freedom of navigation on the Congo subject to control by an International Commission similar to the one on the Danube.

Though still unsatisfied, Leopold had won his first major diplomatic victory. If the River Commission proved to be effective, Portugal would not be able to strangle his African project. Events beyond his control served to strengthen his hand still further. By 1884, Germany and France were not prepared to tolerate a British cat's paw in Africa, even if it wore the new robes of a now liberal Portuguese imperialism.

In March, France protested against the treaty on the grounds that it affected French interests in the area. This objection might have been overcome were it not for the fact that, in early June, 1884,

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R. Anstey, *Ibid*, Chapter VI, pp.113-38.

It is one of the ironies of Congo history that many of what were to become some of the Congo State's severest critics played a leading role in killing the Portuguese solution. The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society and the Baptist Missionary Society both strongly supported Leopold, the former because of Portugal's poor record in suppressing the slave trade and the latter because Leopold, as a sign of his good faith, had instructed Stanley and his agents to lend a helping hand to these Baptist missionaries beginning to establish themselves on the Congo.

Leopold's former associates, Hutton and Mackinnon, used their influence in the Manchester Chamber of Commerce to oppose Portugal in the interests of free trade, while Jacob Bright spoke for Cobdenite Liberal orthodoxy in the House of Commons in denouncing Portugal's heavy tariff system in Africa.

Bismarck categorically rejected the treaty in any form. No bilateral agreement concerning the occupation of African territory could survive without at least tacit recognition from these two Powers so Granville had no choice but to announce the abandonment of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty on 26 June, 1884.<sup>1</sup>

Why did Bismarck squash the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty? Scholars ascribe several reasons, and a consensus seems to be that Bismarck, with the Dual Alliance and the League of the Three Emperors safely established, could now safely challenge Britain in Africa, partly to satisfy a strong colonial party in Germany and partly to neutralize French hostility on the Rhine by encouraging French appetites in West and Central Africa.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever Bismarck's motives were, the results of his action were gratifying to Leopold. The Belgian King, through a combination of shrewd planning, influential associates, and plain good fortune, had seen the greatest threat to his African plans --- the Anglo-Portuguese Treaty --- die an abortive death. Less serious, but a thorn in his side none the less, was the lack of any international status in law for the International Congo Association. How could treaties be

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<sup>1</sup>  
J.S. Keltie, *op.cit.*, p.145.

<sup>2</sup>  
A.J.P. Taylor, Germany's First Bid for Colonies (London, 1938) pp.32-40.  
E. Lewin, The Germans and Africa (New York, 1917) pp.222-23.  
Royal Institute of International Affaris, The Colonial Problem (London, 1937) pp.20-21.  
William O. Henderson, Studies in German Colonial History (Chicago, 1962) pp.4-5.

honoured and jurisdictions respected if the Association owned no legal status and flew an unrecognized flag?

By mid 1884, Leopold was making great strides towards a favourable solution. In November of 1883 he had dispatched Colonel Sanford, United States Army, retired, to America, and the latter was successful in obtaining official recognition of the Association by the United States Government on 22 April, 1884.<sup>1</sup> The following day, in return for a French promise to 'respect' the stations and territories of the Association Colonel Strauch signed an official letter, part of which read:

" But the Association, wishing to afford new proof of its friendly feeling towards France, pledges itself to give her the right of preference if through any unforeseen circumstance the Association were one day led to realize (undoubtedly should have read 'release') its possessions."<sup>2</sup>

This step of Leopold's was as ingenious as it was bold. By granting France an option to claim his territory, Leopold forced those Powers interested in preserving the Congo basin as a Free Trade area to support the International Congo Association and allow it to flourish. Germany did precisely this by recognizing the French right

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H.M. Stanley, The Congo..., ii, p.383.

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H.M. Stanley, The Congo..., ii, p.388.

(In 1895, according to the terms of the Franco-Belgian treaty of that year, the French right of preference was waived in the case of Belgium, but held to be still applicable to any other Power.) J. Reeves, "The Origin of the Congo Free State, Considered from the Standpoint of International Law", the American Journal of International Law, Vol. 3, Jan., 1909, pp.99-118.

of pre-emption on 13 September, 1884, and by granting the Association official recognition on 8 November of that year.<sup>1</sup>

In Great Britain, the Foreign Office was particularly cool to Leopold, particularly since the French option was seen as an attempt to blackmail Britain into supporting Leopold's venture. Moreover, public opinion, once so favourable to Leopold, had become somewhat cooler. Some of the International Congo Association's agents in the Congo had been negotiating treaties of an exclusive nature and certain commercial interests began to wonder how firm Leopold's Association was as a pillar of Free Trade. Yet, by this time, there was no practical alternative to recognition. German and American recognition had been granted, while Anglo-Portuguese relations had deteriorated. All these factors could not be ignored by Her Majesty's Government. In late November, Bismarck pressed Britain to recognize Leopold's new State and intimated that he would make things unpleasant on the Niger if Britain did not so act. Whereupon Granville immediately instructed Sir Edward Malet, the British Ambassador to Germany and chief British plenipotentiary at the Berlin Conference, to negotiate a treaty with the Congo Association, the signing of which took place on 16 December, 1884.<sup>2</sup>

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A.B. Keith, *op.cit.*, p.55; R. Anstey, *op.cit.*, p.183.

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R. Anstey, *op.cit.*, p.183. It is worth noting that, as a quid pro quo of recognition, Great Britain stipulated that British Consular officers should be entitled to hold Consular Courts and to exercise civil and criminal jurisdiction over British subjects within the Congo; thus, though British subjects might be bound by the Congo State's laws relating to foreigners, they were to be justiciable only by a British Court. See. A.B. Keith, *op. cit.*, p.63.



Already possessing the stamp of recognition of these major Powers, Leopold was easily able to obtain total recognition by the remaining European Governments. In December, Italy, Austria-Hungary and Holland complied. In the winter of 1885, Spain, Russia, Norway and Sweden, Denmark, Belgium and Portugal followed suit. Thus, by the time the official draft of the Berlin Act was ready, the Association could add its signature to the document as a legally recognized sovereign State, in terms of international law.

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#### IV

As a last, desperate measure to secure herself in the Lower Congo, Portugal had suggested an International Conference of the Powers to settle the Congo question.<sup>1</sup> The idea was enlarged upon by Bismarck and, having secured French cooperation, the Chancellor issued formal invitations to the Powers to meet in conference at Berlin. Opening on 15 November, 1884, the Berlin West Africa Conference declared itself to have been created for the purpose of discussing, on an official level, such questions as free trade and free navigation of the Congo and the Niger, the formalities to be observed in the future for valid annexation of new African lands, the suppression of the slave trade and the obligation of European Powers to protect and civilize the natives of Africa. In actual fact, the real work of

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<sup>1</sup>

A.B. Keith, *op.cit.*, p.55.

the Conference seems to have been the behind-the-scenes debates over claims and counter-claims to Congo territory by Portugal, France and Leopold's Association.

Notwithstanding the fact that Leopold's treaties with African chiefs had been made while his Association was still a private body -- and of questionable legal standing<sup>1</sup>-- a settlement was reached the terms of which were not unfavourable to Leopold's fledgling state. Leopold's Association dropped its claims to territory on the north bank of the Lower Congo, in favour of the French assertion. Portugal's claim to Cabinda was recognized and she was given considerable coastal territory to both the north and south of the Congo mouth, while Leopold's group was guaranteed so-sovereignty of the mouth of the River as well as a thirty-five kilometer stretch of sea coast.

It is doubtful whether Leopold could have received such good terms from his two rivals in the area were it not for the sympathy Bismarck had shown towards his Association. Perhaps more substantial was the assistance Leopold derived from the American delegation, of which John A. Kasson, then American Ambassador to Germany, was the head, but in which the hands of Colonel Sanford and

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If Stanley had signed his treaties with the African chiefs on behalf of an African Company chartered under Belgian Law, the territory would have come under the protection of the Belgian flag. (This was difficult in any case since Article 68 of the Belgian Constitution at this time forbade the cession, exchange, or addition of territory save by special law.) But Stanley was not acting for such a company, the creation of Belgian or of municipal law; he was the agent of an 'international' Association which in fact had no legal status whatsoever. J. Reeves, "The Origin of the Congo Free State," p.105.

Henry Stanley, Leopold's associates and confidants, can be detected.<sup>1</sup>

As early as 1883 Leopold had been exploring the possibility of acquiring support for his venture in the United States. Most probably through the agency of Sanford, Leopold had managed to enlist support for his Association in the White House itself. In his Annual Message of 4 December, 1883, President Arthur's reference to the Association is significant, not only because it reveals a willingness to accept Leopold's humanitarian expressions at face value, but also because the President alludes to the possibilities of a direct American involvement in the affairs of the Congo basin:

" The rich and populous valley of the Congo is being opened to commerce by a society called the International African Association,<sup>2</sup> of which the King of the Belgians is the president and a citizen of the United States the chief executive officer. Large tracts of territory have been ceded to the Association by native chiefs, roads have been opened, steamboats placed on the river, and the nuclei of states established at twenty-two stations under one flag, which offers freedom to commerce and prohibits the slave trade. The objects of the society are philanthropic. It does not aim at permanent political control, but seeks the neutrality of the valley. The United States can not be indifferent to this work, nor to the interests of their citizens involved in it. It may become advisable for us to

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Sanford was attached to the American delegation while Stanley served as its 'technical advisor'. A.B. Keith, op.cit., p.57.

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This reference, in 1883, to what had by then become an obsolete body is an excellent illustration of how useful it was, for Leopold's purposes, for him to hide his undertakings under the banner of innocuous-sounding organizations.

co-operate with other commercial powers in promoting the rights of trade and residence in the Congo Valley free from the interference of political control of any nation."<sup>1</sup>

The fruit of the Berlin West Africa Conference was the Berlin Act, covering thirty-eight Articles and signed by all fourteen delegations on behalf of their governments.<sup>2</sup>

Of especial interest was the prominence assigned to freedom of trade. Absolute freedom of trade (Article I) was applied to a territory cutting across the heart of Central Africa. The western coastal boundary was to extend from 2°30'S. latitude northward along the Atlantic coast to the mouth of the Loge. The northern boundary ran along that parallel to the basin of the Congo, but excluding the basin of the Ogowe which France insisted be excluded from the terms of the Berlin Act. To the south the Free Trade Zone was terminated by the source of the Loge and on eastward to the Congo basin. On the east, the Zone ran from the Congo basin to the Indian Ocean at latitude 5°N, with an extension to a point five miles up the mouth of the Zambesi, and continuing on to the watershed of the Zambesi and the Congo.

There was to be absolute freedom of navigation on the Congo and its affluents. (Articles II-IV). Differential dues were forbidden, and only such tax allowed as to represent fair compensation for spending in the interest of trade, though the Powers reserved the

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J.B. Moore, A Digest of International Law, VIII volumes, (Washington, 1906), Vol.V, p.53-64.

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The Berlin Act is reproduced in its entirety in the Appendix of A.B. Keith, The Belgian Congo..., pp.302-316.

right to determine after twenty years whether this arrangement was to continue. Monopolies of any kind were forbidden (Article V), and foreigners were assured equal rights with nationals. These proposals were reiterated in an elaborate Navigation Act for the Congo (Chapter IV). Here, reference was made to an International Commission whose duty it was to act as arbiter in case of any disagreement between signatory Powers, but no provision was ever made regarding the creation or composition of this commission. The Act also bound the Powers to watch over the preservation of the natives, to improve their moral and material well-being and to help in suppressing the slave trade. To this end, protection and favour without distinction of creed or nationality was to be afforded all religious, scientific and charitable institutions working within Congoland.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Act contained no provision for violation of its terms; no offending state could be coerced. Rupture of diplomatic relations or the summoning of a new Conference should there be substantial agreement among the Powers as to the violations of the Act would seem to be the most that could be done against a possible offender. Measured against this fact were the pious hopes of the delegates that the 'moral and material well-being' of the natives would be secured.

Because they had put no 'teeth' in the Act, the Powers were forced, in the last analysis, to rely upon the good faith of Leopold, whose

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This useful term was coined by H.R. Fox Bourne, Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society, in his Civilization in Congoland, (London, 1903), and designates the Free Trade Zone established by the Berlin Act --- a zone which coincided with the greater part of the territory under the rule of the Congo Free State.

name was already synonymous with the International Congo Association, or the Congo Free State as it soon was to become.<sup>1</sup>

The delegates to the Berlin Conference had been guilty of betrayal of the natives of Central Africa whose well-being they had committed themselves, at least verbally, to secure. The atmosphere of the Conference, in this respect, had been one of marked presumptuousness, even in terms of imperialism and the 'white man's burden', concepts which were very much in vogue in the late nineteenth century. In Miss Slade's words,

" It was an unquestioned assumption at Berlin that the European Powers had the right to annex African territory for their own advantage, so long as the nominal consent of a certain number of African chiefs had been obtained.

It was also an unquestioned assumption that the native peoples would benefit by the change..."<sup>2</sup>

Not surprisingly, in later years there was to be much confusion regarding the interpretation of the Berlin Act, concentrating as it did on lofty sentiments rather than on concrete measures of enforcement of obligations. Moreover, confusion was encouraged by the anomalous position of the International Congo Association. Because recognition of the flag of the Association occurred simultaneously with the sittings of the Conference --- and the actual negotiations prior to the granting of recognition by most of the Powers were conducted back-stage at Berlin --- some authorities claimed that the Association, or more

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<sup>1</sup>  
Infra, p.26.

<sup>2</sup>  
R. Slade, op.cit., p.41.

correctly, the Congo State, was CREATED BY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, however, recognition of the Association as a State recognized under international law was achieved SEPARATELY through treaties negotiated with each individual Power. It was only in this way that the Association was able to affix its signature to the Berlin Act in a legal and binding manner.<sup>2</sup>

Apologists of Leopold were later to declare that, in fact, the Association was a de facto State before the Berlin West Africa Conference was held, and that recognition was merely a statement of a fait accompli.<sup>3</sup> Yet the signing of native treaties does not constitute a state per se, according to the definition of a state in international law which requires that a 'state' must occupy a defined territory, have an organized government and be populated by individuals who are bound by common laws, habits and customs.<sup>4</sup>

It has been shown that recognition by the Powers of Leopold's Association was given for a variety of reasons, not one of which

<sup>1</sup>  
A.B. Keith, op.cit., p.64-65.

<sup>2</sup>  
The assertion is borne out by the behaviour of the United States, for though the American representatives signed the General Act of the Berlin Conference, the document was never submitted to the Senate since it was felt that this body would never ratify the Act. Thus, in the American view, the Congo Free State was not created by international agreement --- the Berlin Act --- but by an act of recognition on the part of the American Government. See J.B. Moore, Digest..., Vol. I, pp.119, 564.

<sup>3</sup>  
This was the position of the Belgian jurist Rivier; see J. Reeves, op.cit., p.101.

<sup>4</sup>  
J. Reeves, op.cit., p.107.

centred around the notion that Leopold's group indeed possessed the nucleus of a viable political state.<sup>1</sup>

It was a curious feature of the Conference that, though in debate the name of the Association was rarely mentioned, the delegates to Berlin had come to assume that one of their chief reasons for gathering was to invest Leopold's Association with authority to carry out the founding of a State based upon free trade.<sup>2</sup> At the time of the Conference, the Powers regarded the Association not as a state in esse but in futuro. Moreover, the delegates were distinctly aware that a new state was being born.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, a curious page in the history of International Relations was written. A group of private financiers and speculators, led by Leopold and hiding under the cloak of humanitarianism and philanthropy, was recognized by the Powers as a legal person, whereupon the Powers proceeded to lay down what amounted to a modus operandi --- the Berlin Act --- of that state!! And credit for this brilliant coup must be given to the Belgian King. Taking advantage of imperial rivalries,

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With the exception of the United States where there existed the misguided belief that a free republic along the lines of Liberia was the goal of Leopold --- a false view fostered by Leopold and his agents. See R. Slade, op.cit., p.40.

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R. Slade, op.cit., p.43. For Stanley's diary of the day-to-day negotiating at the Conference, see H.M. Stanley, The Congo..., ii, pp.394-402.

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Thus Bismarck spoke of "des zu errichtenden Staates" --- 'the new state to be created'; Baron de Courcel, representing France, referred to a state "territorially constituted to-day with exact limits"; Sir Edward Malet announced, "We salute the new-born State." See J. Reeves, op.cit., p.113.



Leopold was able to carve for himself an empire in the heart of Africa. He had conducted his venture from its inauspicious beginnings at the Geographical Conference in Brussels in 1876 through to the recognition of the Powers of the International Congo Association in an atmosphere shrouded in obscurity. Even the anomalous aspects of the Berlin Conference conformed to the pattern of Leopold's career as an entrepreneur. An unnamed diplomat best expressed the doubts and forboding of informed European opinion over the 'Frankenstein' they had helped bring into existence when he described the Congo State, soon after its birth, as

"an anomaly and a monstrosity, from an international point of view; and from that of the future, it was an unknown danger."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
J. Reeves, op.cit., p.118.

**Chapter Two**

**CONGO STATE MISGOVERNMENT**

**1885 - 1903**

## I

Leopold wasted little time once the Berlin Conference's seal of approval had been obtained. His first task was to acquire permission from the Belgian Parliament to rule his new state, since Article LXII of the Belgian Constitution required the consent of two-thirds of the members of each House for the Belgian King to become at the same time monarch of another state.<sup>1</sup>

It is worth noting that the consent of Parliament was not taken for granted by Leopold. Well aware that most Belgians were unenthusiastic -- and some perhaps hostile -- he addressed a letter to his Cabinet asking for sovereignty of the Congo State on 16 April, 1885, taking great pains to dismiss fears that the Congo would become a financial burden to Belgium.

"It (the Congo State) will have to pay its own way, and experience and the example of neighbouring colonies bear me out in saying that it will dispose of the necessary resources... If my hopes are realized I shall be sufficiently rewarded for my efforts. The welfare of Belgium, as you know, gentlemen, is the object of my whole life."<sup>2</sup>

By 30 April, 1885, the bill had passed both Houses with little opposition, but with the understanding that the Belgian people washed their hands of the entire Congo operation. Any connection between

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<sup>1</sup>

J. Reeves, op.cit., p.116f.

<sup>2</sup>

A.S. Rappoport, Leopold II, King of the Belgians, (London, 1910) p.185.

the vast territory in Central Africa and the tiny European nation was purely personal, vested in Leopold who happened to be sovereign of both states.

On 19 July, 1885, at Banana at the Congo's mouth, the establishment of the 'État Indépendant du Congo'<sup>1</sup> with Leopold as sovereign was announced, and, on 1 August Leopold informed the Powers of his assumption of sovereignty and of the new State's neutrality, as defined by treaties of recognition signed earlier in the year at Berlin. Leopold's announcement came as no surprise, for he had been recognized as the power behind the scene in the International Congo Association all along.

There was, however, a surprise in store for those who expected events in the new African state to move as if regulated by the languid tropical heat. Almost immediately after informing the Powers Leopold embarked upon a relentless programme of economic development involving the establishment of effective communication as well as the pacification and occupation of the interior regions of the Congo State. Supporters and apologists of the Congo regime have demonstrated, to their own satisfaction at least, Leopold's essential good faith and personal selflessness by showing that during the first five years of the State's existence Leopold personally provided ten million francs

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This was rendered into English at the time as 'the Congo Free State', or, more rarely, 'the Independent Congo State'. Since the Congo State was 'neither free nor independent', I prefer the term 'Congo State' and shall so refer to Leopold's African patrimony.

annually to finance his many projects.<sup>1</sup>

Actually, the Berlin Act had eliminated certain potential sources of revenue such as custom and transit duties (Article IV). But, under pressure from Leopold, the Belgian Parliament's determination to remain free from involvement in the Congo did not last long and, in 1887 Parliament authorized the issue of a Congo lottery loan of a hundred and fifty million francs of which only ninety-eight million were issued.<sup>2</sup> Two years later, Belgium came to the aid of the Congo Railway project to the tune of ten million francs.<sup>3</sup>

Slowly, the Belgian people were warming to the idea of an Imperial Belgium. And Leopold helped encourage this trend with the announcement of his Will, whereby the Congo State would devolve to Belgium upon his death.<sup>4</sup> Shortly afterwards the future of the Congo State was made secure by a Belgian loan to the Congo of twenty-five million francs, made available in ten annual installments, after which Belgium would have the option of annexing the Congo State without condition or of

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For example, E. Cammaerts, The Keystone of Europe, (London, 1939) pp.194-96; D.C. Boulger, op.cit., i, p.209. But see infra, pp.33-36 for some of the causes of the State's heavy debts.

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A.B. Keith, op.cit., p.76.

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D.C. Boulger, op.cit., i, p.219.

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Though the Will was dated 2 August, 1889, it was not made public until July, 1890 for the Prime Minister, M. Beernaert, had been given instructions to this effect by Leopold. For the text of the Will, see D.C. Boulger, op.cit., i, p.216-17.

seeking repayment at 3½% interest over a further ten year period.<sup>1</sup>

Leopold had hopes of achieving solvency for the Congo in yet another fashion. At another conference of the Powers on Africa, held this time at Brussels, Leopold persuaded the delegates to allow the Congo State to establish duties not exceeding ten per cent. ad valorem at the port of entry.<sup>2</sup>

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## II

To say the least, the government of the Congo State was unique. From his Court at Laeken the strong willed Leopold ruled his state as an absolute despot. Coupled with the disadvantage of having a central government situated on another continent, government in the Congo State was plagued also by the lack of definition of the powers of the chief executive officer in the Congo, the Governor-General. The King alone possessed supreme executive and legislative authority. The Governor-General had the power to issue both regulations and laws but the latter power was only for temporary and special purposes and took the form of 'ordonnances'. Only the King could issue 'décrets' and 'arrêtés', that is, legislative acts and administrative regulations.

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<sup>1</sup>  
D.C. Boulger, *ibid*, p.215.

<sup>2</sup>  
This amounted to an amendment of Article IV of the Berlin Act which prohibited duties for twenty years subject to revision at that time by the Powers. The ten per cent. duty was authorized, therefore, by a Declaration annexed to the General Act of the Brussels Conference which was signed at Brussels on 2 July, 1890. For the text of the Brussels Act see A.B. Keith, *op.cit.*, p. 318 et seq.

Not only was there no distinction made as to which matters should be mandated under decrees and which under *arrêtés*, but the relationship between Governor-General's ordinances and Royal *arrêtés* was obscure.

It was no wonder that maladministration should have been the by-product of such a cumbersome, yet absolute governmental structure. Yet it was not so much the weaknesses of the machinery of government as the content of the policies emanating from Brussels that created chaos and suffering among the African subjects of the Congo State. These policies, taking the form of decrees issued from 1885-92 created a form of rule oppressive in the extreme --- one that, far from bringing the benefits of civilization to the Congolese people, actually increased their wretchedness and suffering.

By a decree of July, 1885, the Congo State asserted its right to ownership over "all vacant lands", that is, all lands not occupied by the native at the time of the decree. As if to reinforce this decree an ordinance of the Governor-General, Camille Janssen, issued from Boma in 1887, declared the state's right to "des terres dont la propriété n'a été reconnue à personne."<sup>1</sup>

In effect, then, the native owned only the land his village occupied plus the small areas he might cultivate. Further decrees enlisted native chiefs as officers of the State. These 'chefferies', as they were called, proved the source of notorious abuse, for the State imposed these chefferies upon tribes with no consideration

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<sup>1</sup>

H.R. Fox Bourne, op.cit., p.70.

whatsoever to hereditary right or tradition. In fact, the chiefs often selected were the very malcontents that traditional native institutions, in their own way, sought to repress. Still another decree initiated the *libre* system, whereby a freed slave paid for his liberty by serving a new master for a fixed term of seven years at merely nominal wages.<sup>1</sup>

Worst of all was the secret decree of 21 September, 1891, whereby all the products of the 'vacant lands' now fell to the State.<sup>2</sup> Circulars bringing this decree into effect were dated 15 December, 1891 in Bangala district, 8 May, 1892 in Basanjusu, and 14 February in Yakoma and Marinel. By the terms of these circulars unauthorized merchants receiving ivory or rubber were to be regarded as receivers of stolen goods for, as the Marinel circular stated,

"... the State cannot allow the natives to convert to their own profit or to sell to others any part of the rubber or ivory which forms the fruit of the domain...which fruits the State only authorizes the natives to gather subject to the condition that they are brought to it."<sup>3</sup>

The circle had closed round the hapless native. With the bringing into effect of the September decree, monopoly and coercion had replaced

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<sup>1</sup>  
Diplomatic and Consular Reports, No.459 Misc. Series, 1898, Vol.XCII, C.8649-30, p.555.

<sup>2</sup>  
As opposed to the other edicts, this decree was never published in the Bulletin Officiel of the Congo State. A.B. Keith, op.cit., p.121.

<sup>3</sup>  
In E.D. Morel, "The Congo State and the Bahr-El-Ghazal", p.204f. in The Nineteenth Century, Vol.50, Aug., 1901.



free trade, in direct violation of the terms of the Berlin Act. The sole justification for his action that Leopold could present to irate merchants, Belgian as well as foreign, in the Congo was that additional monies were needed to pay for the numerous undertakings of the State. It was argued that the Belgian loans had been solely for the railway and other expenditures to improve communication and that the ten per cent. duty authorized by the Brussels Conference had not provided as yet sufficient revenues.<sup>1</sup>

Opposition to this blow to trade came from unexpected sources. The Governor-General, Camille Janssen, resigned over this new restrictive policy and other Belgians of influence such as Beernaert, Van Neuss and Wauters denounced this new plan. As a compromise, Leopold's decree of 30 October, 1892 left certain districts on the Kasai River open for competition but at the same time established the *Domaine Prive*, a huge area that amounted to about one-half of the State's territory including all of the State's lands above the Equator.<sup>2</sup>

To placate Belgian traders Leopold launched his concessionaire system, whereby a company would be granted a defined territory over which it was given judicial and administrative authority. The usual pattern was for these companies to hold their concessions on long-term

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The ten per cent. levy was never to bring in much revenue simply because the concessionaire system eliminated virtually all independent trading. In any case, the State had no need to trouble itself over a ten per cent. tax when the huge profits from rubber collection began to pour into its coffers.

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A.B. Keith, *op.cit.*, p.122.

leases with anywhere from one-half to two-thirds of the shares being owned by the State. By 1901 well over three-quarters of the Congo State, including the *Domaine Privé* and the open lands, were being exploited by seven major trusts and a score of smaller companies.<sup>1</sup> Finally, on 9 March, 1896, Leopold created from the nominally open lands a large foundation known as the *Domaine de la Couronne*, consisting of a territory of one hundred and twelve thousand square miles between the Kasai and Ruki Rivers and including within its limits Lake Leopold II. The profits resulting from this rich area were to be used by the Foundation --- created to administer this *Domaine* --- to embellish Belgium, and especially Brussels, through the erection of great public buildings.<sup>2</sup>

Having appropriated the wealth of the country, the State turned its attention to the problem of obtaining labour. In lieu of income tax it was decided that labour in kind should be rendered the State and, as a result, forced labour was imposed upon the native in opposition not only to the spirit of the Berlin Act, but to earlier Congo State decrees promising to refrain from any encroachment upon local customs and usages regarding land tenure and labour. Particularly

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The major trusts were: Grand Lacs Trust, Anversoise Trust, Kwongo Trust, Katanga Trust, Kasai Trust, Lomami Trust and the A.B.I.R.

A.B.I.R. was an abbreviation of Anglo-Belgian India Rubber and Exploration Company which was so named to create the impression of international participation. In fact, only a few of the half of its shares available were in British hands.

References: H.R. Fox Bourne, *op.cit.*, p.140;

E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule in Africa, (London, 1904), p.466 and map facing that page.

2

A.B. Keith, *op.cit.*, p.122.

oppressive was the tactic of employing native sentinels, armed with modern rifles, to enforce 'discipline' --- that is, to coerce the natives into fulfilling their quotas of rubber and other produce.

It was only natural that a new government in Central Africa would incur considerable expenses, and, in the case of the Congo State, the railway project and the military campaigns against the Arab slave traders who had acquired hegemony over a considerable portion of the Upper Congo basin were both expensive undertakings. If improved communications and pacification of the interior were legitimate reasons for expenditure<sup>1</sup> the same could not be said of Leopold's expansionist ambitions. Any sympathy Leopold might have engendered by his initial 'selflessness' in dipping into his own personal fortune is lost when it is realized that a man who already was absolute ruler over a territory ninety times the size of Belgium could still think in terms of gaining new territory. In fact, it was this megalomaniac thirst for more territory that contributed to the early financial difficulties of the Congo State.

The first manifestation of Leopold's expansionist dreams came on the Congo State's southern frontier. There, Leopold had established a station in a district held to be Portuguese and a treaty settling the dispute was signed in 1891 only after Portugal had felt it necessary to send a gunboat to Boma to strengthen her case.

To the north Leopold entangled himself with France but was forced to yield for he was anxious to obtain French acquiescence --- in view

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Even in these instances, Leopold's actions were utilitarian rather than moral.

of the latter Power's right of option --- to an eventual Belgian annexation of the Congo State. By the terms of a Convention signed with France in 1887, Leopold was able to achieve his goal, but only by granting territorial concessions on the northern frontier.

Leopold also nurtured Nilotic ambitions and for more than twenty years he pursued a policy fraught with great risk, since it was precisely in the Sudan that the struggle between the forces majeures on the African scene --- Britain and France --- was resolved. As early as 1881 Leopold had engaged the services of General Gordon, though his hopes of obtaining part of the Sudan were dashed with the demise of the unfortunate Gordon at Khartoum.<sup>1</sup> Then there was the half-hearted attempt to enlist the services of Emin Pasha,<sup>2</sup> and finally, an effort to effect a territorial settlement with Mackinnon's British East Africa Company.<sup>3</sup>

In May of 1894, Leopold was able to persuade the British government to grant him a lifelong lease to the Bahr-El-Ghazal and in return, Britain leased a strip of territory sixteen miles wide from the south shore of Lake Albert Edward to the northern tip of Lake Tanganyika.

Neither France nor Germany were prepared to see an agreement in East Africa that excluded them stand, and both Powers lodged their

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<sup>1</sup> W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, (New York, 1951), p.103.

<sup>2</sup> H.M. Stanley, In Darkest Africa, two Volumes, (London, 1890).

<sup>3</sup> An agreement -- the so-called Mackinnon Treaty of 24 May, 1890 -- was actually negotiated between the two parties, but it was never communicated to the British Government. See W.L. Langer, op.cit., p.119.

objections to the agreement on 27 May, 1894.<sup>1</sup> At the same time Germany brought such pressure to bear on Brussels that Leopold asked Britain to return her strip of territory. When France refused to recognize the Congo State's lease on the Bahr-El-Ghazal, the 1894 Treaty appeared to be a dead letter.<sup>2</sup>

Leopold did not give up easily, and, under the cover of the Anglo-French confrontation in the Sudan in 1898 at Fashoda, his Congo State forces began the occupation of the Bahr-El-Ghazal, claiming that their lease still held good. However, Britain's Egyptian policy had taken on a much more determined appearance after Fashoda and she was in no mood to tolerate Leopold's machinations. Leopold ordered the evacuation of the Bahr-El-Ghazal and, by an agreement reached on 9 May, 1906 he relinquished all claims to that region in return for a life-long lease of the Lado Enclave.

After twenty years of effort and expense, Leopold had annexed no territory and could only console himself with a small area which the Congo State was only to lease for two years.<sup>3</sup> His military campaigns were never popular and his forced conscripts often mutinied. Not one

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France, who hoped to push on to the Nile from the west as a means of forcing Great Britain out of Egypt, had good reason to oppose a treaty that blocked her in the east. Germany, with a Protectorate over Tanganyika, would not allow any unilateral alteration in her frontier with the Congo State. Moreover, she wished to thwart a British continuum from north to south so that British traffic would have to pass through German territory.

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W.L. Langer, *op.cit.*, p.134-37.

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Leopold II died on 17 December, 1909, at which time the Lado Enclave was returned to Great Britain.

year passed from 1890 to 1905 without a military revolt on the part of at least one tribe somewhere in the Congo State. Meanwhile, the crippling economic system caused greater and greater brutality in the treatment of the natives as quotas rose and rubber became more and more difficult to procure. It was not to be long before isolated reports of these deeds began trickling back to Europe.

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### III

It was to be expected that commercial interests in Europe would lodge protests over the stifling of free trade in the Congo State. The first organized protest came even before the enactment of the notorious September decree when, at a meeting of British and Dutch commercial groups held in London on 4 November, 1890 and presided over by Sir Albert Rollit, objections were raised over the ten per cent. tariff then being approved by the Brussels Conference.<sup>1</sup> At this same meeting a degree of indignant humanitarian protest was added by Colonel Williams, a British officer in Leopold's employ, who read extracts of a personal letter he had sent to Leopold informing him of acts of cannibalism committed by Bangala tribesmen armed and employed by the Congo State.<sup>2</sup>

Paradoxically, it was Belgian traders in the Congo who first protested against the adoption of the concessionaire system as a violation

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<sup>1</sup>  
E.D. Morel, Affairs of West Africa, (London, 1902), p.319.

<sup>2</sup>  
E.D. Morel, "The Belgian Curse in Africa", in The Contemporary Review, Vol. 81, March, 1902, p.363-64.

of the Berlin Act as early as 1892. Though they later reserved their opinions as to whether a violation of the Berlin Act had taken place after they had been mollified by their being granted a monopoly in the Domaine Privé, the administrators of the Société Anonyme pour le Commerce du Haut-Congo, Messrs. Thys, Urban and Brugmann, had protested vehemently to Leopold along the same lines that Morel was to take ten years later. Included in a resolution adopted on 9 September, 1892 was a paragraph which read thus:

" To deny to the Natives the right to sell ivory and rubber produced by the forests and plains belonging to their tribes, which form part of their hereditary natal soil, and with which they have traded freely from time immemorial is a veritable violation of natural rights. To forbid European merchants from buying ivory and rubber from the Natives, to compel them to purchase concessions in order to trade with the Natives, is contrary to the spirit and the letter of the Berlin Act, which proclaimed the unlimited freedom of every one to trade, and forbade the creation of all monopoly."<sup>1</sup>

Conversely, it was some time before purely humanitarian groups would take up the case of the Congo native. In Great Britain the Aborigines Protection Society had begun to suspect the degree to which Leopold was bent upon bringing about the 'moral and material' regeneration of the Congo natives by 1890, when the testimony of Stanley and his companions on the Emin Pasha expedition implied that the condition of the natives seemed worse than when Stanley had first

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E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule in Africa, cited, p.327-28.

passed through the Upper Congo almost twenty years previously.<sup>1</sup>

Leopold, by virtue of his declared sympathies for native peoples, had been made an honorary member of the Aborigines' Protection Society shortly after the inception of the Congo State in 1885. Accordingly, the Secretary of the Society, Mr. H.R. Fox Bourne, appealed to Leopold on behalf of the Congo natives. For the next six years Fox Bourne received what amounted to empty reassurances and evasions.<sup>2</sup>

By a decree of 18 September, 1896, Leopold established the Native Protection Commission as an indication of his good intentions.<sup>3</sup> Fox Bourne persisted though, and during the same month appealed to the British government to secure implementation of the Berlin and Brussels Acts. Lord Salisbury's response was disappointing since it merely acknowledged receipt of the representation along with a promise to study the matter further.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the Aborigines' Protection Society could

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Though he was no Livingstone and never 'spared the rod' when it came to dealing with natives, Stanley --- in his account of the Emin Pasha Relief expedition --- was alarmed at the increase in savagery he witnessed, an observation that testified to the lack of native co-operation rendered his expeditions. See H.M. Stanley, In Darkest Africa, two volumes.

Moreover, by his own admission he had left much unsaid:

"What the public ought to know, that I have written; but there are many things that the snarling, cynical, unbelieving, vulgar ought not to know." Ibid, i, p.5.

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H.R. Fox Bourne, op.cit., pp.vii-viii.

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Accounts and Papers, Africa No.10 (1903), Vol.XLV, Cd.1754, pp.665-95.

4

H.R. Fox Bourne, op.cit., p.viii.



hardly be said to have presented a solid case upon which a British government could act. To Fox Bourne, the spirit of the Berlin Act was not so much embodied in the free trade articles as in the positive declarations of intent with regard to the moral and material improvement of the native peoples.

Not easily discouraged, the Aborigines' Protection Society determined to work harder still. In December of 1896, a much more detailed statement was sent to both the British and Congolese governments. When Sir Charles Dilke accepted Fox Bourne's offer to champion the cause of the Congo native in the House of Commons by introducing the Congo debate on 2 April, 1897, the Society's campaign was underway in earnest.<sup>1</sup> That same week a public meeting under the chairmanship of Mr. Leonard Courtney was held with Dilke and Morley among the speakers.<sup>2</sup>

It was Fox Bourne's belief that annexation of the Congo State by Belgium would provide the neatest solution to the Congo dilemma. It was with disappointment that he observed the failure of Belgium to annex the Congo State in 1901 when the ten year loan granted in 1890 came due.<sup>3</sup> In a letter addressed to the Belgian Parliament and to which were affixed eight representative signatures including those of Dilke and Courtney, the Aborigines' Protection Society argued that Belgium, as a signatory of the Berlin Act, was under a moral obligation to rectify the violations of the Act committed by a State

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<sup>1</sup>  
The Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Ser., Vol. XLVIII, 2 April, 1897, col.425-450.

<sup>2</sup>  
H.R. Fox Bourne, op.cit., introduction, ix.

<sup>3</sup>  
Supra, pp.27-28.

for which, in the eyes of international opinion, Belgium was morally if not legally responsible.

In 1899, Leopold's concessionaire system had been adopted by France for use in the French Congo and, in the eyes of a devotee of the Aborigines' Protection Society's cause, it appeared as if this horrible cancer was spreading to other parts of the African body. Paradoxically, it was at this time that the campaign for reform began to make headway. Resolutions of censure of Leopold's regime were passed by the Associated Chambers of Commerce of Great Britain, by the Free Church Council and by the London Branch of W.T. Stead's 'International Union'.<sup>1</sup> In September of 1901 the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce sent a memorial to Lord Lansdowne in the Foreign Office, signed by its President, Alfred Jones, protesting against the violation of the Berlin Act by France in the French Congo. Virtually all the British Chambers of Commerce backed Liverpool.<sup>2</sup>

Another statement was submitted by the Aborigines' Protection Society to the Foreign Office on 27 March, 1902, to be followed by a public meeting at Mansion House on 15 May, 1902, Mr. Alfred E. Pease chairing, and with the heads of the West African sections of the Liverpool and London Chambers of Commerce --- John Hold and F. Swanzy --- making speeches expressing full support for the Aborigines' Protection Society's campaign. That blending of humanitarianism with private

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F.S. Cocks, E.D. Morel--the Man and his Work, (London, 1920), p.95.

2

See E.D. Morel, The British Case in the French Congo, (London, 1903). Appendix for the text of the memorial.

commercial interest that was to mark the composition of the Congo Reform Association was already manifesting itself.

That Fox Bourne was already a thorn in the side of Leopold can be deduced from remarks made in the Belgian House as early as July, 1901 by the Prime Minister, Count de Smet de Naeyer, who also doubled as leader of the 'Congo Party':

"Un de vos auteurs semble être la Société pour le Protection des Indigènes, qui, sous couleur de philanthropie, attaque périodiquement des institutions Congolaises."<sup>1</sup>

The question was whether Fox Bourne possessed enough fire to match Leopold in a 'knock-down-drag-out' propaganda war. Fox Bourne still seemed hopeful that Leopold, once made aware of the extent to which maladministration in the Congo had gone, would mend his ways and allow Belgian annexation. In any case, Fox Bourne hoped for international pressure upon Leopold to conform to the Berlin Act.<sup>2</sup> There was no talk on his part of more radical steps. Leopold, on the other hand, either denied charges outright or countered with a 'tu quoque' argument.

Hopeful that he could at last persuade the Foreign Office to do something, Fox Bourne wrote to Lord Lansdowne requesting that he receive a deputation headed by the Reverend W.M. Morrison, an American missionary who had spent six and a half years in the Kasai region of

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<sup>1</sup>  
H. R. Fox Bourne, op.cit., p.302.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, p.281f.

the Congo State with the American Presbyterian Congo Mission.

Lansdowne, it was hoped, would be moved to

"take such action as may be practicable with a view of checking the abuses that have grown up in the territory of the Congo Free State."<sup>1</sup>

If Lansdowne would not listen to Morrison there were others who would. At a public meeting held on 5 May, 1903 at Whitehall, Morrison spoke of his harrowing years in the Congo State before an attentive audience that included Dilke, Herbert Samuel, Sir Wilfred Lawson, Travers Buxton, A.E. Ruskin and E.D. Morel. At the meeting Dilke put forward a motion calling upon

"His Majesty's Government, as one of the signatories to the Berlin and Brussels Acts of 1885 and 1902, to use its influence with the other signatory Powers towards securing the humane and equitable treatment of natives in the Congo..."<sup>2</sup>

When speaking on this motion he employed stronger language:

"The only remedy for the evils we have heard described is the extirpation by the European Powers of the rule which has made the Congo State what it is."<sup>3</sup>

The man who seconded Dilke's resolution that evening was E.D. Morel, a young journalist who had recently caught the attention of those interested in West Africa through his scalding attacks upon Leopold, and who could match Fox Bourne's sincerity for Congo reform.

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Fox Bourne to Lansdowne, 6 April, 1903; cited in W.M. Morrison "Abuses in the Congo Free State", (London, 1903), p.3.

2

W. M. Morrison, op.cit., p.20.

3

Ibid, p.25.

What the latter may have lacked in enthusiasm, however, Morel could supply with great zest and it was he, not Fox Bourne, who was to lead the campaign for Congo reform for the next decade.

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#### IV

Born Georges Edmond Morel-de-Ville in Paris on 10 July, 1873, of a French father and English mother, he dropped the "de Ville" suffix in the early 1890's and achieved a wide fame in his era as Edmund D. (ene) Morel. His mother was determined to send her son to English public schools though it was all she could manage after her husband died when Edmund was but a child. After leaving Bedford Modern School where he was described as a diligent boy, excellent in French and weak in mathematics, young Morel first worked in Paris for Drexel, Morgan, and Company,<sup>1</sup> an American finance house. He left this firm to enter the employ of Elder, Dempster and Company, a Liverpool shipping firm that, coincidentally, began its Antwerp-Congo trade in 1890, a few months after young Morel joined the company as a clerk.<sup>2</sup>

Morel worked diligently, rising in the firm until he was placed in charge of the Congo section. His new responsibility necessitated many trips to Belgium and gave him access to confidential trade figures

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R. Wuliger, The Idea of Economic Imperialism, with Special Reference to the Life and Work of E.D. Morel (Ph.D. thesis, U. of London, 1953) p.2.

2

H. Lutz, E.D. Morel, der Mann und Sein Werk, (Berlin, 1925) p.4.

that --- given his knowledge of African affairs --- aroused his suspicions of the Congo State.

Morel had always been fascinated by Africa. His uncle, a certain Major Phillips, had died in the Congo while serving under the governorship of Sir Francis de Winton,<sup>1</sup> and this had served to focus the attention of the young Morel to the 'Dark Continent'. He devoured all available literature on West and Central Africa and, by December, 1893, felt bold enough to launch his journalistic career with an article in the Pall Mall Gazette, urging the need for Great Britain to undertake more extensive railway construction in West Africa, since France was thus opening up her holdings in Senegal and in the Upper Niger Valley.<sup>2</sup> In 1894, in the same journal Morel wrote two articles, one criticizing Germany's treatment of natives in the Cameroun and the other, curiously, praising Leopold and company for their "commendable energy in grappling with difficulties which beset them."<sup>3</sup>

For the next two years, through to 1898, Morel's attitude towards the Congo State was ambivalent; --- one moment he could declare his indignation over the treatment of Stokes, a British subject murdered by a Congo State official, and in the next breath call Stokes a "bad character". He was able, too, to rationalize away accounts of atrocity by attributing them to the tropical climate's effects upon European

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<sup>1</sup>  
F.S. Cocks, op.cit., p.22.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, p.25 from Pall Mall Gazette, December, 1893.

<sup>3</sup>  
Pall Mall Gazette, Feb. 22, 1894 in F.S. Cocks, op.cit., p.26.

<sup>1</sup>  
mores.

It was British West Africa and not the Congo that was occupying Morel's time. In 1898, Morel and his employer at Elder, Dempster, Alfred Jones, led a campaign for an open door policy for all of West Africa that was instrumental in getting France --- after Fashoda was over --- to apply no differential tariffs to British goods in most French West African possessions for a thirty year period.<sup>2</sup>

Sooner or later, however, Morel, as a self-declared authority on Africa, had to take a stand on the Congo question. In November of 1895 the Times had published an account of atrocity in the Congo from J.B. Murphy, an American Missionary;<sup>3</sup> in 1897 Colonel Hinde had published a sensational narrative of the campaign against the Congo Arabs in which he had taken part;<sup>4</sup> in the same year Dilke brought the Congo question up in Parliament.<sup>5</sup>

It was not so much the tale of atrocity as the story to be found in the trade figures of the Congo State that convinced Morel that some-

<sup>1</sup>  
R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.5-7.

<sup>2</sup>  
Salisbury, having been influenced by pressure from Morel and Jones, signed this agreement with France in June, 1898. F.S. Cocks, op.cit., p.37-38.

<sup>3</sup>  
The Times, November 18, 1895, p.6.

<sup>4</sup>  
Sidney L. Hinde, The Fall of the Congo Arabs, (London, 1897) 308pp.

<sup>5</sup>  
The Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Vol.39, 1151 (17 April, 1896).

thing was amiss. A new colony, it was argued, should be expected to import more than she exported, yet figures revealed that Congo State imports between 1899 and 1902 stood at £ 3,529,317 compared to exports worth £ 7,360,130 of which £ 6,146,973 were in rubber alone. By comparison, figures for Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, Senegal, Dahomey, Togoland, and the Cameroun all revealed greater imports than exports during this period.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Morel discovered that large amounts of rubber and ivory carried by Elder, Dempster ships were not included in the Congo figures. Over a four year period, from 1897 to 1900, Morel noticed that while published returns accounted for forty million francs worth of rubber, over fifty-one million francs worth was actually dumped on the Antwerp market.<sup>2</sup> No wonder shares nominally valued at £ 20 each were changing hands at from £ 800-to £ 1000 per share, with dividends bringing in three hundred to eight hundred per cent. on investments!<sup>3</sup>

Morel brought these facts to the attention of Alfred Jones who promised to bring the matter to Leopold's attention. When he returned from Belgium with but a vague promise on Leopold's part to make changes in time, Morel lost patience. He went to J.L. Hammond at The Speaker

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<sup>1</sup> Morel gives an extensive economic comparison in King Leopold's Rule... , pp.49-56.

<sup>2</sup> E.D. Morel, Affairs of West Africa, p.347; E.D. Morel, "The Belgian Curse..." pp.373-75.

<sup>3</sup> E.D. Morel, Affairs of... , pp.331-33.



who published his article, "The Congo Scandal" anonymously.<sup>1</sup>

By now, Morel had no choice but to resign from Elder, Dempster and Company, his position having become impossible since Alfred Jones was Leopold's Consul in Liverpool as well as being the owner of a lucrative shipping concession from the Congo State. Not prepared to lose his Congo business, Jones unsuccessfully attempted to deter his erstwhile protégé from joining the cause of Congo reform by offering him a position abroad at a substantial increase in salary.<sup>2</sup>

Morel could not be discouraged. Earlier in 1901, he had obtained a part-time post on the weekly paper, West Africa. It was here that he met John Holt, who was to lend him moral and material support throughout his struggle with Leopold.

Holt's firm, John Holt and Company, had been engaged in a lucrative trade in the Ogowe Valley in the French Congo for several years when it suddenly found itself excluded from the area as a result of the adoption of Leopold's concessionaire system in the French Congo. Holt had been aware of the validity of Morel's claims earlier but had been unwilling to speak up in the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce --- Alfred Jones was a man of great influence in that body. Now, Holt had a pecuniary interest in opposing Leopold and he took the scrappy young journalist, Morel, under his wing. He raised the matter of the violation of the Berlin Act in the Conventional Basin of the Congo with the Liverpool

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<sup>1</sup>  
R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.10-11.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, p.13.

Chamber of Commerce and that body sent a protest note to the Foreign Office on 30 September, 1901.<sup>1</sup> Soon afterwards, Morel was made head of the West African section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, thus gaining a respectable sponsor for his views.<sup>2</sup>

Morel's prestige was growing. By 1901 he was a welcome contributor to Alice Stopford Green's circle,<sup>3</sup> where he rubbed shoulders with such influential students of African affairs as Sir Harry Johnston, Sidney Buxton, Herbert Samuel, John Morley, and Sir William MacGregor, Governor of Lagos from 1899 to 1904.<sup>4</sup>

Morel had made his public debut as a speaker in an address to the Women's National Liberal Association in London, 11 June, 1901; in May, 1902 he addressed the A.P.S. meeting at the Mansion House. By April of 1903 he obtained a pulpit of his own when the West African Mail was published for the first time.<sup>5</sup> Officially the organ of the British

<sup>1</sup> F.S. Cocks, op.cit., pp.80-81.

<sup>2</sup> Not that Morel was ever a sycophant. His influence could be seen almost immediately. In January, 1903, the Liverpool Chamber passed a resolution on his initiative to be submitted to the Associated Chambers of Great Britain meeting in London which called for the British Government to summon another Conference of the Signatory Powers. E.D. Morel, The British Case..., p.207.

<sup>3</sup> Widow of historian John Richard Green, Alice Stopford Green had been instrumental in founding the African Society in honour of the late Mary Kingsley and served as a vice-president of that body. Later she was to become strongly anti-imperialist, and then strongly anti-British on nearly every question, including Ireland. Dictionary of National Biography, (London, 1937).

<sup>4</sup> R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.24.

<sup>5</sup> The bulk of the capital came from Morel, Holt and Alfred Jones, who still hoped to divert Morel's zeal away from the Congo. See F.S. Cocks, op.cit., p.31.

Cotton Growing Association and of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, the West African Mail proved to be a great asset to Morel who served as the paper's editor until 1915.

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# V

By 1903, E.D. Morel was hardly ambivalent towards the Congo State. Why was he convinced now as he had not been in 1897? Certainly, the financial figures he uncovered while connected with Elder, Dempster were an important factor. But equally important were his growing convictions as to a proper programme of development for African economies.

In its maturity, Morel's philosophy for Africa --- Morelism, as Sir Harry Johnston labelled it --- consisted of three main strands: free trade, free land tenure, and free labour. It was against this litmus that Morel was to evaluate a colonial system. Since Leopold's system violated all three elements in Morel's theory completely and utterly, it was upon the Congo State that Morel was to concentrate all his venom.<sup>1</sup>

## 1

It is no exaggeration to so describe Morel's attitude towards Leopold. Indeed, so bitterly did he despise the Belgian King and his system that he constantly lapsed into schoolboy rhetoric, perhaps thus weakening the reasoned arguments he so painstakingly assembled. For example, in his massive King Leopold's Rule in Africa, he concluded his work in this fashion: "A piratical expedition on a scale incredibly colossal. The perfection of its hypocrisy; the depth of its low cunning; its pitiable intrigues; its moral hideousness; the vastness and madness of its crimes... A perpetual nightmare reeking with vapours of vile ambitions --- cynical, fantastic, appalling..." p.371.

Morel's faith in free trade, of course, is quite understandable. His years in Liverpool, and the influence of West African traders like Holt and Jones upon the impressionable young man no doubt account for his Manchester orthodoxy.

A second source of influence for Morel was Mary Kingsley, the leading West African authority of her day. A brilliant young Englishwoman, she had travelled extensively in West Africa and held very strong opinions about the proper course Great Britain should follow in her dealings with the Negroes of West Africa.

In her books<sup>1</sup> and in the press she argued that the African, possessing an intellect different in kind from that of the European could neither be judged according to European standards nor be forced to conform to a European model. African institutions, far from being replaced, should be studied and preserved by Europeans for they possessed intrinsic value. After her premature death in South Africa in 1899, her reputation grew; the African Society was founded in her memory and the doctrine of Kingsleyism became revered by friends of West Africa.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Travels in West Africa (London, Macmillan and Co., 1897).  
West African Studies (London, Macmillan and Co., 1899).

<sup>2</sup> Recent evidence unearthed from the papers of John Holt by J.E. Flint seems to destroy the notion that Mary Kingsley was disinterested in her enthusiasm for the African. Flint argues convincingly that she was in fact essentially a reactionary who wanted a return in West Africa to the halcyon days before 1880 when the only European on the West African scene was the trader. Both Crown Colony government and missionary she criticized heavily for interfering with the African's way of life. Only the trader was innocent of this crime so she aligned herself with the British Chambers of Commerce and organized their campaign for a free hand in West Africa. (See J.E. Flint, "Mary Kingsley, A Reassessment" in the Journal of African History IV, no.1, 1963, pp.95-104.)

From Mary Kingsley Morel acquired his faith in the essential humanity of the African. He read her books avidly and they shared a mutual friend in John Holt.<sup>1</sup> Her hand can be seen most clearly, perhaps, in his first work, Affairs of West Africa, when he suggests that British traders be given a greater role in the governing of the Colonies through some sort of advisory board in view of the wide experience that these merchants have in West African matters.<sup>2</sup>

Morel's intimate knowledge of the Congo State, however, did cause him to have second thoughts about the degree to which traders could be given a free hand to govern. He came to feel that a degree of supervision over the native was necessary. The native needed paternalistic guidance but not of the Congo State variety!

"In helping him to develop his property on scientific lines; in granting him internal peace; in proving to him that he is regarded not as a brute, but as a partner in a great undertaking from which Europe and Africa will derive lasting benefit --- Europe will be adopting the only just, right, and practical policy."<sup>3</sup>

Morel was never totally the humanitarian that Fox Bourne, for instance, was. Though it left him vulnerable to ad hominem attacks from Leopold's clique Morel could not divorce commerce from his compassion for the African, for he saw a unity in the two concepts. He never considered them contradictory. He could even agree with Fox

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In the Forward to Affairs of West Africa there is an obituary for Mary Kingsley: "The truest, kindest, staunchest friend that ever breathed --- such was Mary Kingsley." (xv).

2

E.D. Morel, Affairs of West Africa, p.26-27.

3

E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule... p.101.

Bourne that the Berlin Act was primarily humanitarian in spirit:

"Now although international jealousies contributed very largely to the Berlin Conference of 1885, it is unquestionable that the spirit displayed at that Conference and the policy it laid down were alike inspired by humanitarian motives --- practical humanitarian motives."<sup>1</sup>

Why? For Morel, Free Trade --- and this was held to be synonymous with legitimate commerce --- was as much a panacea for the world's problems as it had been for Cobden or Bright.

"Commerce is the greatest civilizing agent. The steps upward in the ethical development of the human race have been synonymous with the spread of commercial relations, and the creation of the means and measures whereby their promotion has been successively extended."<sup>2</sup>

Even where the African is concerned, the best proof of the latter's essential humanity is the African's commercial nature:

- "(1) The native of Africa is not a brute, but a man, more or less intelligent according to environment, tribal peculiarities, and influence from within and without --- but still, and always, a man.
- (2) The native of Africa possesses commercial instinct...
- (3) The native of Africa is passionately attached to his rights in land."<sup>3</sup>

Not every one could effect a marriage between pragmatism and humanitarianism the way Morel could. Fox Bourne, the old reformer,

<sup>1</sup>  
E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., p.3. Italics are his.

<sup>2</sup>  
E.D. Morel, Affairs of West Africa, p.21.

<sup>3</sup>  
E.D. Morel, The British Case..., p.184.

mistrusted Morel, regarding him as a young upstart who threatened to steal his thunder, and their relationship was never entirely harmonious. Morel, for his part, felt that Fox Bourne did not fully appreciate the problem. It was not a question of atrocity, no matter how macabre, but of a system that invited these results. Moreover, Morel felt that Fox Bourne was too well known as a 'do-gooder' to achieve any concrete successes against as wily a foe as Leopold.<sup>1</sup>

In these vital respects the youthful journalist was better suited to the task of maintaining harmony within the ranks of Congo reform than was the elderly humanitarian. So long as the A.P.S. dominated the movement against Leopold Congo reform would be suspect in the eyes of the worldly. And the worldly were to be as vital to Morel's cause as were the disinterested subscribers.

Men of commerce in Manchester, Liverpool and Glasgow had long been interested in the commercial prospects of Africa, but any suggestion that co-operation among these rivals --- even in respect to as high-minded a subject as reform in the Congo --- could be achieved by a young man wearing the colours of Liverpool trade would have been ludicrous in 1903. Yet achieve this E.D. Morel did, though not without some difficulty.<sup>2</sup>

Morel was also able to work effectively as a team with Sir Charles Dilke though he knew full well that he was every bit as useful to

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<sup>1</sup>  
R. Wuliger, *op.cit.*, p.23.

<sup>2</sup>  
Infra, pp.96-97 for internal rivalry and clashes of personality within the C.R.A. membership.

Dilke as the latter was to him. Dilke, who at one time or another had championed the cause of the native in South Africa, the Amazon Valley, India and the Congo, was attracted to Morel after the appearance of the latter's articles in The Speaker in 1900 and a long association between the two men began.<sup>1</sup>

Barred from Cabinet Office ever since the scandal in 1885, Dilke was in constant need of detailed information on foreign affairs. In return for Morel's information on Congo matters Dilke eloquently asserted the Congo Reform Association's position in the House --- not that the cause was at all painful to him in view of his earlier services to Fox Bourne.<sup>2</sup>

Morel himself jumped to the attack in 1902 with the publication of Affairs of West Africa, in which he concentrated his main fire upon the Congo State. In a style that was clear if not profound, he exposed the concessionaire system's main elements: alienation of land ownership; monopoly of products; tribute in rubber, ivory and coffee; a regular army of fifteen thousand natives, including armed cannibals; a State whose financial existence was based upon profits derived from forced labour and illegal trusts.

The attack was acute, and remarkable for a man of twenty-nine who had never set foot on African soil and who had but recently entered the campaign against Leopold. Morel did reveal certain weaknesses,

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1

S. Gwynn and G.M. Tuckwell, The Life of the Right Honourable Sir Charles Dilke, ii, (New York, 1917), pp.368-71.

2

Supra, p.39.



notably a tendency to over-estimate the powers of Leopold's mind in its pursuit of self-interest, perhaps, the better to reveal his selfishness. For example, Leopold is given credit for transplanting the concessionaire system to the French Congo because he feared that independent French companies would construct a railway to Brazzaville, thus breaking the transportation monopoly into the interior enjoyed by the Matadi-Stanley Pool Railway.<sup>1</sup> Morel suspected a Belgian plot since many of the French concessionaire companies were controlled by Belgian shareholders, but couldn't this have been a case of Belgian investors with newly gained capital from their Congo investments seeking more of the same on the north bank of the Congo River?

Affairs of West Africa was favourably received by the British press. The Contemporary Review found it "so well written withal, and so thoroughly interesting in itself, that it should appeal to a wider circle of the general public".<sup>2</sup> The Atheneum described Morel as one "who has written much and well on West African matters..."<sup>3</sup> Only the Glasgow Herald questioned Morel's treatment of British West Africa,

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E.D. Morel, Affairs..., p.287. It was characteristic of Morel that he should seek to explain the adoption by France of the concessionaire system in the French Congo by making Leopold the villain of the piece. Elsewhere, in The British Case in the French Congo, p.68 he continued to soft-peddle his criticism of French policy. Perhaps he already realized the necessity of gaining all the European support he could muster against the source of iniquity and avoided alienating French opinion in pursuit of the greater foe.

2

The Contemporary Review, Vol.83: March, 1903, p.448.

3

The Atheneum, December 13, 1902, p.793-94.

seeing Morel as a spokesman of the Liverpool school "which combines faith in Miss Kingsley with an eye to the main chance, that is, Liverpool trade and rooted suspicions of all governmental ways and proceedings".<sup>1</sup> On the Congo question, however, where the Glasgow-Liverpool commercial rivalry was less marked, the same paper could be more generous: "We know of no author who displays a more intimate knowledge of the European side of the Congo scandal".<sup>2</sup>

Interested readers in Belgium took notice of Morel and his writings at this time as well. By 1903 Morel was recognized by Leopold as a formidable foe who would have to be discredited. The most common attack upon Morel was that he was commercially involved in West Africa and coveted an opportunity to 'get in on' the Congo lode.<sup>3</sup> Or, --- another side of the same coin --- Morel was a spokesman of Liverpool

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<sup>1</sup>  
Glasgow Herald, 27 December, 1902, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.25.

<sup>2</sup>  
From the same review article, cited in E.D. Morel, "The Congo Slave State", (Liverpool, 1903), p.ii.

<sup>3</sup>  
While working for Alfred Jones, Morel had, upon his employer's advice, dabbled in A.B.I.R. shares, but he relinquished his holdings when he left Elder, Dempster and Company in 1901. See R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.13.

After he had left his job, with its steady salary, Morel was in no position financially to speculate in West Africa even if he wished to do so. Refusing to accept a salary for all the time and effort he devoted to the C.R.A. it was all he could do to keep the 'wolf from the door'. *Infra*, p.105 and f. and p.168f.

To meet the Congo State charges publicly, Morel was forced to issue three public disclaimers. See E.D. Morel, Affairs of West Africa, p.vii; The Daily Chronicle, 20 July, 1903; E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., p.xi.

interests jealous of Belgian successes.<sup>1</sup>

Leopold's attacks upon Morel were proof positive that the latter's criticisms were beginning to 'hit home'. Leopold could never accept any motivation for reform other than jealousy and envy of his wealthy preserve. Since British voices of complaint against the Congo State were loudest it was in this direction that most of his invective was directed. Either the British coveted the Katanga, or they wanted back the Lado Enclave. English missionaries complained of atrocity to hide the fact that Roman Catholic orders were realizing greater success.<sup>2</sup>

There was shrewdness in Leopold even here. So long as voices of complaint came solely from Great Britain they could be dismissed. European politics were such that Germany, for one, and France, for another, could accept a thesis which argued that Great Britain was out to obtain the lion's share of Africa. Both Leopold and his British opponents realized that his Congo State was in no jeopardy so long as Britain could find no external support, moral or otherwise, for Congo reform.

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Attempts to sully Morel's reputation as a noble crusader linger on, it seems, for a very recent account would have Morel as a professional agitator who found the Congo cause "a profitable means of a livelihood". (George Martelli, Leopold to Lumumba, (London, 1962), p.167.) Such insinuations are hardly worth disproving, but see *Infra*, pp.105 and f. and 168f. for Morel's rejection of personal rewards and salary for his C.R.A. services.

2

A.S. Rappoport, *op.cit.*, p.224.

## VI

By 1903, however, Great Britain was not the sole scene of protest against the excesses of the Congo State. In France, support for the British reformers came from an unexpected source when Morel's Affairs of West Africa was translated into French by Alfred Duchêne, Head of the African Department in the French Colonial Office. The translation appeared in the Department's Officiel Journal and later, in 1904, was made available to the French public,<sup>1</sup> all of this despite the criticisms Morel had levelled against the French Congo.

In fact, though the concessionaire system had been adopted by the Méline Cabinet upon the advice of Guillaun, then Colonial Minister, in 1899,<sup>2</sup> opposition from French traders and colonial officials had been so strong that the system was never introduced into any other of France's African possessions. In French West Africa, the Governor-General, M. Ballay, threatened to resign rather than administer such a system and La Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale voiced its own protests.<sup>3</sup> In France, the explorers Chevalier and de Brazza opposed the policy, in concert with certain elements in the French press, Jean Hess of the Magasin Colonial and La Petite République,

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<sup>1</sup>  
F.S. Cocks, op.cit., p.17.

<sup>2</sup>  
The system was officially launched by the Concessionaire decree of 1899. See E.D. Morel, The British Case..., p.59-60 for text.

<sup>3</sup>  
F.S. Cocks, op.cit., p.84.

and Serge Basset in La Revue being the most vehement.<sup>1</sup>

Most noteworthy of all was the remarkable decision of the Compagnie France-Congolaise to surrender their concession. In a letter to the French Colonial Minister, M. Fondère, the company's Managing Director declared that

"the right to sell his products to whomsoever he may please cannot be denied to the native because he has always possessed it."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the French Government and the official colonial press continued to support the system, and implicitly, did not look with disfavour upon Leopold and his State.

German protests against the Congo State bore a close resemblance to their opposite numbers in Great Britain. Commercial interests who were adversely affected by the monopoly system --- especially the Hamburg and Bremen Chambers of Commerce --- made representations to the German Foreign Office in November, 1901, suggesting another Conference of the Powers,<sup>3</sup> while the Berlin Charlottenburg section of the German Colonial Society, representing humanitarian sympathies, sponsored a public meeting on 20 March, 1902 in protest against Congo State policies. The highlight of the evening was a speech delivered by Ernest Vohsen, German Consul at Boma, condemning Leopold's regime and intimating that a revision of the Berlin Act to enable the Powers

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<sup>1</sup>  
E.D. Morel, Affairs... , p.309-10; E.D. Morel, The British Case... , p.212.

<sup>2</sup>  
As quoted in E.D. Morel, The British Case... , p.214.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid, p.208.

to take coercive measures against Leopold was in the offing.<sup>1</sup>

Though every shade of the German Press opposed Leopold official German policy was non-committal. Suspicious of both French and British aspirations for the Congo, Germany preferred to see the status quo maintained.

In the United States in 1903, there was as yet no organized opposition to Leopold, though accounts of atrocity emanating from American missionaries were beginning to reach their parent organizations at home. Morel made an initial effort to widen the base of Congo Reform by securing American publication for his latest pamphlet, The Congo Slave State, a fierce denunciation of Leopold and his system.<sup>2</sup> Leopold, not to be outdone, countered by granting an interview to the Paris editor of the New York Herald, by sending a confrere on a lecture tour of the United States, and by having D.C. Boulger write, in reply to Morel, The Congo State is not a Slave State.<sup>3</sup>

If the prospects of Congo reform outside Great Britain were less than promising in 1903, British reformers could take heart at the latest turn of events at home. On 20 May, 1903 Dilke and Samuel brought before

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, p.209-10.

<sup>2</sup>  
E.D. Morel, The Congo Slave State. The sub-title reveals Morel's international intentions:

"A Protest Against the New African Slavery; and an Appeal to the Public of Great Britain, of the United States, and of the Continent of Europe."

<sup>3</sup>  
D.C. Boulger, The Congo State is not a Slave State, (London, 1903). For Leopold's counter-measures, see F.S. Cocks, op.cit., p.18.

the House of Commons the Whitehall Resolution which met with a unanimity which crossed party lines and which elicited from Balfour a promise to memorialize, in the near future, the Signatory Powers with a view to the summoning of another Conference in order to re-examine conditions in the Congo State.<sup>1</sup> Reporting the debate, the Times observed that there did, indeed, seem reason to believe that both free trade and the natives were suffering in Leopold's State in spite of the scanty evidence available from the Congo.<sup>2</sup>

Undoubtedly aware of the need for official investigation of missionary reports of abuses in the Congo, Lansdowne, on 26 May, 1903, wired His Majesty's Consul at Boma, Roger Casement --- a man of wide African experience ---, with instructions to undertake an inspection tour of the Upper Congo.<sup>3</sup> That speed was considered imperative by Lansdowne is evidenced by both the method of communication employed and by Casement's notation in his diary upon receiving the Lansdowne wire.<sup>4</sup> Somewhat alarmed by these first signs of official concern on the part of a Berlin Act Signatory Leopold embarked upon a good-will

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<sup>1</sup>  
Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Series, Vol.CXXII, 20 May, 1903, col.1330-32.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Times, 21 May, 1903, p.9.

<sup>3</sup>  
Galen Broeker, "Roger Casement: Background to Treason", in Journal of Modern History, Vol.29, Sept. 1957, p.238.

<sup>4</sup>  
P. Singleton-Gates and M.Girodias, editors, R. Casement, The Black Diaries (Paris, 1959), entry of 4 June, 1903, p.135. The normal method of communication between the Foreign Office and its Congo Consulates was by sea. Parliamentary Papers, 1896-1913.

tour of European capitals in the summer of 1903, and took the further precaution of defending his Congo policies in the Bulletin Officiel of June, 1903.<sup>1</sup>

In fact, Leopold was not free from opposition in Belgium itself. Not all of the Belgian Press was acquiescent or partisan. As early as 1896, La Reforme had recognized the consequences of the monopoly system:

"Si l'État persiste dans son système actuel, il pourrait bien voir les gouvernements mêmes qui ont été ses complices ou ses dupes, forcé par l'opinion publique de l'Europe à se réunir en une Conférence qui ferait, elle, l'enquête sérieuse que Belges et Congolais n'auraient pas voulu faire, même pour laver leur honneur."<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, the political left in Belgium had never endorsed Leopold's venture. Georges Lorand of the Radical wing of the Liberal Party and Emile Vandervelde, the internationally prominent Socialist leader, took their cue from Dilke and Samuel and instituted an intense three day debate in the Belgian Chamber 1-3 July, 1903. While Vandervelde argued in vain that Belgium had incurred small benefit from Leopold's African lode since the Congo State exported much and imported little, and that the Belgian Government, as a party to the Berlin Act, should impress upon the Congo State the need for an impartial inquiry into that State's Administration, de Smet de Naeyer's Belgian Government remained impervious. Foreign Minister de Favreau invoked an ambivalent argument, one that was particularly galling to

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<sup>1</sup>  
R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.43-44.

<sup>2</sup>  
La Reforme, 14 September, 1896, cited in E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., p.90.



Congo reformers. Belgian initiative for an inquiry into Congo Administration was out of the question, for this would constitute interference in another State's internal affairs. On the other hand, there was no reason for such probes because the Congo State was doing an admirable job, encouraging both commerce and native well-being. Though Lorand wryly observed that there was an obvious contradiction in de Favreau's concerted efforts to defend in detail the domestic affairs of a supposedly sovereign state, yet in the same breath argue that international law precluded external interference, a majority of the Chamber seemed satisfied with the Foreign Minister's strange logic. Indeed, Lorand and Vandervelde were accused of lacking in patriotism for not supporting a 'national venture'!<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
Annales Parlementaires, Séance de premier juillet, 1903; the text of this three day debate is reproduced in translation by E.D. Morel in King Leopold's Rule..., pp.299-338.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **THE GROWTH OF CONGO REFORM IN GREAT BRITAIN**

**1903 - 1906**

## I

While Roger Casement was still conducting his inquiry in the Upper Congo, Lord Lansdowne, in keeping with his Government's promise to Parliament of 20 May 1903, sent a Circular Note to the Signatory Powers of the Berlin Act on 8 August 1903, requesting another International Conference to determine whether or not the Berlin Act's pledges towards natives' rights and towards free trade had been violated by the Congo State.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, Lansdowne welcomed any suggestions in reference to the question, including the possibility of arbitration through The Hague Tribunal. Very careful to avoid positive statements, Lansdowne, nevertheless, intimated that there must have been a grain of truth in the tales of coercion and atrocity transmitted to the British Government by humanitarian societies, Chambers of Commerce, the Press, and the Foreign Office's own Consular Reports.

To ask for International co-operation against a friendly State when the request admitted of having no conclusive evidence was to invite indifference or even scorn. The Congo State reply, delivered by Foreign Minister de Cuvelier on 17 September 1903,<sup>2</sup> took full

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<sup>1</sup>  
Accounts and Papers, Africa No. 14 (1903), Vol. LXII, Cd. 1809, pp.517-21.

<sup>2</sup>  
Accounts and Papers, Africa No. 1 (1904), Vol. LXII, Cd. 1933, pp.360-67.

advantage of the British Foreign Office's lapse. Where was British evidence? Why the sudden British concern? Could it be due to British covetousness?

"Il est à remarquer, en effet, que cette campagne date du jour où la prospérité de l'Etat s'affirma."<sup>1</sup>

Finally, there was audacity:

"Après un examen attentif de la note Anglaise, le Gouvernement de l'Etat du Congo reste convaincu qu'en raison du vague et du manque complète de preuves, ce dont elle fait implicitement l'aveu, il n'est pas une juridiction au monde, en en supposant une qui ait compétence pour être saisie, qui puisse, bien loin de prononcer une sorte de condamnation, prendre une autre décision que celle de ne pas donner suite à de simples suppositions."<sup>2</sup>

The Times, now mildly sympathetic to Congo Reform for the first time, was indignant, and warned prophetically that

"... until public opinion has been satisfied, King Leopold may rest assured that he will not hear the last of the misgovernment of the Free State."<sup>3</sup>

There could be no question of a British reply to the arrogant Congo rebuttal until Casement presented an account of his investigations. Arriving back in London 1 December 1903, Casement completed his report in ten days, submitting it to the Foreign Office on 12 December.<sup>4</sup> Containing thirty-nine pages of text and twenty-two of enclosures, the Casement Report more than confirmed earlier

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, p.361.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.367.

<sup>3</sup> The Times, 12 October 1903, p.7.

<sup>4</sup> The Casement Report was tabled before Parliament as part of Africa No. 1 (1904), Vol. LXII, Cd. 1933. Hereafter, it will be referred to as "The Casement Report".

missionary accounts of atrocity and misgovernment.

In many respects, Casement was eminently qualified for the task of such an investigation as he had conducted. He had first visited the Congo as an assistant purser on one of the Elder-Dempster Line's ships in 1884 when he was twenty years old. From 1886 to 1889 he did exploration work for the Congo State, thus becoming familiar with the natives and terrain of the region during those initial years of European impact upon Central Africa.<sup>1</sup> Entering the Consular Service in 1892, he served successively in Lagos, Lorenzo Marques, St. Paul de Louanda, and Kinchassa until 1900. In May, 1902, he became His Majesty's Consul at Boma, and returned there in February, 1903, after three months' leave in England.<sup>2</sup>

Casement, then, could judge the Upper Congo during the two-and-one-half months he spent touring in the Equateur District against an African background of almost twenty years, over a quarter of which had been spent in the Congo State itself.

His Report was a model of understatement and restraint. There were a few positive contributions of the State which he recognized, especially the improvement in communications rendered by the steamers and railways, and the "admirably built and admirably kept" State

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P. Singleton-Gates & M. Girodias, op.cit., p.73.  
Casement was a member of the Sanford exploring expedition to the Upper Congo; afterwards, he commanded the Congo Railway Company's advance surveying expedition for several months.

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René MacColl, Roger Casement --- A New Judgment, (London, 1956) pp.17-37, gives an account of Casement's activities in the Consular Service during this period.

Stations in the interior.<sup>1</sup>

Far more impressive were the negative features of Congo State rule. Though he included accounts of atrocity, mutilation and cannibalism, to Casement these were products of an evil cause --- the State's commercial involvement. Casement observed that State Officials were rewarded for fulfilling quotas in their districts and the collection of rubber became the measure of their worth in the eyes of their superiors. Ultimately, then, the State was responsible for mis-rule in the Congo. Citing a circular of Governor-General Wahis addressed to senior State Officials and exhorting them to improve the quality control of rubber harvesting, Casement contrasted the spirit of these instructions with the platitudes contained in those orders dealing with the treatment of natives.<sup>2</sup> Casement concluded that a "most exhaustive inquiry" into the affairs of the Congo State be made.

Now, belatedly, Lansdowne had his evidence. Should he publish the Casement Report or submit it to an International Commission expressly appointed to investigate on the spot, the British Consul's charges, as

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<sup>1</sup>  
"The Casement Report", p.379.

<sup>2</sup>  
It was the second of the directive's two paragraphs that was significant:

"Il (the native) essaiera de diminuer son travail en prenant du latex de mauvaise qualite, quand il obtient celui-ci facilement, ou en ajoutant au produit du matieres etrangeres.

Mon attention sera d'une facon constante, fixee sur les prescriptions que je donne ici."

(Circular of Governor-General Wahis to District Commissioners and Zonal Chiefs, dated Boma, 29 March 1901), cited, "The Casement Report", p.440.

Lord Percy suggested?<sup>1</sup> Fearing that the House of Commons would sharply protest against such a step, Lansdowne elected to publish the Report, but with the names and locations omitted lest the Congolese officials take revenge against the native witnesses.<sup>2</sup>

On 12 February 1904, Lansdowne distributed copies of the Casement and Cromer Reports to the various British Embassies with instructions to utilize these Reports as a means of encouraging response from the Powers to the 8 August Circular Note.<sup>3</sup> Four days later, the Congo Government issued its first reply since Casement's return in the form of an official press communique. Promising more extensive reply in the near future, the Congo Government criticized Casement for accepting too readily the statements of "interested natives", and of approaching

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William Roger Louis, "Roger Casement and the Congo", in The Journal of African History, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1964, pp.109-10.

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A second consideration in favour of publication of the Report was the news leak of its content. On 7 December 1903, the British Press carried reports to the effect that Casement's findings amplified those of the irate missionaries. See, for instance, The Times, 7 December 1903, p.10.

In order to supplement the young Consul's findings, Lansdowne appended to the Casement Report a short note from Lord Cromer relating to his visit to Kiro and the Lado Enclave in 1902. Cromer contrasted the natives' attitudes towards British and Belgian administrators. Whereas British officers could wander at will,

"The Belgians are disliked. The people fly from them and it is no wonder they should do so, for I am informed that the soldiers are allowed full liberty to plunder, and that payments are rarely made for supplies."

Africa No. 1 (1904), Vol. LXII, Cd. 1933, p.360.

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Africa No. 1 (1904), Vol. LXII, Cd. 1933, p.442.

the subject with "far from a friendly spirit."<sup>1</sup>

On 13 March 1904, the British Ambassador in Brussels, Sir Constantine Phipps, was presented with a "preliminary reply" to Casement's Report.<sup>2</sup> Now it was argued that Casement had become friendly with Protestant missionaries and was identified with them in the natives' eyes as "le redresseur des griefs." Moreover, the Congo note argued, Casement relied exclusively upon native interpreters, and natives were known to be incorrigible liars. Using the case of the boy Epondo, whose hand was severed at the wrist, the Congo State maintained that Epondo's latest version was that not a native sentry but a wild boar had been responsible for his injury. Ex post facto, all of Casement's evidence was held to be untrustworthy. Finally, the State asserted that Casement had no right as a Consul, to question natives on matters of internal policy, but since he had gone to such great lengths, would the British Government forward the complete text, including names and places, as well as earlier Reports, since the Congo State was considering an inquiry into the charges?

Replying on 19 April 1904, the British Government expressed satisfaction that the Congo State planned an inquiry and observed that Great Britain's motives, which were purely disinterested, were not so offensively imputed as in the note of 17 September 1903. The full text of the Casement Report would be forwarded as soon as the Congo State

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The Times, 16 February 1904.

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Accounts & Papers, Africa No. 7, (1904) Vol. LXII, Cd. 2097, pp.447-86.



gave specific guarantees to protect the witnesses from vengeance on the part of implicated officials. Lansdowne's excuse for not forwarding earlier reports was less valid. The earlier accounts were described as being founded on hearsay and were, in some cases, outdated in any event; thus,

"... it would be unjust to bring forward statements regarding a condition of affairs which may have entirely passed away."<sup>1</sup>

In his next despatch to the Congo State, on 6 June 1904,<sup>2</sup> Lansdowne abandoned this surprisingly conciliatory tone, strongly urging the Congo State not to appoint exclusively Congolese officials to the proposed Commission of Inquiry and suggesting instead a Commission fully independent of Congo State affiliations. The British Foreign Secretary declared his detailed support for Casement's Report and again refused to submit Casement's full text until adequate protection for witnesses was assured.

The effect of the Casement Report was to stimulate a new and stronger wave of protest in Great Britain, if not elsewhere, against the Congo State. No longer was the Congo reform cause to be the property of small pockets of reformers. The House of Commons reflected this new departure in the Congo question when it held a Congo debate on 9 June 1904.<sup>3</sup> Dilke, Emmott, Sir John Gorst, Samuel, Fitzmaurice and Sir Edward Grey --- the latter in Opposition, but soon to be Foreign

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<sup>1</sup> Africa No. 7 (1904), Vol. LXII, Cd. 2097, pp. 486-7.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp.506-07.

<sup>3</sup> The Parliamentary Debates, Fourth Ser., Vol. 135, 9 June 1904, col. 1236-90.

Secretary in the new Liberal Government in 1905 --- all agreed as to the necessity of action even if they disagreed as to the actual form British action should take.

Earl Percy, speaking for the Balfour Government as its Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, strongly criticized the Congo State as well, but informed the House that only Italy, the United States and Turkey had taken the trouble to respond to Lansdowne's request for another Conference, and all three Powers limited their activity to an "earnest consideration" of the question.

It was not surprising that response to the British initiative had been weak. To begin with, it was difficult not to conclude that Casement's 1903 mission was to find fault with the Congo State, through concoctions if necessary. In the light of the Congo State's rebuttal of the 8 August Circular Note, it was argued, Casement's Report was ex post facto.

Secondly, there was the problem concerning earlier British Consular Reports, which Lansdowne had dismissed as "hearsay". As E.D. Morel was later to charge,<sup>1</sup> the Foreign Office had suppressed earlier Reports dating from 1896 to 1903, concerning the mistreatment of Yoruba and Hausa subjects of Great Britain hired for service in the Congo State. Leopold was aware of this because the British Foreign

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E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, (London, 1909), pp.120-25,

In fact, Casement himself had furnished a long Report in July, 1902, on this theme, as the study of documents in the Public Records Office reveals. (See G. Broeker, "Roger Casement: Background to Treason", in The Journal of Modern History, Vol. 29, Sept., 1957, pp.238).

When Lansdowne labelled earlier accounts as "hearsay", Casement took personal offense.

Office had brought the matter up privately in February of 1903, but, shrewdly realizing that the Foreign Office could not without difficulty explain their earlier public silence to Congo reformers, the Belgian King continued to press for earlier British Reports. The total effect was one of sufficient British "interestedness" in the Congo Question to cause the foreign Powers to shy away from Official British overtures.<sup>1</sup>

A substantial part of the confusion resulting from the publication of the Casement Report was caused by countervailing forces for and against Casement in the Foreign Office. Lansdowne himself thought highly of the Report and told Phipps, his Minister in Brussels:

"The descriptions given in the report of the manner in which the administration is carried out and the methods by which revenue is collected in the districts visited by Mr. Casement constitute a grave indictment, and need no comment beyond the statement that, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, they show that the allegations to which reference is made in the despatch (8 August 1903) were not without foundation, and that there is ample ground for the belief that there are, at any rate, extensive regions in which pledges given under the Berlin Act have not been fulfilled."<sup>2</sup>

To Casement himself, Lansdowne was more direct:

"Proof of the most painfully convincing kind, Mr. Casement."<sup>3</sup>

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It is interesting to note Morel's shift in argument on the question of response to the Lansdowne Note. In 1906, Morel attributed lack of Official foreign response to the low state of British prestige caused by the recently ended Boer War. (See E.D. Morel, Red Rubber, 1st edition, London, 1906, p.195). Three years later he saw foreign reticence as a function of suspected British designs on the Katanga. (E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, 1909, p.122)

<sup>2</sup> Lansdowne to Phipps, 11 February 1904 in Africa No. 1 (1904), Vol. LXII, Cd. 1933, p.441.

<sup>3</sup>

P. Singleton-Gates & M. Girodias, op. cit., p.95.

On the other hand, F.H. Villiers, the African expert in the Foreign Office and later to become British Minister in Brussels, combined a personal dislike of Casement with a cautious view of European considerations behind the Congo Question. He maintained now as he would later, that Anglo-Belgian friction over the Congo could serve to compromise Belgian neutrality in Germany's favour.<sup>1</sup>

More formidable a force against candour on the Congo issue, however, was the influential attitude of Sir Constantine Phipps himself. Officially, he did his best to dampen enthusiasm for Casement's Report. He described the Report as carelessly written and wondered why Casement had never bothered to consult with the Governor-General of the Congo State. Privately, he remarked that Casement must have succumbed to the heat of the tropics.<sup>2</sup> In a private letter to Villiers, Phipps observed:

"I fully agree in your estimate of Casement's ability but I absolutely deny his tact or his judgment."<sup>3</sup>

Only a part of Phipps' disbelief could be attributed to his proximity to the centre of Congo enthusiasm. More important was the wide gulf between Casement and Phipps as personalities. To Phipps, the polished career diplomat much at home in the sophisticated atmosphere of diplomatic circles in Brussels, the realities of an unchecked imperialism in Africa were compromised by an affinity for a

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<sup>1</sup> Notation by F.H. Villiers concerning Casement Report, 27 December 1903, cited, G. Broeker, op.cit., p.238.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.239.

<sup>3</sup> W.R. Louis, op.cit., p.113-14.

Belgian elite with whom he could sympathize and to whom he was attracted by his station. To Casement, a radical Ulsterman who had entered the Foreign Service by the back door of an African Consulate, Phipps appeared as a crony of Leopold and the Press Bureau. He despised Phipps and took no pains to conceal this fact in all his correspondence, official or otherwise.<sup>1</sup>

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## II

During the summer of 1904, Official Correspondence ranged back and forth between Brussels and London over the proposed Commission of Inquiry.<sup>2</sup> Lansdowne, seeking ample guarantees for the protection of native witnesses, refused to turn over the complete text of the Casement Report until 6 October, two days after the Congo State had finally given official assurances.<sup>3</sup> Before turning over the full text Lansdowne had insisted that the Commission be composed in part, at least, of members unconnected with the Congo State, and that a British

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See R. MacColl, *op.cit.*; P. Singleton-Gates & M. Girodias, *op.cit.*; W.R. Louis, *op.cit.*; G. Broeker, *op.cit.*

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Under Lansdowne's prodding, Leopold had decided to convert his original plan for an investigating team of Congo officials into a full-fledged Commission of Inquiry with wider powers, as laid down by his Decree of 23 July 1904. Text of same in Accts. and Papers, Africa No. 1 (1905), Vol. LVI, Cd. 2333, pp.441-51.

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Phipps to Lansdowne, 4 October 1904, *Ibid*, p.464. Lansdowne to Phipps, 6 October 1904, *Ibid*, p.464.

observer be permitted to attend the Commission's sittings.<sup>1</sup>

It was not, however, until 11 December 1904 that Lansdowne received official word from the Commission of Inquiry itself that, since the sittings were to be public, they had no objections to any persons attending.<sup>2</sup> By this time the presence of an official British observer was virtually an academic question. The Commissioners had left Antwerp for the Congo on 15 September and had begun their tour on 31 October. Vice-Consul Mackie, Acting British Consul at Dakar, was not selected as the British observer until 15 December and never reached the Congo interior until February, 1905, having time only to attend the final four Commission hearings.<sup>3</sup>

From the moment the British public was informed of the appointment of a Commission on Inquiry by the Congo State, criticism poured forth. The three Commissioners, Edmund Janssens, a judge in the Belgian Court of Appeals, Baron Nisco, a member of the Congo Supreme Court, and Dr. E. de Schumacher, a Swiss jurist, were regarded by Fox Bourne as being far too easily identifiable with Leopold, Belgium and the Congo. Furthermore, Fox Bourne added, any criticisms voiced by the Commissioners would never be graciously accepted or acted upon by the

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, p.455.

<sup>2</sup>  
Nightingale to Lansdowne, 17 December, 1904, Ibid, p.467.

<sup>3</sup>  
Commission of Enquiry, The Congo, a Report, (New York, 1906), pp.3-6. Lord Percy revealed Mackie's limited participation in the Commission hearings in the House of Commons debate of 3 August 1905. Parl. Deb., Fourth Series, Vol. 151, (3 August 1905), col. 144-51.

Congo State authorities.<sup>1</sup>

E.D. Morel, for his part, did not mince words. The Commission was held to be neither independent nor impartial, its powers solely investigatory, its itinerary prescribed by the State itself.<sup>2</sup>

Morel had no choice but to take a strong line in his letters to the Times. That newspaper's Brussels correspondent had adopted a distinctly pro-Leopoldian line on the Commission of Inquiry, remarking that the latter body offered "every guarantee for the impartial collection of evidence and the special question of cruelties to natives."<sup>3</sup> The paper itself took its cue from the British Government when the Commission of Inquiry correspondence was tabled in Parliament in January, 1905, and the Times leader must have given Morel good reason to hold fears:

"The institution of that inquiry is due to the action of our Government. We raised the question with a full sense of our responsibilities as a Power signatory to the Berlin Act; and, however much the Commissioners appointed by the Congo State may fall short of what we should have desired, it is plainly our best policy to secure it every chance of working effectively."<sup>4</sup>

Despite the fact that the Commission of Inquiry returned to Europe after having spent six months in Africa, their report was not made public until early November, 1905. Rumours as to its content abounded.

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H.R. Fox Bourne to the Times, 20 September 1904, p.9.  
H.R. Fox Bourne to the Times, 27 September 1904, p.10.

2

E.D. Morel to the Times, 20 September 1904, p.9.

3

The Times, 15 September 1904, p.3.

4

The Times, 25 January 1905, p.9.

When the Commissioners docked at Southampton on their return trip to Belgium on 12 March 1905 a Reuters newsman claimed to have been told by one of the Commissioners that they had heard enough substantiated atrocity accounts to make further inquiries unnecessary, while a Belgian reporter claimed to have been told that the Congo was in good shape and only a small part of Casement's exaggerated account had any truth to it.<sup>1</sup> Ten days later, Commissioner Janssens wrote to deny such accounts and to state that no information would be released until the Report was completed.<sup>2</sup>

Why the long delay in the drafting of the Report? In March, 1905, the Commissioners presented a preliminary report to Leopold that made him furious, and the final Report's fundamentally critical attitude, even though it must have been considerably softened, no doubt accounted for the delay.<sup>3</sup>

The Report, moderate though it was, provided a turning point of sorts in the Congo Reform campaign for it was tantamount to an admission of guilt by the Congo State's own creature. Certainly, the

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<sup>1</sup> The Times, 13 March 1905, p.9. The Roman Catholic L'ami de l'Ordre of Belgium had quoted Janssens, before the latter left Boma for Europe, as stating:

"I came here with a feeling of confidence, expecting to find everything in order. I did not think I was about to come in contact with such putridity as I have found. Now we must make a Report. It shall be made. 'Tant pis' if it is published." Cited, in the Official Organ of the C.R.A., December, 1905, p.27.

<sup>2</sup> The Times, 23 March 1905, p.10.

<sup>3</sup> Subsequent accounts reveal the extent of Leopold's wrath. Henri Gregoire, former secretary of the Commission of Inquiry told John Harris at a League of Nations meeting at Geneva in 1923 that Leopold had Janssens boycotted politically and socially, and kept the Belgian Government from decorating the three Commissioners as long as he lived. See R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.105 and f.



reforms advocated were mild: a more liberal interpretation of the land laws; a limitation of the labour tax to forty hours a month; the suppression of the sentinel system; the abolition of the concessionaire companies' right to use force to secure rubber; the enforcement of the Congo State's protective laws by a judicial system freed from administrative control.<sup>1</sup> Equally significant was an admission that cruelties had existed on a wide scale.

Indeed, the Report was accepted in Britain as a condemnation of the Congo System. The Press saw it as a justification for earlier British concern and for continued British interest and surveillance in the future.<sup>2</sup>

Having been informed on the Congo Question before he took office, Sir Edward Grey had also recognized the shortcomings of the Report. Even the anti-reform Sir Constantine Phipps, in his transmission of the Report to the Foreign Office on 7 November 1905, had been forced to concede that the Report contained "the most scathing criticisms of the policy pursued in the Congo State."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Commission of Enquiry, op.cit., pp.165-67.

<sup>2</sup> The Westminster Gazette, the Spectator, and the Manchester Guardian all spoke out loudly against the Congo State on the basis of the Report. Cited in the Official Organ ... , November, 1905, p.32.

The Times of 6 November 1905 devoted a leading article to the Report and found that:

"... it is impossible to doubt that grievous cruelties and abuses have been shown to exist."

Still, in that same edition, the paper's Brussels correspondent tried to rationalize away the Commission's findings:

"It is unfortunately the fact that in every country the early annals of colonisation are more or less stained with acts such as those of which complaint is now made."

<sup>3</sup> Phipps to Lansdowne, 7 November 1905, Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 1. (1906), Vol. LXXIX, Cd. 3002, pp.5-7.

On 9 January 1906, Grey forwarded his views on the Report to Phipps, asking him to "call the special attention of the Congo State" to the fact that the evidence had not been published as promised. While the British Government would have to await the report of Leopold's Committee of Reform, Grey added that the Commission of Inquiry Report surprisingly endorsed the labour tax, especially since the concessionaire companies often possessed administrative powers. Clearly, the State should get out of business and the companies out of government. Otherwise, the System will

"... remain open to the imputation of constituting a form of servitude, differing in essence but little from actual slavery."<sup>1</sup>

Grey's reference to suppressed evidence was a response to repeated inquiries from Morel on this subject. Originally, de Cuvelier had promised Lansdowne that full publicity would be made of the Commission hearings, but now the Report appeared without the evidence upon which the Report was composed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Grey to Phipps, 9 January 1906, Africa No. 1 (1906), Cd. 3002, pp.7-9.

<sup>2</sup>Grey asked His Majesty's Minister in Brussels, now Sir Arthur Hardinge, in despatches dated 27 March and 29 March, to request publication of evidence, without success. Ibid, p.22.

De Cuvelier's grounds for refusal were fatuous: the Commissioner's evidence would only give Mr. Morel more material with which to hurl abuse!! Hardinge to Grey, 11 January 1906, Ibid, pp.9-10.

Morel did not give up his struggle to secure official Congo evidence easily though. Employing the direct method, he had John Harris appeal to M. de Schumacher, one of the original Commissioners. The latter replied that while the evidence had been turned over to the Congo State and he had no power to publish it, he had nothing but praise for the missionaries doing their noble work in the Congo and expressed the hope that reforms would be carried out. --- Letter from de Schumacher to Harris, 29 June 1906, cited in the Times, 1 October 1906, p.12.

Actually, Morel, knowing full well the tactics of those with whom he was dealing, had left nothing to chance. With his many contacts in the Congo, he had taken the precaution of asking all those missionaries who had testified before the Commission of Inquiry to send him copies of their depositions. When the Report appeared in November without the promised evidence, Morel was able to publish a pamphlet entitled "Evidence Laid before the Congo Commission of Inquiry," containing depositions and letters from Bellington, Clark, Grenfell, Scrivener, Gilchrist, Harris, Stannard, Ruskin, Gamman, Lower, Padfield and Weeks.<sup>1</sup>

Morel was not prepared to allow what he considered to be an emaciated and naive Report to stand unchallenged. True, Morel reasoned, the Commissioners were innocent, but of critical standards as well as of bias. It was sheer nonsense to maintain that the Congo State benefitted from security when mutinies were constantly breaking out in Katanga, Mongalla and Upper Welle districts. Fundamentally, Morel added, the reform proposals reflected the Commissioners' ignorance of the main evil --- the System --- and their suggestion that the native be allowed to trade within delimited native villages and plantations contradicted their defence of the use of forced labour. Indeed:

"It reminds one of nothing so much as the approval in PRINCIPLE, of a raging conflagration, while suggesting that a bucket of water might, upon occasion, be used to allay, temporarily, the fierceness of the flames."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E.D. Morel, "Evidence Laid before the Congo Commission of Inquiry", (Liverpool, 1905), pp.96.

Morel sent this evidence, together with new missionary testimony, to Grey in the form of a C.R.A. Memorial on 14 December 1905. See the Official Organ..., January, 1906, pp.1-13.

<sup>2</sup> The Official Organ..., November, 1905, p.16.

No!! If there was any hope for significant improvement in the Congo it still rested with a determined British Public Opinion, prepared to watch carefully to see if any serious reform took place, and, this not being likely, ready to press the British Government to use the power given by treaty to do something constructive for the oppressed Congo native.

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### III

Though the Commissioners had themselves suggested several reforms, to their Report was appended a Decree signed by Leopold on 31 October 1905 which read in part:

"There is constituted a Committee instructed to study the conclusions of the Report of the Commission of Enquiry, to formulate the suggestions which they necessitate and to investigate the practical means for realizing the same."<sup>1</sup>

The decree went on to name fourteen men to this Committee of Reform, headed by its President, M. Van Maldeghem. Of the fourteen, only E. Janssens, a member of the original Commission of Inquiry, and H. Davignon, a member of the Belgian Chamber and later to become Belgian Foreign Secretary, were not compromised by either having defended the Congo System in theory or having applied it in practice.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Commission of Enquiry, op.cit., pp.169-70.

<sup>2</sup> Other Committee of Reform members were: senior Congo Officials C.A. de Cuvelier, H. Droogmans, N. Arnold and C. Liebrechts; lesser Congo Officials G. Five, L. Chenot, E. Nys, A. Gohr and C. Tombeur; Belgian concessionaire company representatives J. de Hemptinne and A. Mols. --- Commission of Enquiry, op.cit., pp.169-70.

From January to June, 1906, Grey continued to press de Cuvelier for word of the Committee's proceedings, but was given no indication of when the recommendations could be expected. Nor would publication of the Committee's proceedings be made, replied de Cuvelier, since the Congo Government planned to give the recommendations immediate enactment once they were received.<sup>1</sup>

The Bulletin Officiel of 9 June 1906 contained the long-awaited Reform Decrees resulting from the Commission of Inquiry and Committee of Reform recommendations.<sup>2</sup> Appended to these decrees was a Royal Letter, dated 3 June 1906, from Leopold to the three Congo State Secretaries, Droogmans, de Cuvelier and Liebrechts. The Letter dealt with the contingency of Belgian annexation of the Congo but it also

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Grey to Hardinge, 26 February, 27 March, 16 April, 3 May 1906; Hardinge to Grey, 26 February, 16 March, 11 May 1906; all in Africa No. 1 (1906), Cd. 3002, pp.10-23.

Morel could not suppress his curiosity as to Grey's policy during this period and, through Questions put in the House of Commons by sympathetic M.P.'s, learned that Grey, though displeased with the attitude of the Congo Government, was prepared to await results from the Committee of Reform before pressing for another International Conference of the Powers. For Grey's replies to Questions put on this theme, see

Parl. Deb., Vol. 152, 21 February, 26 February 1906, col. 342; 774-75; Vol. 154, 27 March 1906, col. 103-04; Vol. 157, 17 May 1906, col. 623-25; Vol. 158, 29 May 1906, col. 276-77.

2

Sir Arthur Hardinge, British Minister in Brussels, forwarded to the Foreign Office a special edition of the Bulletin Officiel containing decrees of the Congo Government, a message from Leopold to the three Secretaries-General and a supplementary declaration containing Leopold's conditions to his 1889 Will involving the question of annexation of the Congo by Belgium.

Accts & Papers, Africa No. 1 (1907), Vol. LVII, Cd. 3450 only contained Leopold's Manifesto, however. The Times of 11 June 1906, p.5, contained a summary of the decrees.

served to reveal Leopold's unrelenting attitude. Opening his letter by addressing his Secretaries Leopold remarked:

" I sanction the measures which you propose. Our duty is to neglect nothing to develop the prosperity of the Congo, to ameliorate the condition of the natives, and to place in excellent condition a country which Belgium, thanks to the initiative which I took in her interest, can, if she chooses, one day possess."

" My rights on the Congo are indivisible; they are the product of my toil and my expenses. You must not cease to put them forward, because it is they, and they alone, which have rendered possible and legitimate my legacy to Belgium."<sup>1</sup>

The Reform Decrees, twenty-four in number, left the basics of the System intact; the labour tax and the concessionaire companies were to remain, as the Commission of Inquiry Report had intimated. Elaborate provisions guaranteed native rights to the lands they occupied, cultivated or exploited in other ways; each village was allotted an area of land three times the size of their village area; natives were prevented from alienating their lands to third parties without Government permission; natives were to be given seeds, plants, and necessary tools for the development of modern agricultural techniques; force was to be forbidden as a means of ensuring rubber collection. But, of course, all these reforms were enforceable at the will of the Governor-General and his officials, and a loophole was provided by giving him discretionary power in the enforcement of each article.<sup>2</sup>

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The Official Organ..., June 1906, pp.1-4 contained the Royal Letter of Leopold's in its entirety. For Leopold's annexation remarks see *Infra*, p.139.

2

Reform decrees summarized in the Times, 11 June 1906, p.5.

Thus, the spirit with which the reforms were received by Leopold's men in the Congo would be the decisive factor, and Leopold had set the climate in which these reforms should be received in his Royal Letter. No one was deceived.

Once again, British Press reaction was immediate. The Times saw the new decrees as illusory. The forced labour system remained intact; the fate of the reforms was left to officials unlikely to enforce them; the concessionaire regions and the Domaine de la Couronne --- the worst areas of abuse --- were to remain intact.<sup>1</sup>

The Manchester Guardian felt that to demonstrate to Leopold "the gaps in his reform proposals will, as experience teaches, prove not very fruitful..."<sup>2</sup>

The Westminster Gazette viewed the decrees with "the completest skepticism" so long as the forced labour system prevailed, while the Daily News referred to Leopold's "matchless impudence" in telling the world just what it behooved him to concede to his Congo subjects.<sup>3</sup>

Two debates, in the Lords on 3 July and in the Commons on 5 July 1906 demonstrated that Parliament was no less deceived by the Reform Decrees.<sup>4</sup> Lord Reay, Lord Fitzmaurice, the Archbishop of Canterbury,

<sup>1</sup>  
The Times, 18 June 1906, p.9.

<sup>2</sup>  
Manchester Guardian, 5 July 1906, p.6.

<sup>3</sup>  
Cited, the Official Organ..., June, 1906, p.8.

<sup>4</sup>  
Parl. Deb., (Lords) Vol. 159, 3 July 1906, col. 1569-89; (Commons) Vol. 160, 5 July, 1906, Col. 258-86; 306-09; 318-24.

the Marquess of Ripon (Lord Privy Seal), Lord Lansdowne, Sir Gilbert Parker, Sir Charles Dilke, Earl Percy, E.N. Bennett, and Sir Edward Grey all spoke with one voice in declaring the reforms frauds and shams. But whereas Parker and Bennett favoured another International Conference or the establishment of British Consular Jurisdiction, Percy and Grey hoped for a Belgian annexation of the Congo as the most feasible solution to the problem.

The difficulty with Consular Jurisdiction, observed Grey, was that it would discourage a Belgian interest in the Congo which was only now beginning to manifest itself:

"Therefore I will wait ... so that Belgium, so far as we are concerned, is encouraged and not embarrassed by anything we may do. But we cannot wait forever ... Before I commit His Majesty's Government to any definite steps, I should like to wait and see what the autumn may bring forth."

As if to substantiate British suspicions of the Reform Decrees, there arrived in the Foreign Office during 1906 Reports from His Majesty's Consuls depicting conditions in the Upper Congo in the wake of the June decrees.<sup>1</sup>

Armed with copies of the Bulletin Officiel containing the Reform Decrees, Vice-Consuls Michell and Armstrong toured the Aruwimi and ABIR territories and found no significant change in conditions there. In fact, observed Michell, a name change often was the sole result of the new reforms. Instead of the old five year labour contracts the State was now conscripting "travailleurs" as civilian labourers on a para-military basis. Instead of the sentries or capitas, abolished

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<sup>1</sup>

Africa No. 1 (1907), Cd. 3450, pp.803-67.



by the June decrees, there was now to be a native official called a "messenger indigène" whose duty it would be to receive tax impositions, and, if less ferocious than his predecessor, he would still be all-powerful in the native districts. As for the European official in the district, the Chef de Poste, the latter, according to Michell, saw scant signs of change in the new Reforms and regarded them with indifference. Everything depended upon the application of the decrees and Michell was very pessimistic about the possibility of any real improvements.<sup>1</sup>

By mid 1906, then, Morel could look forward hopefully to a genuine Congo solution. Hadn't Grey promised action by the autumn if conditions remained unchanged in the Congo? Couldn't it now be accepted that the Congo regime would never reform itself voluntarily in the wake of its palliative reform proposals?

In the Official Organ... Morel expressed his satisfaction:

"There is today in Belgium a Party of Reform, and we cannot criticize Sir Edward Grey --- whom we all trust, whatever our political views may be --- for giving that Party a chance of seeing what it can do; a chance with a time limit, however."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, pp.861-65.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Official Organ..., August, 1906, p.1.  
It was not in Morel's nature, however, to trust entirely to Grey's promise without bolstering the case against the Congo State with further evidence. See Infra, pp.92-96, for an account of Morel's tactics during 1906.

## IV

Through Herbert Ward, an old Congo acquaintance of Casement's, Morel had learned of the Casement mission of inquiry during the summer of 1903,<sup>1</sup> and he met with Casement only nine days after the British Consul's return to England. Both men took to each other immediately<sup>2</sup> and they talked Congo far into the night. From this meeting was to come the Congo Reform Association, one of the most remarkable organizations of the Edwardian era.

Casement, angry at the coolness with which Villiers had greeted his Report, and believing that British Consular Jurisdiction was the best line of approach for Reform, suggested the idea of a Congo Reform Association to Morel as a means of keeping the Congo question continually before the British public.<sup>3</sup> Giving Morel £ 100 towards

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<sup>1</sup> R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.60-61.

<sup>2</sup> The reactions of the two men were interesting, Morel's first impression being perhaps the less accurate of the two. Casement was amazed that Morel could have had the same insight as he without ever having set foot in Africa:

"The man is honest as day." --- in the Black Diaries, entry of 10 December 1903, p.184.

Morel described Casement thus:

"... one of the most noble men I have ever met, the soul of honour, with a perfectly balanced mind, and a large and extensive experience of African questions and African conditions."

Morel to Emmott, 8 January 1904, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.186-7.

<sup>3</sup> Galen Broeker raises an interesting question with regard to the questionable ethics of Casement in suggesting such an association when he was still in His Majesty's Consular Service and having knowledge that his Report was about to be tabled in Parliament. --- G. Broeker, op.cit., p.240.

initial expenses Casement was to remain behind the scenes, canvassing support from the socially prominent and guiding Morel, who was to be Secretary of the new organization, in the political aspects of the campaign.<sup>1</sup>

On 24 March 1904, at a meeting in Philharmonic Hall, Liverpool, the C.R.A. was born. With Casement's help, several 'big names' lent their support to the meeting: the Bishops of Liverpool, Durham, Rochester and St. Asaph, and Lord Aberdeen represented Church of England response; newspapermen W.T. Stead and Fabian Ware were there; Dilke and Morley provided Liberal Party representation, as did the Liberal Peer, Earl Beauchamp, who was installed as the C.R.A.'s President (G. Harold Brebner was Treasurer, and with Morel, completed the C.R.A. Executive).<sup>2</sup>

Initially, Casement played an important recruiting role, attempting to redress the religious imbalance within the C.R.A. by securing the support of the Roman Catholic Peer, Lord Listowel.<sup>3</sup> Once begun, though, the C.R.A. became Morel's responsibility and Casement was happy to sit in the wings. Casement wrote Morel:

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Casement's financial contribution was very substantial when it is realized that his gift amounted to a full one-third of his annual income. W. Louis, op.cit., p.115.

2

Black Diaries, op.cit., p.194. It was noteworthy, though, that no significant Roman Catholic representation was present at this inaugural meeting.

3

Casement sent Morel an interesting letter in this respect, complete with instructions on how to deal with the Irish nobility. See R. MacColl, op.cit., pp.59-60.

"I think it is my duty to hold myself aloof as much as I can."<sup>1</sup>

The manifesto of the C.R.A. was pure Morelism and served from the outset to obscure any lines of distinction between the movement and its leader. In short, the C.R.A. was E.D. Morel:

"The case against the existing methods of the Congo State Administration does not rest merely upon numerous charges of individual acts of cruelty towards natives such as have tarnished, from time to time, the annals of every colonising Power, but upon the System itself whereby the Congo State maintains itself in being, and which involves cruelty and oppression on a vast scale and in endemic form."<sup>2</sup>

In the introduction to his latest work, King Leopold's Rule in Africa, published in 1904 to herald the birth of the C.R.A., Morel tried to be constructive in his criticism of Congo misrule:

"To put the Congo State in the pillory and pelt it is comparatively easy, for elements of con-

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R. Casement to E.D. Morel, 9 March 1904, cited in W. Louis, op.cit., p.117.

Casement's interest in Congo reform, high in 1904 and 1905, wavered after he was no longer personally involved in its activities. He began to adopt a personal attitude to the Congo question and assumed that all criticism of the C.R.A. was intended for him. In fact, G. Broeker argues, in Casement's mind the C.R.A. was as much a vehicle for the restoration of his honour as it was an agency for the betterment of the Congo native.

It is Broeker's thesis that Casement came to view the Congo as a medium through which his enemies in the Foreign Office were launching their vendetta against him. In return, his hatred for the permanent Foreign Office officials was soon transferred to the Balfour Government, from there to all British Governments and from there to Britain itself; thus, he concludes, was Roger Casement's treason born. G. Broeker, op.cit., pp.237-45.

2

March, 1904 Manifesto of the C.R.A., excerpts, cited in E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, p.9.

viction increase every day ... It is not enough to denounce a wrong; it is necessary to show how the wrong originated, and to put forward a practical remedy. In this respect the process of instructing Public Opinion still lacks in completeness, and the recently formed Congo Reform Association has a great and useful task to perform."<sup>1</sup>

Yet, ultimately, as Morel revealed privately, everything turned upon the British public.<sup>2</sup> If, as an end, permanent reform was sought in the Congo the means would often be to describe as graphically as possible the horrible wrong-doing taking place there.

It is still possible, though, to discern a continuing thread of policy in the C.R.A. through its years of activity. The main remedy was a new International Conference. Though Morel never abandoned this line entirely,<sup>3</sup> his speculation as to what would result from such a gathering often varied. There were certain constants: free trade, and continued pressure upon the British Government by every agency of British opinion for an 'open door' in all of Equatorial Africa; disruption of the Congo State and an end to the concessionaire system in the French Congo. The variables were: Belgian annexation; partition

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<sup>1</sup>  
E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., xii.

<sup>2</sup>  
Morel wrote thus to Emmott on 3 February 1904:  
" A glance at the history of the movement against the old slave trade shows that it was only by moving the heart of the British public that victory was finally accomplished, and this is a mere bagatelle compared with the other." Cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.67.

<sup>3</sup>  
See, for instance, E.D. Morel, "The Belgian Curse in Africa", March, 1902, p.377; E.D. Morel, The British Case in the French Congo, 1903, p.186; E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., 1904, pp.89-90; E.D. Morel, letter to the Times, 30 March 1905, p.7; E.D. Morel, Red Rubber, 1906, p.211.

among the Powers; and International Government for the Congo. In any event, Morel urged the establishment of British Consular Jurisdiction as an interim measure until any of the above could be implemented.<sup>1</sup>

It was in late 1905 and 1906, after the Report of the Commission of Inquiry had been published, that the "Belgian Solution" began to grow in popularity. The announcement of the ineffectual Reform Decrees by Leopold in June, 1906, made the possibility of a Belgian takeover greater, but still a long-term question, in Morel's view.<sup>2</sup> In the meantime, the problem was to do something quickly for the suffering Congo subjects. Here, then, was a case for British Consular Jurisdiction.

Throughout the winter of 1906, Morel's correspondence with the Foreign Office centred around the question of British extra-territoriality.<sup>3</sup> It marked the first, but not the last, difference

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One gets the impression, after having digested Morel's writings on the constantly recurring problem of finding a workable Congo solution, that Morel was most partial to partition among the Powers, including Britain. He went on record in 1903 as favouring partition in his The British Case in the French Congo, pp.186-87, but could never realistically hope for a British involvement in the Congo after 1904, mainly because suspicion of British designs was the one great obstacle to international co-operation on the Congo question.

Could Morel have hoped that British Consular Jurisdiction, which he so continually sought, would have led to another instance of reluctant British imperialism as in the classic case of Egypt? There appears to be no written evidence to support what must remain interesting speculation.

2

In late 1905, Morel argued that Belgian annexation was little more than a pleasant dream and that the only Belgians interested in the Congo question were Leopold's supporters. E.D. Morel, "Belgium and the Congo", in Contemporary Review, Vol. 88, September, 1905, pp.363-68.

3

See, for instance, E. Barrington (for Grey) to Morel, 8 February 1906, and E.D. Morel to Grey, 12 February 1906, in the Official Organ..., February, 1906, p.8.

of opinion between Morel and the British Foreign Secretary. Both men realized without its being said that Consular Jurisdiction would not be so much a means of protecting British subjects as of giving Britain far wider powers of investigation and control over such regions as she chose of the Congo State. British Consular Courts, supported by the British Navy if need be, would make it exceedingly difficult for the Leopoldian System of labour tax and monopoly to continue unabated.

In 1905 and 1906, then, Morel's tactics were obvious. He must impress upon the British public --- and Grey --- the need for British extra-territoriality by showing how British missionaries were being harassed by the Congo State in retaliation for their having spoken out against the State's crimes.<sup>1</sup>

Morel's test case was that of the Reverend Edgar Stannard, who was unjustly accused of criminal libel by a certain Colonel Hagstrom, Chief of Police in the A.B.I.R. territory.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> One of the first communications by the C.R.A. to Grey upon the latter's assumption of the Foreign Secretaryship dealt with Congo State stoppages of food supplies to British missions, and pleaded for the establishment of immediate Consular Jurisdiction. --- E.D. Morel to Grey, 18 December 1905, cited in the Official Organ... January, 1906, pp.2-3.

Again, in May, 1906, Morel wrote to inform Grey that British subjects were being prevented from travelling freely in the Congo and that they were threatened by native soldiery.

Morel to Grey, 12 May, 16 May 1906, cited in the Official Organ..., May, 1906, pp.12-13.

<sup>2</sup> Stannard had testified before the Commission of Inquiry in the fall of 1904 to the involvement of Hagstrom and the director of the A.B.I.R. Company in the Bolima massacres. When the Commission departed, the Company began arresting those natives who had corroborated Stannard's testimony. Upon protesting to the Governor-General, and reporting the affair to Morel, Stannard was arrested on the charge of criminal libel, punishable by up to five years imprisonment. --- E.D. Morel, "The Stannard Case", Liverpool, September, 1906.

Throughout 1906, the Stannard case filled the pages of the Times<sup>1</sup> and of Hansard;<sup>2</sup> it was the constant theme of C.R.A. correspondence with the Foreign Office.<sup>3</sup> It was even the subject of a C.R.A. public meeting in Liverpool attended by fifteen hundred persons.<sup>4</sup> The point, of course, was to secure British extra-territoriality through Stannard's plight. Grey did agree to have Vice-Consul Armstrong serve as Stannard's counsel during the trial and promised to seriously consider Consular Jurisdiction if there was any miscarriage of justice.<sup>5</sup>

When Stannard was unable to furnish proof of his accusations he was found guilty and sentenced to a fine of £ 40 and £17 costs or three months and twenty days in jail. He paid up and returned to England.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Times, 12 April, p.7; 14 April, p.7; 6 June, p.8, all 1906.

<sup>2</sup> Parl. Deb., Vol. 155, 5 April 1906, col. 724-25; Vol. 157, 17 May 1906, col.623-25; Vol. 160, 16 July 1906, col. 1305.

<sup>3</sup> E.D. Morel to Grey, 7 April 1906, cited in the Official Organ..., April, 1906, pp.4-6.

<sup>4</sup> In April, 1906. See the Official Organ..., April, 1906, pp.1-3.

<sup>5</sup> Barrington to Morel, 18 April 1906, cited in the Official Organ..., April, 1906, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> The Times, 28 August 1906, p.7.  
Stannard's native witnesses of the Bolima massacres were nowhere to be found once the trial began!

Later, an Appellate Court met in Belgium despite the fact that Stannard had given up appeal as hopeless. This Court now reversed the Congo Court's decision on the grounds that it was Morel's manipulation of Stannard's statements that was libellous, not the original remarks. See R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.135.



In addition to his writings, Morel became a skilful practitioner of the art of public speaking. The public meeting became another weapon in his campaign to move the Foreign Office to action.

In October, 1905, a public meeting at Frome put forward a Resolution, forwarded by Morel to Lansdowne, calling for British extra-territoriality over the Congo State. The next two months saw similar Resolutions adopted at Plaistow, Wantage, London, Sheffield and Greenwich.<sup>1</sup>

1906 was a bumper year for C.R.A. meetings. Whether the site was Liverpool at the Town Hall where twenty-five hundred heard Dr. Chavasse, the Lord Bishop of Liverpool, move the Resolution, or, by contrast, the Y.M.C.A. in York, the theme was always the same --- "to secure for the people of the Congo State, redress, justice, and good government."<sup>2</sup> Throughout Britain people gathered to hear Morel, Harris, Monkswell or some other C.R.A. figure --- at Liverpool, London, Sheffield, Bristol, Birmingham, Newcastle, Stroud, Leicester, Jersey, Glasgow, Huddersfield, Belfast, Manchester, Southport, Edinburgh, Leeds, Bradford,

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<sup>1</sup>

The texts of these Resolutions were identical, and bore the unmistakable stamp of Morel and the C.R.A.:

"... that this meeting urges upon His Majesty's Government the necessity of an immediate assumption of its extra-territorial rights in the Congo State, both to insure adequate protection to the British subjects in that State, and as unmistakable testimony to the reprobation entertained by the British people of the evils prevalent therein." --- cited in the Official Organ..., December, 1905, pp.16-20.

<sup>2</sup>

The Official Organ..., April, 1906, pp.8-13.

York, Derby, Coventry, Plymouth, and a host of other cities, towns and hamlets.<sup>1</sup>

Morel and Harris worked like beavers, since one or the other attended these meetings wherever possible. In one stretch of ten days, in October, 1906, Harris spoke at six different meetings.<sup>2</sup> The normal procedure was for the adopted resolution to be forwarded to Morel for mailing to Grey, but, on occasion, the Foreign Secretary was besieged by a delegation of city representatives.<sup>3</sup>

Another favourite Morel tactic was to mail complimentary copies of his C.R.A. newspaper and his many pamphlets to influential figures who did not already subscribe to the C.R.A. Lords Derby, Ripon, and Fitzmaurice, Prime Minister Campbell-Bannerman, and later, Asquith, Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Keir Hardie and even King Edward VII were among the recipients of Morel's publications.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, June, 1906, p.20, 24-25; October, 1905, p.15; November, 1906, pp.18-24; December, 1906, pp.22-28.

<sup>2</sup> The Official Organ..., November, 1906, pp.17-18.

<sup>3</sup> See E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, p.16 & f. for one such representation to Grey in November, 1906.

<sup>4</sup> The Official Organ... frequently published acknowledgments from these and other important figures. See, for instance, issues of June, 1906, pp.22-23, and July, 1906, p.18.

Edward VII was not unmoved by the Congo question. In reply to a personal letter from his cousin Leopold requesting a personal reconciliation between the two Crowns in the light of growing British criticism of Leopold and the Congo State, Edward replied:

"The Congo question is not altogether a private matter, but is largely a political and public one, in which everybody in England has expressed a unanimous and strong opinion. In this opinion His Majesty entirely agrees with his subjects and it certainly is not one which is favourable either to the King of the Belgians or to his Ministers." --- cited in P. Magnus, King Edward the Seventh, (London, 1964) p.321.

As the campaign moved on, Morel's journalism grew more and more sensationalistic. The Official Organ.... was now dressed in the most graphic of headlines;<sup>1</sup> photographs were used, sometimes picturing the native as an industrious worker under a system of free wage labour in West Africa but more often depicting pathetic figures without arms or legs as victims of Congo barbarity.<sup>2</sup>

From the beginning, the C.R.A. was absorbed with the problem of membership, and while it fell to Casement, initially, to help in recruitment, it was Morel's responsibility to assure internal harmony --- often a difficult thing. For, rivalries and personality clashes of all sorts marred the course of the movement. Fox Bourne and the Aborigines' Protection Society --- the purely humanitarian element --- disapproved of commercial affiliations while the various Chambers of Commerce reciprocated by showing disdain for pathological do-gooders.

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Some of the more revealing headlines were:

"Food taxes still Working Havoc", or,

"Rising on the Kasai. Extensive Importation of Weapons."

2

See, for instance, the Official Organ... of February, 1906, pp.1-6.

By now the Official Organ... bore all the attributes of yellow journalism, even to extent of over-sentimentality. Morel would borrow anything, so long as the word 'Congo' appeared in the right context. Note, for instance, this clumsy verse from the pen of one William Watson, borrowed from the Daily Chronicle, and appearing in the Official Organ... of September, 1906, p.26:

"No zeal, no Faith inspired this Leopold,

Nor any madness of half-splendid birth.

Cool-eyed he loosed the hounds that rend and slay,

Just that his coffers might be gorged with gold.

Embalm him, Time! Forget him not, O Earth,  
Trumpet his name, and flood his deeds with day."

Still worse, idiosyncracies played their part. Mrs. Stopford Green could not tolerate Fox Bourne and Guinness; Morel disliked John Harris intensely, but found him too valuable to cast aside. W.T. Stead despised Dilke and refused to be seen publicly or privately with Sir Charles. Fox Bourne, for his part, never forgave Guinness and the Baptists for their long silence on the question of Congo atrocities.

The "Baptist problem" had been a source of concern to Congo reformers long before the C.R.A. was born.<sup>1</sup> One of the most influential men in the Baptist Missionary Society was Sir Hugh Gilzean Reid, who also held interests in several British newspapers, and, more significantly, was a friend of Leopold's and of Van Eetvelde, the Administrator-General of the Congo State.<sup>2</sup> As early as 1900, Reid had disputed Morel's articles in The Speaker and, in 1903, threatened the young journalist with a libel suit.<sup>3</sup>

Reid continued to support Leopold to the very end, but, in 1903,

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An excellent treatment of relations between English-speaking missions (especially the Baptist Missionary Society and the Congo Balolo Mission) and the Congo State is to be found in Ruth Slade, The English-Speaking Missions in the Congo Independent State, Brussels, 1959.

Miss Slade shows that, generally, English missionaries refused to credit Leopold with a lack of sincerity and attributed wrongs in the Congo to inferior subordinate officers. Believing that the best source of redress was through private communication to the Governor-General and to Leopold himself, the Baptists refused to arm Fox Bourne with missionary testimony to be used publicly against the Congo State. Still another consideration was that these missions sought new sites from the State in the Upper Congo and were unlikely to obtain them if they lost Leopold's friendship. Ibid, pp.238-57.

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Ibid, p.162.

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R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.21, 34.

Morel was able to gain a convert within Baptist ranks in the person of Dr. John Clifford, a leading preacher with a dedication to social reform. At the Whitehall Meeting of 5 May 1903, Clifford spoke out for Congo reform while at the same time apologizing for B.M.S. silence.<sup>1</sup>

Though, officially, the B.M.S. continued to channel its appeals privately to Leopold,<sup>2</sup> individual Baptist missionaries on the Congo were beginning to look to Morel for a public airing of their testimony. The Reverend John Weeks, a B.M.S. missionary on the Upper Congo, after unsuccessfully protesting the effects of excessive taxation upon the Bangala tribe to Governor-General Wahis, sent copies of his letter of protest to Morel in August, 1903, who, in turn, published this account in the West African Mail in October.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, so long as the Baptists appealed to the Congo State privately and praised it publicly, the unanimity which Morel sought was lacking. Even more galling was the tactic of Leopold's Press Bureau of quoting British missionaries as having praised the accomplishments of the Congo State. Most damaging of all were Press Bureau references to George Grenfell, the eminent Baptist missionary whose stay in the Congo had been virtually uninterrupted since 1878 --- before the Congo State had come into being.<sup>4</sup> Grenfell, though stationed

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<sup>1</sup> W.M. Morrison, "Abuses in the Congo Free State", London, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> It was not until after the Report of Leopold's Commission of Inquiry appeared in 1905 that the B.M.S. gave its support wholeheartedly to the C.R.A. --- R. Slade, English-Speaking Missions..., pp.297-98.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.277.

<sup>4</sup> Federation for the Defense of Belgian Interests Abroad, "Reliable Evidence on the Congo Question", November, 1904, quoted favourable remarks of Grenfell, Forfeit, H.H. Johnston and others.

on the lower part of the River and away from the scene of the worst abuses, was aware of atrocities and recorded them in his correspondence, but he was inclined to attribute weaknesses in the System to problems of personnel rather than to false theory.<sup>1</sup>

By 1905, Grenfell had undergone a change of heart. Disappointed with the Commission of Inquiry for having dashed through the country in great haste along the main lines of communication alone, he was now prepared to support the C.R.A. and allow it to publish his findings.<sup>2</sup>

Attacking the Congo judicial system, Grenfell argued that justice in the Congo, while expensive, was cheaper in the long run than the lack of it. Why didn't the State establish Courts in the rubber areas, the source of wealth --- and of abuse --- instead of spending what little it did hundreds of miles away?

"Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that arbitrary men, both Black and White, take the law into their own hands, and that scandals arise."<sup>3</sup>

But, more important, he now found the System "vicious", and argued that Leopold, not his lowly subalterns in the Tropical Forest, was chiefly responsible.

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H.H. Johnston, George Grenfell and the Congo, i, pp.445-75.  
R. Slade, English-Speaking Missions..., p.263.

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Morel, elated over this important conversion, gave Grenfell's views full publicity in the Official Organ... of January, 1906, pp. 23-24. On the basis of Grenfell's testimony, herein reproduced, the Baptist missionary emerges as one of the most balanced and best informed critics of the Congo State.

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Ibid, pp.23-24.

Not all English missionary groups working in the Congo waited as long as the B.M.S. before lending support to the C.R.A. The Congo Balolo Mission's English founder and spokesman, Dr. H. Grattan Guinness, had long been aware of Congo abuses and had so hinted to Fox Bourne and Morel, though he was still reluctant to publish in 1903.<sup>1</sup> By the end of that year, after Morel had tirelessly applied pressure, Guinness consented to join the ranks of Congo reform and volunteered to conduct a series of Congo atrocity meetings throughout England and Scotland.<sup>2</sup>

Guinness proved to be a master of the public atrocity-meeting method, and, in late 1905, again served as the C.R.A.'s roving ambassador to the Celts, this time touring Wales as well as Scotland.<sup>3</sup>

Religious and missionary groups did not comprise the entire humanitarian wing of the C.R.A. The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society, led by its Secretary, H.R. Fox Bourne, played an important role, even if they viewed the C.R.A. with suspicion at the outset. Fox Bourne questioned the need for double energy and expense, and criticized the "reckless haste" that had characterized its birth.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. Slade, English-Speaking Missions..., p.264.

<sup>2</sup> Morel only agreed to endorse these meetings after Guinness abandoned his plan to use the tour as a fund raising campaign for his C.B.M. Ibid, p.279.

<sup>3</sup> Over two thousand turned out to hear him at Cardiff, and, again, a large crowd gathered at Swansea. The Official Organ..., December, 1905, p.23.

<sup>4</sup> Fox Bourne to Morel, 1 February 1904, cited in W. Louis, op.cit., p.116.

Morel rather uncharitably attributed Fox Bourne's coolness to jealousy. See R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.68.

Sir Charles Dilke, for his part, suggested that the C.R.A. would be more useful in France or the United States where opinion towards the Congo was less well defined.<sup>1</sup>

Morel, on the other hand, defended the need for a movement that would be exclusively devoted to the Congo issue. He chose to ignore other atrocities, something the A.P.S. could not do. Though he certainly opposed Chinese Labour abuses in the Transvaal and Kaffir persecution in Rhodesia, Morel avoided these issues publicly because he felt they served to distract the Radical Press from the Congo question.<sup>2</sup> Gradually, however, Fox Bourne became reconciled to the C.R.A. and he, Dilke, the Buxtons, the Frys, and many other traditional A.P.S. supporters began to lend their support to Morel.

Recruiting for the C.R.A. was not always an easy task. Often, the most likely prospects declined participation, not always for sound reasons. The case of Joseph Conrad was illustrative in this respect.

Approached by Casement, whom he had met while serving as a river-boat captain for a Congo State company in 1890, to join the C.R.A., Conrad politely declined, not through disagreement with the movement's aims but through a personal distaste for the very word 'Congo', which recalled for him the unpleasant six months he had spent in Congo

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<sup>1</sup>

Dilke to Morel, 28 January 1904; to Casement, 12 February 1904; both cited in W. Louis, *op.cit.*, p.115.

<sup>2</sup>

Morel to Samuel, 5 September 1905, cited in R. Wuliger, *op.cit.*, p.109.



service.<sup>1</sup>

Even more influential a conversion to the cause would have been Sir Harry Johnston, the noted African naturalist-explorer who at one time or another had served as British Consul or Commissioner in Southern Nigeria, Mozambique, Tunis, and Uganda. Like Grenfell, Johnston had gone on record earlier as an admirer of the Congo State he had known in the 1880's.<sup>2</sup>

With the publication of Casement's Report, Johnston's attitude changed. Describing the British Consul as "an experienced and absolutely impartial observer", Johnston qualified his earlier praise of the Congo State by stating that he had spoken only of frontier

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<sup>1</sup>Conrad wrote to his friend and co-author, R.B. Cunningham-Graham:

" I would help him (Casement) but it is not in me. I am only a wretched novelist inventing wretched stories and not even up to that miserable game; but your good pen, keen, flexible, and straight, and sure like a Toledo blade, would tell in the fray if you felt disposed to give a slash or two. He could tell you things! Things I've tried to forget; things I never did know. He has had as many years of Africa as I had months --- almost." Letter written 26 December 1903,

cited in Gerard Jean-Aubrey, Joseph Conrad: Life and Letters, New York, 1927, Vol. 1, pp.325-26.

Conrad based two short stories upon his Congo experiences, An Outpost of Progress, and the immortal Heart of Darkness. Both stories deal with European degeneracy in a tropical climate, an argument Leopold's Press Bureau often used to explain away atrocity. But Conrad was not unaware of the true nature of abuse in the Congo State. He wrote:

"And the fact remains that in 1903, seventy years or so after the abolition of the slave trade (because it was cruel) there exists in Africa a Congo State created by an act of European Powers where ruthless, systematic cruelty towards the blacks is the basis of administration; and bad faith towards all other States the basis of commercial policy." Cited, in E.D.

Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., pp.351-52.

<sup>2</sup>Supra, p.98f.

areas where the horrible concessionaire companies had no influence. Johnston now became the foremost advocate of the "Belgian Solution". The Congo's ills stemmed from the phony international flavour of the State. Such a lack of national identity provided for no esprit de corps, present in other colonial undertakings. Let Belgium annex and this anomaly --- including the abuses --- would end.<sup>1</sup>

Now, too, Johnston grew to respect Morel and permitted the African Society, of which he was President, to publish Morel's article, "The Commercial Aspect of the Congo Question".<sup>2</sup> On 7 June 1905, Johnston entered the fold of the C.R.A. for the first time when he chaired a C.R.A. meeting at Holborn Town Hall.<sup>3</sup> By 1906, he was an active personality within the organization, best known for his advocacy of the Belgian Solution. He made these views public in his introduction written for Morel's latest work, Red Rubber, which appeared in November, 1906.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
H.H. Johnston to the Times, 2 June 1904, p.4.

<sup>2</sup>  
E.D. Morel, "The Commercial Aspect of the Congo Question", in the Journal of the African Society, 1904, 19pp.

<sup>3</sup>  
The Times, 9 June 1905, p.14.  
It seems that Morel, though undoubtedly persuasive, cannot be given full credit for Johnston's conversion. Involved in the Liberia Rubber Corporation, Johnston wanted British trade to have access to Congo markets as well as Liberian ones. By working actively in the C.R.A. he would be able to make his ideas known to men of influence in West African Commerce. R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.106-07, cites several letters written by Johnston to Morel in 1905 on this theme.

<sup>4</sup>  
H.H. Johnston, Introduction; E.D. Morel, Red Rubber, pp.vi-xvi.

Unlike Morel, Johnston saw nothing wrong in theory with forced labour or the Crown Land concept; Leopold's sin was that he utilized the revenues so gained for his own selfish purposes instead of for the benefit of the mother country and the colony. This was not, however, the Congo State's worst sin. Far more dangerous was the racial antagonism being fostered by the Congo State. One day Central African Negroes would break their bonds and wreck havoc not only upon Europeans in the Congo, but upon all Whites in Africa. Essentially, then, the European Powers were forced to remove the Congo State from the scene for expediency's sake.<sup>1</sup>

Strangely enough, perhaps, the most loyal element in the C.R.A. were the men who held the purse-strings. To John Holt and William A. Cadbury fell the financial burden of propping up the organization, its newspaper, and Morel himself. In November, 1904, the C.R.A. treasury was dry and Holt responded to Morel's pleas for funds with a generous contribution on the assumption that the C.R.A. had only to survive until the next election produced both a Liberal and C.R.A. victory.<sup>2</sup>

In late 1904, the burden on Holt's shoulders was lifted somewhat by the conversion of William Cadbury to the cause of Congo reform.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnston returned to this theme again in his George Grenfell and the Congo, i, p.464f, published in 1908.

<sup>2</sup> R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.94. This logic seemed powerful in 1904, for would not C.R.A. supporters like Morley, Burns and Samuel become Privy Councillors with a Liberal victory?

Though he often disagreed with Morel, Holt's loyalty to the young journalist and his cause never wavered. Holt assumed the burden of supporting Morel and the latter's family as he would a son. At his death in 1914, the wealthy Liverpool merchant bequeathed to Morel a yearly sum of £100 as a token of their long friendship. See W.S. Adams, op.cit., p.191.

Without ever having met Morel, Cadbury offered him an expenses-paid vacation to Lisbon which Morel politely refused even though his constitution, never strong, could have benefitted from the rest. During 1905, Cadbury gave the C.R.A. £ 1000 and, by bringing the Congo question before the Society of Friends, secured additional financial backing for the cause.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.95-98.

Appeals for funds in the English Press were frequent. The Times, for instance, of 30 March 1905, p.7; of 5 March 1906, p.9. The Official Organ... constantly.

Whereas, after 1908, when C.R.A. tactics no longer called for extensive propaganda to combat the huge sums paid by Leopold to discredit the C.R.A., the financial picture improved; the difficult years were from 1904 to 1908.

The Official Organ... periodically printed the C.R.A.'s financial statement and yearly balance and included a list of all financial contributors, large and small. Some of the major contributors were:

A. (March, 1904-September, 1908)	B. (1909 - 1913)
Bristol Auxiliary.....	£ 75.
Edinburgh Auxiliary.....	25.
Liverpool Auxiliary.....	275.
London Auxiliary.....	680.
Northumberland and Durham Aux.....	£ 23.
W.A. Albright.....	125.
Arthur Backhouse.....	50.
Mrs. E.B. Backhouse.....	50.
Mr. and Mrs. G.F. Barbour.....	50.
Earl Beauchamp.....	115.
Thomas Fowell Buxton.....	50.
Travers Buxton.....	65.
Barrow Cadbury.....	200.
George Cadbury.....	170.
William A. Cadbury.....	920.
Dr. Thomas Hodgkin.....	100.
John Holt.....	190.
Earl of Lonsdale.....	125.
Lord Monkswell.....	71.
E.B. Mounsey.....	50.
Joseph Rowntree.....	200.

A. The Official Organ..., June, 1909, pp.283-90.

B. Ibid, January, 1910, pp.483-88; May, 1910, pp.605-08; October, 1910, pp.657-59; May, 1911, pp.701-04; October, 1911, pp.743-44; August, 1912, pp.856-60; April, 1913, pp.974-76; July, 1913, pp.1044-48.

Other donors included G.P. Gooch, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, F. Swanzy, Sir George White, Col. Stopford, J.S. Fry, Sir Robert Usher, and Sir Robert Laidlow. It should be added that Holt and William Cadbury gave privately to help out Morel himself, who refused to accept a salary for his services to the C.R.A., even though he had no independent means.

Though absolutely necessary to the movement, Holt and Cadbury left the C.R.A. somewhat vulnerable to Press Bureau attacks. Both men were commercial giants and each had unhappy African connections. Holt's company had been active in the liquor trade in West Africa, and it was the Press Bureau's claim that he had gin to sell and a closed Central African market to force open in view of the Congo State's admirable anti-liquor legislation.

Cadbury, for his part, had been purchasing cocoa from forced labour plantations on the Portuguese island of Sao Thome'. Upon Sir Edward Grey's advice, he continued this practice even after knowledge of these labour conditions came to him. Cadbury's political opponents learned of the affair, and though his name was cleared in court, many Englishmen questioned the sincerity of the Quaker cocoa manufacturer.<sup>1</sup>

By 1906, however, the C.R.A. was so eminently respectable an organization that only the most cynical could doubt its sincerity. Its membership swelled; in Newcastle, Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, a man of great influence in Liberal circles and a champion of depressed peoples everywhere, had founded and become president of the Northumberland and North Durham C.R.A. Auxiliary.<sup>2</sup> Other auxiliaries were springing up throughout Britain --- in Edinburgh, Bristol, and Plymouth such organizations performed the dual task of sending Memorials to their M.P's and raising much needed funds to enable C.R.A. headquarters in Liverpool to realize the costly strategy of pamphleteering and public

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<sup>1</sup> W.S. Adams, op.cit., pp.192-93.

<sup>2</sup> The Official Organ..., October, 1906, p.6.

meetings.

In Parliament, while the new Liberal Government did not bring immediate victory, the influence of C.R.A. members grew; Emmott was now Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Samuel was Home Office Under-Secretary and Lord Aberdeen the new Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Moreover, the C.R.A. now had its own non-partisan Parliamentary Committee. Ramsay MacDonald, in spite of misgivings, was Chairman; E.N. Bennett, the Liberal M.P., was Secretary; Unionist representation came from Sir Gilbert Parker and F.B. Mildmay.<sup>1</sup> With such strength, a C.R.A. victory seemed close at hand.

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# V

Though by 1906 Morel had gained the support of a majority of British political, religious and commercial opinion, some groups still remained indifferent at best.

In the commercial sphere, some British companies, notably Tanganyika Concessions Limited, had succeeded in gaining for themselves a slice of the Congo 'pie', and their agents stuck to a pro-Congo State line. Back in February, 1904, their employee, Michael

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<sup>1</sup>

The Official Organ..., April, 1906, p.15.

MacDonald, never a convinced Congo reformer, somewhat uncharitably described the movement as a "mere Nonconformist hubbub" as late as February, 1908. See W.S. Adams, op.cit., p.197.

Though he later resigned the Chairmanship of the Parliamentary Committee in favour of Sir Charles Dilke, while he served he was an eloquent adversary of Grey in the House, and one of Morel's favourite correspondents.

Holland, the son of Canon Scott Holland, wrote that, in his experiences in the Katanga from 1901 to 1903, he found the natives justly treated and isolated acts of atrocity no more prevalent than in neighbouring Rhodesia.<sup>1</sup>

Another employee of this firm was George Grey, brother of Sir Edward, who, in 1903, had written to the Morning Post that he found the Belgian officials courteous and humane, and he ascribed acts of brutality to native brigands who posed as Congo State soldiers.<sup>2</sup>

The Managing Director of Tanganyika Concessions, Robert Williams, also joined in defence of the State, denying categorically Dilke's remarks in the House of Commons that Katanga mines were worked by slave labour.<sup>3</sup>

Some independents made their opposition known. One of the most interesting arguments, in that it anticipated by four years a type of logic with which Morel would have to contend, was that employed by T.J. Hanna in a letter to the Times in October, 1904. Hanna publicly introduced the "German bogey" thesis, deducing that it was not in the

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<sup>1</sup>  
The Times, 25 February 1904, p.10.

<sup>2</sup>  
Though George Grey's remarks were naive, and outdated by 1906, McKean, a member of the Irish Party in the House of Commons and a bitter opponent of Congo reform, cited George Grey at great length in his efforts to disparage the C.R.A. Parl. Deb., Vol. 160, 5 July col. 266-79.

Sir Edward Grey, rising to reply, observed that while his brother was completely impartial and a man of wide experience in Africa, his remarks had been confined to the southern extremity of the Congo State, outside the rubber district. Ibid, col. 318-24.

<sup>3</sup>  
The Times, 22 August 1905, p.10.

British interest to alienate Belgium. Already, he said, the Dutch were disaffected over the Boer War; should both Belgium and Holland oppose Britain, national security would be seriously threatened.<sup>1</sup>

Religious opinion within the C.R.A. in 1906 was almost entirely Nonconformist. The Church of England, while never antipathetic to the Congo cause, still remained in the background. Several Bishops had been charter members of the C.R.A., to be sure, but the Prelate himself, Randall Davidson, Archbishop of Canterbury, was only now warming to the movement. In the House of Lords debate of 3 July 1906 he admitted that the cause was just, but justified earlier caution on the grounds that many of the early supporters were either "mawkish sentimentalists or unbalanced enthusiasts."<sup>2</sup>

If Official Anglicanism was cautious in 1906 Roman Catholic attitudes were less than cool. True, the C.R.A. had always pretended to be non-partisan religiously, and could offer as proof such Roman Catholic supporters as Lord Clifford of Chudleigh and Lord and Lady French. Yet, this claim was not convincing in the face of stiff Roman Catholic opposition in both Parliament and the Press.

In the House of Commons in 1904, O'Dowd and O'Connor, two Irish Party stalwarts, had suggested that British opposition to Leopold was organized by South Africans who coveted the Katanga,<sup>3</sup> and, in the

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<sup>1</sup>  
The Times, 29 October 1904, p.16.

<sup>2</sup>  
Parl. Deb., Vol. 159, (Lords) 3 July 1906, col. 1587-88.  
Later, the Prelate was to become one of Morel's staunchest supporters. See *Infra*, p.170.

<sup>3</sup>  
Parl. Deb., Vol. 138, 25 July 1904, col. 1044-45.



same year John Campbell, representing Armagh South, invoked the odium theologium by suggesting that Protestant missionaries, who had axes to grind against Catholic Belgium, were behind the agitation for reform.<sup>1</sup>

Even after the Report of the Commission of Inquiry the Irish Party persisted. Nolan and McKean posed supplementary questions to Grey which brought up the British excesses in Natal, and begged the Government to give Leopold's Committee of Reform time to draft new measures.<sup>2</sup>

A few months later, McKean revealed that it was Anglophobia which prompted much of his bitterness when he remarked:

"Give me the autocracy and the depotism of King Leopold in Ireland a dozen times before your boasted constitutional Government."<sup>3</sup>

Despite his outward boldness, Morel was sensitive to Roman Catholic criticism and would not rest content with the near unanimity in favour of Congo reform which prevailed in Parliament. Even McKean's diatribe had to be explained: McKean was "one gentleman whom we may charitably assume to be suffering from complications."<sup>4</sup>

Charles Diamond's Catholic Herald was a more formidable opponent. In 1904, the C.R.A. was termed a Baptist organ;<sup>5</sup> a year later Diamond

<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, Vol. 135, 9 June 1904, col. 1324.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, Vol. 156, 3 May 1906, col. 712-15.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid, Vol. 160, 5 July 1906, col. 266-79.

<sup>4</sup>  
The Official Organ..., August, 1906, p.1.

<sup>5</sup>  
R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.50. (Ironical though this was in view of the difficulties Morel was having with the Baptists at this time. See Supra, pp.97-98.

was invading the columns of the Times to show that his sources in the Congo --- Catholic missionaries such as Bishop Prosper Augouard of Brazzaville and Bishop C. Van Ranslé, Vicar-Apostolic in the Congo --- were convinced that while charges relating to a state of things fifteen years ago might have some validity, now the Government was enlightened and did not tolerate offenders against the natives.<sup>1</sup>

In 1906, Diamond switched targets to Morel, alleging that the C.R.A. Secretary earned his living through the Congo agitation, a charge that brought an immediate disclaimer from G.H. Brabner in the Official Organ....<sup>2</sup>

In the political sphere, British Socialists were another obstacle to Morel's dream of achieving total unanimity. In an interview in Brussels, Labourites Keir Hardie and H.M. Hyndman were reported to have called the C.R.A. "hypocritical", though Hardie later denied making the statement.<sup>3</sup> Yet, during the July, 1906 Congo debate in the House of Commons, Hardie rose to describe Congo developments as:

"... but a continuation of what had taken place in all countries civilized and uncivilized in the past --- the rich and the strong oppressing and robbing the weak and unfortunate."<sup>4</sup>

Morel explored every avenue. When R.B. Cunninghame-Graham was

<sup>1</sup>  
Charles Diamond to the Times, 9 February 1905, p.8.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Official Organ..., November, 1906, p.12.

<sup>3</sup>  
For statement, see R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.110; for denial, see The Official Organ..., April, 1906, p.15.

<sup>4</sup>  
Parl. Deb., Vol. 160, 5 July 1906, col. 298.

taken with Morel's account of the Congo in Red Rubber and offered to help, his means was to solicit Hardie's support for the cause if at all possible.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in Red Rubber, Morel displayed his pique with the lack of Labour support for his movement:

"When the Labour Parties of England and the Continent have realized that between the labourer at home and the labourer in Africa there is a practical community of interest as co-partners in the world's production, constructive assistance in the problems connected with the administration of Tropical African dependencies may be expected from them."<sup>2</sup>

If the C.R.A. was plagued by clashes of personality, if Morel was often forced to lapse into ineffectual rhetoric in the face of Government indifference, there was one factor operating for C.R.A. solidarity --- opposition to the Leopold clique and its efforts to camouflage the harsh realities of Congo misrule.

Around 1902, Leopold had founded an official Congo State Press Bureau, whose duty it was "de documenter les journaux de l'étranger sourtout", with 'reliable' Congo information.<sup>3</sup> One agency of this machine was an institution called the Federation for the Defense of Belgian Interests Abroad (F.D.B.I.A.).<sup>4</sup> In addition, Leopold could

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R.B. Cunninghame-Graham to E.D. Morel, 7 December 1906, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.151.

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E.D. Morel, Red Rubber, pp.203-204. This was hardly the sort of approach calculated to win over Socialist orthodoxy.

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F. Masoin, Histoire de l'État Indépendent du Congo, i, Namur, 1912, p.177. Masoin alleged that the Press Bureau never really 'bought' foreign newspapers; rather, Leopold was paying for the right of defence!!

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F.D.B.I.A. was founded on 4 November 1903, Ibid, p.175.

take advantage of his State's split personality by employing the Belgian diplomatic corps in Europe and America, as well as his own Congo State consuls, to defend his regime.

The Congo defence was many-sided, sometimes presented as an exercise in jurisprudence, but more often rendered by means of a relativistic, racist, or 'tu quoque' approach.<sup>1</sup>

It was to curb British public opinion that Leopold organized his propaganda and he had agents scattered throughout the United Kingdom. In Edinburgh, the Belgian Consul, Charles Sarolea, manned the northern bastion against the C.R.A. During Guinness' lecture tour of Scotland

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The following are typical examples of Congo State polemics:

"It has been twenty times demonstrated that realizing the fruits of a 'Domaine' is not commerce or speculation" --- de Smet de Naeyer, cited in E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., p.80.

"We ought to be very grateful to the King of the Belgians for having relieved us of the Black Problem." --- D.C. Boulger, "The Congo State and its Critics", Fortnightly Review, 1899, p.443.

"Si toi et moi faisons la même chose, ce n'est pas la même chose." --- in reply to British criticism, "Legislation Domaniale dans le Bassin Conventionnel du Congo", Brussels, 1904.

"Either these witnesses are lying (those who find nothing amiss in the Congo) or the abuses with which the Congo State is taxed are individual offenses, mistakes of inexperienced officers, local incidents such as take place in all colonies." --- F.D.B.I.A., "Reliable Evidence on the Congo Question", 1904, p.8.

Morel, of course, was often the butt of ad hominem attacks, sometimes by inference, as when Leopold, in an interview granted to an American reporter, stated:

"It seems that a new trade has arisen in the world: that of calumny. There are those who make their living by forming associations to protest against everything under Heaven." --- Cited, in the Official Organ..., January, 1907, p.43.

in the late 1903, Sarolea was there to debate the Congo issue.<sup>1</sup> Again, in May of 1904, he took on both Guinness and Morel at New College, Edinburgh.<sup>2</sup> A year later, he employed the pages of the Scottish Geographical Magazine to describe the Congo State story as the "romance of modern colonisation."<sup>3</sup>

But it was in Liverpool, the C.R.A.'s headquarters, that Leopold fixed his biggest guns. Eduard Seve, Belgian Consul-General there, vehemently fought the C.R.A., and even threatened a libel suit against the Casement Report during April and May of 1904.<sup>4</sup>

More formidable an opponent of the C.R.A. was Alfred Jones, Morel's old employer, who served as the Congo State Consul in Liverpool. Jones' ships carried the West African Mail to Congo subscribers and Morel found that his newspaper was being delivered late, if at all.<sup>5</sup> By 1904,

<sup>1</sup>  
The Times, 21 April 1904, p.4.

<sup>2</sup>  
R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.66 & f.

<sup>3</sup>  
C. Sarolea, "The Economic Expansion of the Congo Free State", in the Scottish Geographical Magazine, April, 1905, p.182.

Sarolea eloquently outlined the great economic potential of the Congo State, but, speaking of those natives inhabiting the Congo, he revealed himself as a strong White Supremacist:

"... there can be no doubt that, with their sensual and brutal instincts, with their gross fetishism, with their monstrous tattooing practices, with their total inability to form abstract ideas, they (Africans) belong to the lowest scale of humanity." Ibid, pp.189-91.

<sup>4</sup>  
R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.66 & f.

<sup>5</sup>  
Ibid, p.54. Morel, however, had ways of evening the contest, having recourse to informants within Elder, Dempster and Company by virtue of his earlier association with that firm.

Jones had given up trying to win back the irrespressible Morel and stopped advertizing in the West African Mail. Soon he was distributing Leopold's newspaper, the Indépendance Belge, including a translated article in this journal which accused the C.R.A. of being prompted by Liverpool jealousy and of being a useful arm of the British Foreign Office.<sup>1</sup>

Nor was this all. Jones also sponsored a party of English observers on a carefully chosen Congo tour, the fruits of which were a series of articles in the British Press by Mrs. French-Sheldon, Marcus Dorman and others proclaiming the virtues of the Congo State.<sup>2</sup>

Predictably, Leopold's Press Bureau was no less active in 1905 and 1906 than they had been earlier, but by now their return was very meagre. At every turn it was the C.R.A.'s policy to rebuke Press Bureau claims, and most of Morel's pamphlets and public newspaper correspondence were devoted to this task.<sup>3</sup> With each battle Morel's prowess grew. On 28 September 1906, a Times leader praised Morel

<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, p.57.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Times, 10 August 1904, 24 August 1904, 3 February 1905.  
Dorman's letter of 24 August contained an amusing if weak analogy between the Congo State and the dreams of Utopian Socialists:

" Although the Government is autocratic in name, the whole system in practice recalls to mind the plan advocated by the Socialist St. Simon, for the State owns the means of production, and each person is paid according to the value of his work."

<sup>3</sup>  
For instance, the Times, 5 January 1905, p.8; 9 January 1905, p.4; 12 January 1905, p.12; 16 January 1905, p.11; for Morel vs. Roland de Marès, editor of the Indépendance Belge.

Ibid, 10 September, p.9; 15 September, p.8; 24 September 1906, p.10; for Morel vs. F. Lacourt and J. de Hemptinne of the Kasai Company.

for his single-minded yet effective attack upon the Kasai Company.<sup>1</sup>

One by one, Leopold's spokesmen and sympathizers were being exposed or rendered impotent. Jones, who was President of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine was humiliated before a throng of over four thousand at the Sun Hall on 14 October 1906, where Morel, in retaliation for Jones' agitation on Leopold's behalf, secured the passage of a Resolution regretting that the School of Tropical Medicine had accepted a grant of funds from Leopold.<sup>2</sup>

In late 1905, Sir Constantine Phipps and Sir Albert Rollit had made remarks in praise of the Congo State while guests at a Liège banquet. Morel was incensed that a British Ambassador could so ignore the state of British opinion on the Congo question, and he could not restrain his delight when he learned that Phipps had been replaced in Brussels by Sir Arthur Hardinge in early 1906.<sup>3</sup>

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Times, 28 September 1906, p.7.

After years of caution, the Times was now won over to the cause. Their Foreign Editor, Valentine Chirol, and Morel now exchanged personal correspondence on the Congo issue and this happy situation was to prevail until 1909. See Infra, p.190.

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The Official Organ..., November, 1906, pp.16-17.

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Morel wrote:

"That Liège banquet seems to have been thoroughly satisfactory from the Congo Reformers' point of view. It did not improve Sir Albert Rollit's reputation, and now, mirabile dictu, Sir Constantine Phipps is being translated --- elsewhere. We always said that the air of Brussels was unsuited to the constitution of that eminent diplomat." --- in the Official Organ..., December, 1905, p.28.

## **Chapter Four**

**CONGO REFORM IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE AND AMERICA**

**1903 - 1906**



## I

Though Great Britain certainly led the way in Congo reform, other nations, as well, showed more than a passing interest in the Congo State and her peoples.

The United States had had a long association with the Congo State,<sup>1</sup> especially through American missionaries serving there. They, in fact, had been first to report accounts of atrocity and misgovernment to the civilized world.<sup>2</sup>

But Congo reform in the United States owed its organized beginnings to the visit of E.D. Morel in September, 1904.<sup>3</sup> The International

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Though her Senate had not ratified the Berlin Act, the United States had been the first Power to recognize the Congo State. (See Supra, p. 14), and she did adhere to the Brussels Act of 1891. In 1892, the Congo and American Governments had negotiated and ratified a treaty of "Amity, Commerce, and Navigation" which secured for the United States most favoured nation treatment, religious freedom for her missionaries, --- in short, the same rights enjoyed by all parties to the Berlin Act.

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W.M. Morrison (Supra, pp. 41-42), for instance, after his tour of England in 1903, had returned to America bent upon moving his own Government to action. Morel aided him in his task by penning a pamphlet appealing especially to the sympathies of American women. See, E.D. Morel, "The Treatment of Women and Children in the Congo State, 1895-1904 --- An Appeal to the Women of the U.S.A.", Boston, 1904, 30pp.

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Earlier, on 19 April 1904, Senator John Tyler Morgan of Alabama had presented a Memorial on Congo conditions to the Senate on behalf of the Conference of Missionary Societies, a group representing the American organizations doing missionary and philanthropic work in the Congo State. However, the Memorial was shuttled off to the Senate's Committee on Foreign Relations, where it was conveniently forgotten. --- U.S. Senate, 58th Congress, Second Session, Document No. 282, "Memorial Concerning Conditions in the Independent State of the Kongo (sic)", 19 April 1904, 136pp.

Peace Congress, meeting in Boston during 1904, had originally invited Grattan Guinness, but when he was unable to attend, Morel jumped at the opportunity.

Armed with a Memorial concerning the Congo scandal to be presented to President Roosevelt, as well as with a personal letter of introduction to Roosevelt from one of the latter's old hunting cronies, Morel had private interviews not only with the American Head of State but also with John Hay, then Secretary of State.<sup>1</sup>

Though Morel remarked publicly that he was well received by Roosevelt and Hay, and that they were impressed with the moderate and representative character of the Memorial,<sup>2</sup> privately, in a special unpublished report to the C.R.A. Executive, Morel confessed that while Roosevelt was enthusiastic, Hay was cautious.<sup>3</sup>

More encouraging was Morel's reception in American missionary circles. He was warmly welcomed by Thomas S. Barbour, Chairman of the Conference of Missionary Societies. In November, 1904, Barbour accepted the chairmanship of the newly created United States branch of the C.R.A., and, by 1905, taking his cue from Morel, had organized a full-

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<sup>1</sup> The Times, 13 September 1904, p.7; R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.87-88.

<sup>2</sup> The Official Organ..., November, 1906, pp.1-2.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.93-94.

Secretary Hay suggested three reasons for a reserved American attitude: the United States had never ratified the Berlin Act; no American interest in the Congo was threatened; the country was on the eve of a Presidential election.

fledged campaign, complete with pamphlets, memorials and public meetings.<sup>1</sup>

From start to finish the complexion of the U.S.C.R.A. was overwhelmingly evangelical, and centred around its New England base of operations in Boston. There was only one major and strange exception to the norm of missionary and religious involvement. Mark Twain --- that great wit and iconoclast --- was the strangest bedfellow ever acquired by the C.R.A.

Approached by Morel during the latter's American visit, Twain was sufficiently convinced of the iniquities of Leopold's rule to lend his devastating pen to the cause. But, if Twain would help, it had to be on his terms. In 1905 he wrote a biting satire on Leopold in the form of a soliloquy, which, though it was said to have enjoyed wide circulation, must have offended as many as it converted to the cause.<sup>2</sup>

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The policy of the U.S.C.R.A. was patterned after that of its parent branch. It attacked the minor key of the Commission of Inquiry Report and advocated international intervention immediately. See, for instance, "The Indictment against the Congo Government", C.R.A., Boston, circa 1905; "Wrongs in the Congo State --- Why the U.S. Government should promote international action", C.R.A., Boston, circa 1906.

2

Mark Twain, "King Leopold's Soliloquy", Boston, 1905, 50pp.

Even the official name of the State was subject to attack; in reality, Twain argued, it should be called "the Congo Free Graveyard". But the tone was really set by the cover design, where there was depicted a crucifix superimposed over a machete and bearing the caption, "by this sign we prosper".

The cover seems to have made its greatest impression in Brussels, for the Press Bureau dashed off a little gem entitled "A Reply to Mark Twain", whose cover, in turn, portrayed two intertwined serpents, one with the face of Twain and the other, Morel. Twain's caricature was made to speak "slander" and Morel's, "lies". --- in the Official Organ..., July, 1907, p.14.

Twain missed no opportunity to attack what he considered the most unbearable symptom of his age --- the hypocrisy of organized religion. Putting words into Leopold's mouth, he had the Belgian King bemoan the tactical error of the latter's Congo henchmen for using crucifixion as a means of punishment:

"It (Christendom) can hear me charged with half a million murders a year for twenty years and keep its composure, but to profane the Symbol is quite another matter."

Speaking for himself, Twain exaggerated in his own splendid fashion:

"... If the skeletons of his (Leopold's) ten millions of starved and butchered dead could rise up and march in single file, it would take them seven months and four days to pass a given point."

If Morel was aware of the strategic importance of the U.S.C.R.A., his adversary in Brussels was no less concerned. When Leopold learned of Morel's projected American tour in 1904, he ordered his consuls in Baltimore and Boston to actively counter Morel's charges and to see to it that hecklers attended each of Morel's rallies.

The Press Bureau employed the odium theologium to win support from Irish-American Roman Catholics, who, of course, would not readily be convinced that Britain had no covert ambitions in Central Africa, in any case. Using this approach, Leopold won as a defender Cardinal Gibbons of Baltimore. His Eminence proved to be a persistent antagonist of the U.S.C.R.A., beginning his opposition in Boston by attempting to persuade the International Peace Congress not to bring the Congo issue up at their giant 7 October 1904 meeting. Though Morel was permitted to speak, he was forced to spend a good part of his address in debate

with a Congo apologist planted in the audience.<sup>1</sup>

But the leader of the Congo forces in the United States was Henry I. Kowalsky, a San Francisco lawyer, who met with Roosevelt on 18 October 1904 and presented him with a letter from Leopold defending the Congo State.<sup>2</sup> Again, in 1905, Kowalsky presented a brief to Roosevelt, this time attacking Morel ad hominem.<sup>3</sup>

Kowalsky's bubble burst in December, 1906, when William Randolph Hearst's New York American exposed the entire Press Bureau campaign in America.<sup>4</sup> Kowalsky, Professor Nerinx of Louvain University, Wellington Wack, a publicist and former patent medicine lawyer, George A. Whitley, the Congo State Consul in Baltimore, and Baron Moncheur, the Belgian Ambassador in Washington, were all implicated.

The Kowalsky exposure lifted U.S.C.R.A. spirits, for, earlier in 1906, a blow against Congo reform had been struck by a statement of

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Despite this opposition, the International Peace Congress passed a Resolution calling for either Arbitration at The Hague or another International Conference. --- The Times, 4 November 1904, p.12.

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The Times, 19 October 1904, p.3.

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"Brief of Henry I. Kowalsky of the New York Bar", March, 1905.

4

New York American, 10-14 December 1906, cited in the Official Organ..., January, 1907, pp.4-11.

Ruth Slade claims that Kowalsky sold his correspondence to Hearst. --- op.cit., p.314f.

Kowalsky, for co-ordinating the campaign, was paid \$45,000 plus \$20,000 expenses, and succeeded in bribing Senator Morgan's secretary, Colonel Garrett, to persuade his employer to keep anti-Congo resolutions off the Committee on Foreign Relations' agenda.

Secretary of State Elihu Root which received wide circulation by the Press Bureau both in the United States and Europe. Root, in a letter to Congressman Edwin Denby, had declared that the United States had no power to investigate charges since she had no consuls in the Congo --- a testimony, he felt, to the lack of American interest in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Morel was bitterly disappointed. Hopefully, though, he rejoiced at the news, soon after Root's letter appeared, that the United States Government had appointed Clarence R. Slocum as its first Consul-General to the Congo State, and that a new Congo reform committee had been formed in Washington.<sup>2</sup>

It is difficult to evaluate the American phase of the struggle between the C.R.A. and the Press Bureau. From 1904 through to early 1906, it seems that Leopold's efforts were partly successful, at least in persuading Americans that not all Englishmen totally approved of the C.R.A. or of its efforts. Moreover, the strongly evangelical flavour of the U.S.C.R.A. may have dissuaded the more worldly.

The American Press provides a good index of response to Congo reform, or lack of same, in the United States. When John Harris and his wife visited the United States in early 1906 on a lecture tour, not a single major New York, Chicago or Boston paper carried the story at any length.<sup>3</sup> Later in the same year the complexion of the American

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<sup>1</sup> R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.126.

<sup>2</sup> The Official Organ..., May 1906, p.16; August, 1906, p.30.

<sup>3</sup> Describing the Harrises' tour, Morel could only extract favourable reviews from such low circulation papers as the Newark Advertiser, the Butte Inter-Mountain, the North Christian Advocate, and others. Cited, the Official Organ..., April, 1906, pp.10-14.

campaign changed. Leopold was his own worst enemy in this respect since his arrogant June Manifesto, coupled with the Kowalsky exposure, alienated several important journals of opinion. Now, the New York Post, the New York Tribune, the New York American, the Detroit News, the Chicago News, and the Boston Herald could be added to the list of the disillusioned.<sup>1</sup>

By the end of the year the United States had at last come to realize that only drastic change in the Congo could ameliorate conditions there. The United States Government was now prepared to attend another international conference.<sup>2</sup> Whether this meant as well that she would abandon her traditional policy of non-involvement in what was really a problem of European imperialism by taking the initiative in summoning such a conference, as Morel and his American collaborators hoped, was another question indeed.

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## II

Italian nationals were among the most numerous in the service of the Congo State, and it was only natural that the question of reform would be raised in Italy.

Morel himself became involved in late 1904, when the Press Bureau

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Cited in the Official Organ..., August, 1906, pp.29-30.

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Letter of Acting Secretary of State, Roger Bacon, to E.D. Morel, 19 November, 1906, cited in the Official Organ..., December, 1906.

Nor was this the only joint involvement between Italy and the Congo State. Congo consuls in Milan and Turin had been especially active in recruiting trained Italian railway-men for Congo service, while an Italian jurist, Baron Nisco --- the same man who had served as one of the Commissioners of Inquiry --- had been appointed to the Congo Appeal Tribunal in 1896.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, when Britain began to assert her views on the Congo question, first through the Lansdowne Circular Note, and later, through distribution of Casement's Report, the Italian Foreign Minister, Tittoni, was able to bring to the study of the question more than a superficial knowledge. Tittoni, influenced as much by Sir Constantine Phipps as his own Minister in Brussels, concluded that British commercial interests had pushed the British Government to take 'interested' action.<sup>2</sup>

When news of Leopold's appointment of a Commission of Inquiry reached Tittoni, the Italian Foreign Minister breathed a sign of relief for this seemed to be the most expedient solution to an uncomfortable problem. Tittoni sought good relations with both Leopold and Great Britain, but knew full well that, in a showdown,

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<sup>1</sup>

Ibid, pp.132-38, 140-41.

<sup>2</sup>

In 1903, Phipps told Gerbaix de Sonnaz, then Italian Minister in Brussels, that the Lansdowne Note had been issued with "de mauvais coeur" and only to please certain British Chambers of Commerce. --- de Sonnaz to Tittoni, December, 1903, cited, Ibid, p.149.

De Sonnaz and his successor, Count Bonin, shared Phipps' fondness for Leopold and his Congo projects. When the Italian Consul in Boma, Dr. Villa, wrote to confirm Casement's findings, describing his accusations as "exactes et irrefutables", he was not believed. Villa, like Casement, was said to be suffering from that rather common African affliction, "morbus consularis". Ibid, pp.152-54.



Italian interest in keeping friendly with a major Power far outweighed any gains Italy might make in the Congo. He hoped that, now, the wrongs in the Congo would be righted, but instructed Bonin to remember where Italian interests lay.<sup>1</sup>

It was to take the Baccari Report to convince Tittoni that British concern was motivated by more than self-interest. In November, 1902, Dr. Edoardo Baccari, a medical Captain in the Italian Navy, had been commissioned to investigate colonization possibilities in the Congo. As an additional function, Baccari was to examine closely the manner in which Italian officers were employed by the Congo State.

On both counts, Baccari's conclusions were entirely negative. The Congo State existed solely for exploitation of the natural wealth of the country, he argued. Coercion was an integral part of the System and officers' merits were measured by production figures alone. Worse, Baccari continued, the Latin temperament had great difficulty in adjusting to an oppressive climate, with the consequence that many became morbid and cruel. Ultimately, Baccari reasoned, the Congo State had hired Italians not because they were needed as officers but because the State sought the goodwill of Italy --- and her connivance

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Tittoni to Bonin, 26 June 1904, cited in L. Ranieri, *op.cit.*, pp.156-57.

With the Report of the Commission of Inquiry, Tittoni's attitude changed somewhat. Whereas he had earlier agreed with Bonin that atrocities were isolated, and in any event, inevitable consequences of European colonization (Tittoni to Bonin, 24 October 1905, cited, L. Ranieri, *op.cit.*, pp.207-08), now he wrote in the margin of a Bonin communique that the Commissioners' findings were so grave as to necessitate urgent reforms. --- marginal comments in Bonin to Tittoni, 6 November 1905, cited in L. Ranieri, *op.cit.*, p.208.

<sup>1</sup>  
in the regime.

Unfortunately for the cause of Congo reform, Baccari's volatile character and extremism weakened his findings and presented the Press Bureau in Italy with an effective wedge to split Italy into two camps on the Congo question. Upon his return to Italy, Baccari shouted noisily about Congo State efforts to impede his investigation and even credited the State with attempting to poison him. The Congophobe press, best represented by le Popolo Romano, le Giornale d'Italia, and le Secolo XIX of Genoa, made great mileage from the incident while the Congophile La Tribuna of Rome blasted Baccari as an unstable agitator of the C.R.A.<sup>2</sup>

Baccari's critical findings were never published by the Italian Government though the Italian Press made available the essentials, thanks to Baccari's public statements. Tittoni confined himself to publishing Baccari's Colonization Report on the grounds that this had

<sup>1</sup>

Ibid, pp.173-82.

Baccari did not mince words, and, as contrasted to Casement, was far more inclined to rehetoric and exaggeration:

"Je veux laisser une trainée de haine tout le long de mon passage, et je veux que mon souvenir reste comme celui d'un orage funeste tombé sur

l'État indépendant du Congo." --- Baccari to Luigi Bodio, Commissioner-General of Emigration, 29 May 1904, cited in L. Ranieri, op.cit., p.185.

<sup>2</sup>

Ibid, pp.192-212.

An Italian judicial commission was appointed in 1906 to investigate Baccari's charges of poisoning and found that Baccari's native attendant had been the well-intending culprit. The latter, discovering a cockroach in a bottle of wine, had decanted the contents into another bottle containing disinfectant.

been his essential mission.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, Baccari's controversial nature made official publication risky for a Minister whose policy was one of cautious friendship for the Congo State.<sup>2</sup>

By late 1905, the Congo question was an open one in Italy. Soon, Italian politicians, led by the Deputy for Rome, Felice Santini, were pressing for the recall of Italian officers serving in the Congo State, as well as for the removal of the exequator of the Congo Consul in Italy, Signor Elia.<sup>3</sup> Under growing pressure, Marazzi, Minister for War, finally agreed to recall all remaining Italian officers in the Congo by the end of 1907, and announced that even reserve officers would no longer be permitted to serve in Leopold's State. Finally, in 1906, Elia was declared persona non grata and was replaced by Van der Burch as Congo Consul in Italy.<sup>4</sup>

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Baccari's Report was published by the Italian Government in 1905. It condemned plans for Italian settlement in Kivu on the grounds that the climate was unsuitable and that the colonists would be isolated since no railway project was slated to connect Kivu with the Lower Congo. --- L. Ranieri, op.cit., pp.182-85; 198.

2

Miss Ranieri's final verdict on Baccari and his findings are worth examining:

"Les critiques portées par Baccari sur le Congo, souvent judicieuses et parfois même confirmées par des enquêtes ultérieures, auraient gagné en poids si elles avaient été formulées plus modérément. Mais au cours de sa mission au Congo, Baccari fut la victime d'un tempérament bileux, d'une instabilité d'humeur proverbiale et d'un système nerveux débilité par les fièvres." --- Ibid, p.191.

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The Official Organ..., December, 1905, p.27; L. Ranieri, op.cit., pp.199-200.

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L. Ranieri, op.cit., p.214.

As officers returned to Italy and began to speak freely, atrocity stories in the Italian Press abounded. With this public agitation, with the privately held findings of Baccari tucked away in its files, the Italian Foreign Office was much more ripe for another British request for a Congo conference than it had been in 1904. Though he was not in possession of all the facts, Morel seems to have been correct in concluding, with much more validity than in the case of France, that Italy was prepared, by the end of 1906, to accept a new British advance.<sup>1</sup>

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### III

Morel never tired of looking hopefully to France in his search for international support. While he enjoyed some success with individuals on the other side of the Channel he made little headway officially so long as the French Congo continued to maintain its concessionaire system. Morel confined himself, meanwhile, to listing a number of influential Congo reform supporters in France for the benefit of Official Organ... readers; names like Pierre Mille, Anatole France, Francis de Pr  sens  , Paul Viollet, Gustave Rouanet and F  licien Challaye frequently were virtually sold testimony to the existence of any concern for Congo reform in France.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>

The Official Organ..., October, 1906, p.7.

<sup>2</sup>

The Official Organ..., December, 1905, p.26; E.D. Morel, Red Rubber, 1906, p.153.

Morel also praised Le Petit Parisien and L'Aurore, two of the few papers to criticize the Report of Leopold's Commissioners in 1905.

Officially, in response to growing criticism of their regime in the French Congo,<sup>1</sup> the French Government in 1905 appointed their own private commission under the veteran explorer, de Brazza. The commission's fate was a sad one. To begin with, de Brazza, having completed the investigation, took sick and died at Dakar, and it fell to the other members of the team to submit the report to the French Government.<sup>2</sup>

Their report was so highly critical that the Minister of Colonies ordered a new Commission, composed of governors and independent functionaries headed by M. de Lanessan, to draft another report on conditions in the French Congo. Both reports were kept secret, despite promises to the contrary.<sup>3</sup>

Morel never dwelt upon these gloomy happenings in his newspaper or writings, though he most certainly was aware of the sad fate of the de Brazza and de Lanessan investigations. Although he refused to

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Pierre Mille was a particularly strong spokesman on this subject and a man of some influence in French colonial circles. In 1905, he published his Le Congo Léopoldien, for which Morel wrote an Introduction. The book attacked the concessionaire system in both the Leopoldian and French Congos. --- cited, in the Official Organ..., December, 1905, p.26.

2

Félicien Challaye, Le Congo Français, Paris, 1909, p.299.

Challaye had been a member of the de Brazza Commission and his book is one of the few sources of information on this unhappy venture.

3

Apparently, a few nominal reforms were prompted by these Reports. In 1906, the Minister of Colonies, Clementel, issued a series of four reforms which did little to change the essentials of the monopoly system. The reforms included a new and most liberal labour code, and made mandatory at least a small monetary payment to those natives who paid their taxes to the State in rubber. --- F. Challaye, op.cit., pp.303-04.

despair, and publicly declared that the Anglo-French Entente was, in itself, a positive encouragement for another international conference under Britain's initiative,<sup>1</sup> in fact, the Entente was a handicap to the cause, as Morel was later to realize.<sup>2</sup>

So long as the Entente was valued in Britain, her Government could never be direct with France over the French Congo. Even in its narrowest sense, the Entente hampered Congo reform, for the Anglo-French understanding was at root, a colonial settlement whereby each Power agreed to cultivate its own respective imperial gardens. Consciously or not, the strongest advocates of Congo reform realized this and were careful to qualify their criticisms of the Congo System when speaking of the French Congo.<sup>3</sup>

The outlook for international co-operation on the Congo issue from Germany was bleaker still.

The C.R.A. did make a few gestures. In January, 1906, John Harris accompanied a Quaker delegation to Germany and presented the C.R.A. case to Chancellor von Bülow.<sup>4</sup> Harris argued the need for a new

<sup>1</sup>  
The Official Organ..., April, 1906.

<sup>2</sup>  
Infra, p.183.

<sup>3</sup>  
Emmott, for instance, in a House of Commons debate, argued that the French Congo lacked the same degree of abuse and atrocity found in the Congo State because it lacked the same resort to organized coercion. --- Parl. Deb., Vol. 151, 3 August 1905, col.117-20.

<sup>4</sup>  
The Official Organ..., February, 1906, pp.10-12.  
As well, Morel used the good offices of F.W. Fox and Lord Lonsdale, a friend of the Kaiser's and of the C.R.A., to send a leather-bound copy of his latest work, Red Rubber, to the German Emperor. --- R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.145.

conference as the only way of securing quick reform in the Congo so long as Belgian annexation continued to be a far-off dream. Though he stressed British disinterestedness, von Bülow seemed unconvinced.<sup>1</sup>

Events in 1906 had seen a rapid deterioration in Anglo-German relations, a development which was encouraged by Germany's policy of antagonism towards France in Morocco. The precarious European diplomatic balance did not make swift Congo reform, with Germany's active help, a realistic possibility.<sup>2</sup>

Always disturbed by the lack of concerted Roman Catholic support

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So Morel surmised in a letter to Ludwig Deuss, a member of the German Colonial Society and an active advocate of Congo reform. Morel felt that von Bülow feared an Anglo-French deal in Central Africa whereby Britain would bring down the curtain on the Congo State so as to enable France to exercise her right of pre-emption. --- Morel to Deuss, 12 November 1906, cited, in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.145.

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This deterioration --- and its effect upon the cause of reform --- was acknowledged in Britain. Morel wrote:

" Unhappily, the relations between England and Germany, which do not show any tangible signs of improvement, are an obstacle to cordial co-operation at present." --- The Official Organ..., April, 1906, p.13.

With remarkable candour, for his part, Fitzmaurice wrote:

" The King of the Belgians puts about these stories for the same sort of reason which made the German Emperor put about the story that there was a change of policy in regard to France. At the same time there must be a little 'law' given to the King while his second Commission is reporting on the methods of carrying out the reforms indicated in the first Commission's report. As you know, I am not a believer in the King 'at all, at all', but one has to observe the forms of diplomacy. It is, perhaps, not unfortunate that this pause coincides with a moment when it is not our interest to be having a row with Germany." --- Fitzmaurice to Dilke, February, 1906, cited, in Gwynn and Tuckwell, op.cit., p.382f.

for his cause, Morel turned to Rome itself in 1906. In that year, Mrs. Georgina King-Lewis, a Quaker, had an audience with the Pope armed with Roman Catholic accounts of Congo atrocity, as well as with horror pictures supplied by Morel, which shocked the Pope into promising his help.<sup>1</sup>

In November, 1906, however, Reuters Agency issued a story dated from Rome with the information that the Vatican had received atrocity reports from several Roman Catholic missionaries in the Congo, notably from Jesuits, but that these reporters advised the Vatican against publishing their accounts for fear political enemies of the Congo State would make capital of them.<sup>2</sup> So long as Roman Catholics in the Congo and in Rome viewed the Congo reformers as politically interested Protestants serving the interests of Great Britain, Morel could expect little assistance from the Vatican.

Morel also sought help from other, less influential, diplomatic sources, mainly because it gave the C.R.A. faithful some news that was not entirely disappointing. Switzerland was depicted as a hotbed of Congo reform, but the fact remained that the Swiss possessed little desire to intervene, and an entire history which precluded this.

The same could be said for Canada and New Zealand, both still imperial daughters of Britain. Nevertheless, the Official Organ... could print that in Canada, "ministers of all denominations" were

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His Holiness, according to Mrs. King-Lewis, repeated several times as he looked at Morel's Congo photographs, "Poor things! Poor things." --- reported in the Official Organ..., January, 1907, p.42.

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The Times, 30 November 1906, p.5.



preparing a petition to the British Government, while in New Zealand, Prime Minister Seddon was "greatly interested."<sup>1</sup>

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#### IV

Opinion in foreign capitals was not to be compared in importance to the attitudes of Belgians themselves toward the Congo. As early as 1904, the Belgian Press was not exclusively pro-Congo. La Belgique Financière understood full well why the system of forced labour persisted:

" Speaking economically the system of the rue de Namur (the Congo Government) is worse than the famous Van den Bosch system... It is so universally condemned that its adoption can only be explained by one motive; the aim is to make the Congo State --- the word is a hard one, but we do not find any other --- into a paying farm for the Sovereign-King, and the object is nearly attained already."<sup>2</sup>

By 1906, with the Report of the Commission of Inquiry behind them, the far more influential La Patroite, the largest Catholic Party organ in Belgium, had joined the ranks of Congo reform. Though on domestic issues it remained loyal to the de Smet de Naeyer Government it could no longer hold its tongue on the Congo question. Anticipating the Reform Decrees, it published its own list of some twenty major reforms

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<sup>1</sup>  
The Official Organ..., April, 1906, p.13.

<sup>2</sup>  
La Belgique Financière of 18 August 1904, cited in E.D. Morel, King Leopold's Rule..., p.302f.

needed in the Congo, including the expropriation of the concessionaire companies, the restoration of land ownership to the natives, the establishment of cash currency, an independent magistracy, and amnesty for specific crimes. Forced labour and the labour tax would continue temporarily, but when Belgium annexed, she would review these measures with a view to their abolition.<sup>1</sup> With such a far-sighted view, it was a programme that Morel himself would have accepted.

Equally significant for Congo reform was the growth in Belgium of informed individual opposition to Leopold and his Congo practices. In 1906, there appeared two books on the Congo written by Belgian academics in which the usual platitudes were missing.

The first of these works, published early in 1906, was Étude sur la Situation de l'État Indépendant du Congo, written by Félicien Cattier, Professor of Law at the University of Brussels and an associate member of the Institut Colonial International.<sup>2</sup>

Cattier paid tribute to English humanitarians Fox Bourne and Morel for having interested the British Government into obtaining a Commission of Inquiry which itself condemned the System even if this was implicit rather than stated.<sup>3</sup> Secrecy was one of the State's worst faults and an indication of its guilt:

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<sup>1</sup> Cited, in the Official Organ..., April, 1906, p.13.

<sup>2</sup> F. Cattier, Étude sur la Situation de l'État Indépendant du Congo, Brussels, 1906, 362pp.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p.6.

"Le gouvernement congolais cessera d'être suspect quand il imitera tous les autres gouvernements coloniaux et se résoudra à publier des rapports complets, concrets, sincères, susceptibles d'être contrôlés et étudiés."<sup>1</sup>

But, this was unlikely, since the State was not a colonizer but a gigantic financial undertaking:

"Aucun esprit impartial ne pourra s'empêcher de constater que la condition morale et matérielle du noir, malgré certains services que l'État lui a rendus, est aujourd'hui plus mauvais qu'elle ne l'était en 1884."<sup>2</sup>

In effect the entire study was a plea for immediate annexation by Belgium of the Congo, but with her eyes open, for the great fortunes would cease once the necessary reforms removed forced labour from the concessionaire companies.<sup>3</sup>

Morel was elated over the Belgian Professor's account, ideologically because the latter's views echoed his own, and personally because he was credited with having contributed in no small measure to the exposure of Leopold's African practices. He rushed through the press a pamphlet which abstracted Cattier's 'exposure' in English for the benefit of English doubters.<sup>4</sup>

The second major Congo work appearing in Belgium during 1906 was

<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, p.339.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, p.351.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid, p.315.

<sup>4</sup>  
E.D. Morel, "Belgian Indictment of the Congo State --- Abstract of Prof. Cattier's Exposure", Liverpool, March, 1906, 20pp.

by a Jesuit, Father Arthur Vermeersch.<sup>1</sup> In scholarly fashion, Vermeersch presented the social aspects of the Congo question. In a chapter entitled "Caoutchouc ou Civilization", he argued that the beginning of systematic abuses rather than isolated ones was due to a growing lust for rubber and this passion would grow stronger lest something was done.<sup>2</sup> On the question of vacant lands he admitted that some such land might exist in the Congo basin but that this should be proved, not surmised, as the Congo State had done. One of the primary difficulties, he added, was that the natives were accustomed to communal land tenure and did not correlate land rights with effective occupation and use as did Europeans.<sup>3</sup> Like Cattier, Vermeersch advocated Belgian annexation, but not so much for political reasons as patriotic ones. Belgian sons had died establishing the Congo State and the nation owed it to them to turn the work into "un devoir national". This should take place as soon as possible, but "la parole est au Roi."<sup>4</sup>

With the Cattier and Vermeersch exposures the C.R.A. rested its case. Surely, now, the Congo State would be brought to an end.

Its job, unfortunately, was not done yet. The pro-Leopold de Smet de Naeyer - led Catholic Party had been in Power in Belgium for over twenty years and faced no immediate danger of defeat in the face of

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<sup>1</sup> Arthur Vermeersch, S.J., La Question Congolaise, Brussels, 1906, 375pp.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, pp.199-205.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, pp.13-15.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, pp.344-68.

Liberal Party factionalism and the prospering electorate's fear of Socialism. So long as there was prosperity --- and the present Congo System contributed to it --- the Catholic Government might be weakened by the Congo issue but hardly defeated. The moment of triumph was not yet at hand.

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**Chapter Five**

**GREAT BRITAIN AND THE "BELGIAN SOLUTION"**

**1906 - 1908**

## I

In addition to sanctioning the Reforms recommended by his Committee of Reforms, Leopold, in his Letter of 3 June 1906, devoted his attention to what was, for him, the far more crucial question of Belgian annexation of the Congo. Indeed, in a codicil appended to the Royal Letter, Leopold sought to maintain his influence from beyond the grave:

" In taking possession of the Congo sovereignty, with all the goods, rights and advantages attached to that sovereignty, my legatee will assume, as is just and necessary, the obligation of respecting all engagements of the State which have been made over towards third parties, and similarly to respect all measures which I have taken to attribute land to natives, donations to philanthropic and religious work, the formation of the 'Domain de la Couronne', the establishment of the 'Domain National', as also the obligation to diminish in no manner the integral revenues of these various institutions, without ensuring them at the same time an equivalent compensation. I consider the fulfilment of these principles as essential to ensure the Congo sovereignty, the indispensable resources and force necessary to the accomplishment of its task. By entirely relinquishing the Congo and its property in favour of Belgium, I must, short of carrying out a national work, endeavour to ensure for Belgium in perpetuity the advantages which I leave to her."<sup>1</sup>

If, however, Leopold could not persuade his subjects to wait until he died before taking over the Congo, he was determined that any annexation during his lifetime should be entirely favourable to his interests. Accordingly, he spent the greater part of 1906 and 1907 tidying and

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<sup>1</sup>

Cited, in the Official Organ..., June, 1906, p.4.

reorganizing his many Congo investments, secure in the knowledge that involved diplomatic negotiations would precede any annexation and give him the required breathing spell.

Firstly, he announced his Mining Plan for the Congo, which granted extensive mineral rights to three newly created giant trusts.<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, Leopold borrowed a page from the book of such commercial giants as Nobel, Rockefeller, and Rhodes to create a huge foundation out of the resources of the *Domaine de la Couronne*. This *Fondation de la Couronne*, as Leopold named his state within a state, had a net worth estimated as high as seventy million francs,<sup>2</sup> giving Leopold sufficient independent wealth to make the Civil Lists unnecessary. With its resources behind him, Leopold embarked upon a series of

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The Companies, all created in 1906, were l'Union Minière du Haut-Katanga, la Compagnie du Chemin de Fer du Bas-Congo au Katanga, and la Société Internationale Forestière et Minière du Congo (Forminière). The principal investor in each company was the gigantic Belgian trust, the *Société Générale*, although Tanganyika Concessions Limited, a British firm, had some interest in Union Minière while an American syndicate formed by Thomas F. Ryan, James D. Stillman, the Guggenheim brothers, J.P. Morgan and others had a large slice of Forminière stocks.

Leopold possessed enough of the shares in each company to make his scheme worthwhile, for his motive was to preserve the mining wealth of the Congo for the Belgian Crown in a personal sense by binding Belgium to third parties before the fact. --- Neal Ascherson, The King Incorporated, Leopold II in the Age of Trusts, London, 1963, pp.266-67; R.L. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, New York, 1928, ii, pp.442-43; R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.91-92, for American participation.

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F. Cattier, op.cit., p.217.

Professor Stengers, working from Belgian State Papers, estimates the worth of the Foundation at forty million francs, but adds that in reality, its net value was far higher; Leopold, he finds, paid his contractors with Congo State debentures so that, in effect, his capital never was consumed. --- J. Stengers, op.cit., pp.169-71.



expensive personal projects, including the raising of a Congo Museum at Tervueren, a golf course at Ostend, and a Chinese Pavilion at Laeken.<sup>1</sup>

As added protection in case his Belgian opponents should not allow the Fondation de la Couronne to stand, Leopold formed a second trust, la Fondation de Niederfullbach, whose net value was calculated at forty-five million francs.<sup>2</sup>

This Fondation was essentially one of direction and finance for several companies operating under it. La Compagnie des Sites, for instance, build public works in Belgium while, in France, La Société de la Côte d'Azur erected a Royal Family residence.

A complete account of Leopold's financial manipulations will never be known. Much, the Belgian Government later concealed, partly since it was afraid to challenge the omnipotent Société Générale and partly because it chose not to embarrass the Belgian Crown after Leopold's death.

Leopold, then, by late 1906, was prepared to meet the challenge of a Belgian Parliament finally bent upon a serious consideration of annexation. A nine day debate devoted to the Congo issue took place in the Belgian Parliament between 20 November and 14 December 1906, with both British and Belgian observers closely watching proceedings

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J. Stengers, op.cit., p.182, provides as complete a picture of Leopold's manipulations as exists.

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Ibid, pp.250-70.

throughout.<sup>1</sup> At once, the issue became a constitutional one --- could Leopold, a Constitutional Monarch, dictate to the Belgian nation in the fashion of his arrogant codicil of June, 1906?<sup>2</sup> In the face of determined opposition to the King's terms from Vandervelde, Lorand, Beernaert and Hymans, de Smet de Naeyer's Government was forced to accept an Order of the Day which described Leopold's Manifesto as in the nature of "solemn recommendations", not stern commands. In addition, the Parliamentary Committee first appointed in 1901 to study the question of Belgian annexation was to be revived in order to draft a Colonial Law, and the Committee was urged to "hasten its labours, and lay its report at an early date." In order to facilitate the Committee's task, the Government promised to provide full evidence of the condition of the Congo State's finances.<sup>3</sup>

If, at last, it appeared as though Belgium was prepared to annex, the crucial question now centred around conditions for such a takeover. The composition of the revived Parliamentary Committee, while slightly weighted in favour of the Congophile group, did not preclude reform, including in its membership as it did such Congo reform stalwarts as

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In Britain, Morel provided lengthy excerpts of the debate in the Official Organ..., January, 1907, pp.14-30.

The Times covered the debates thoroughly, offering daily reports from 29 November through to 17 December 1906.

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M. Hymans, a leading Liberal Party spokesman, termed the Royal Letter an insult to the intelligence of Belgium and a demonstration of the lack of faith the King held in his Parliament and people. --- The Times, 29 November 1906, p.9.

3

The Official Organ..., January, 1907, p.1.

Emile Vandervelde, Georges Lorand and Auguste Beernaert.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, things went badly for the reformers. At the initial meeting of the Committee on 31 January 1907, it was learned that Leopold was reneging on his promise to furnish financial evidence.<sup>2</sup> In May, one of the reformers, Helleputte, crossed the floor and shifted the balance of power on the Committee in Leopold's favour.<sup>3</sup>

Though the reformers were able to secure some concessions, the draft Colonial Bill produced by the Committee and made public in September, 1907, was singularly inadequate for their purposes.<sup>4</sup> While the new draft did offer genuine improvement in the administration of justice, it continued to leave executive and legislative power with the King. Moreover, financial statements were to remain immune from Parliamentary scrutiny and Leopold was obliged only to reveal his expenses for office rents and salaries in Brussels.<sup>5</sup>

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Of the seventeen members of the Committee, each faction --- Congophile and Congophobe --- could rely upon eight supporters. The remaining member, M. Cooreman of the Catholic Party, had never gone on record one way or the other. The leading supporters of Leopold were the Committee Chairman, M. Schollaert, later to become Prime Minister, Woeste, Delbeke, and the future Belgian Colonial Minister, Jules Renkin.

(This breakdown was made by Morel in the Official Organ..., January, 1907, p.31, and corroborated by the Times' Brussels correspondent, the Times, 4 April 1907, p.7.)

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The Times, 4 April 1907, p.7.

3

The Times, 4 May 1907, p.13.

4

Text of the draft Colonial Bill in the Times, 25 September 1907.

5

The Official Organ..., November, 1907, pp.10-13.

There were, however, two sides to the issue of annexation, one dealing with the mechanics of future Belgian rule, with which the Parliamentary Committee concerned itself, and the other involving the question of negotiating terms of transfer with the nominally independent Congo State. In this second case, the scales were heavily weighted in Leopold's favour. The eight man commission formed to negotiate the transfer of the Congo consisted of four representatives from each Government, and was, accordingly, entirely Congophile in composition.<sup>1</sup>

In early July, 1907, the new Catholic Prime Minister, de Trooz,<sup>2</sup> told the Belgian Chamber that negotiations with the Congo State would begin immediately, and, on 3 December of that year, the Congo State Bulletin Officiel announced and published the Treaty of Transfer of the

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It went without saying that the four Congo State representatives would be loyal to Leopold's wishes. As for the Belgian Government men, all were known to be supporters of the King. Van Maldeghem, the President of the old Committee of Reform was also first President of the Belgian Court of Cassation; N. Beco was Leopold's Governor of Brabant; M. Joostens was Belgian Minister to Spain; M. van Cutsen was Director-General of the Belgian Treasury and a governor of the Congo Railway Company. --- The Times, 24 July 1907, p.10; the Official Organ..., September, 1907, pp.2-6.

To substantiate his claim that these men were all Congophile, Morel cited Cattier's newspaper, La Gazette, which had termed the eight commissioners "the most devoted and faithful servants of the Congo State". --- Ibid, pp.2-6.

2

In April, 1907, the de Smet de Naeyer Ministry had resigned over a domestic issue and de Trooz had agreed to form a new Catholic Party Ministry. Indeed, three members of the Parliamentary Committee sitting to draft a Colonial Bill joined the Government, Renkin taking Justice, Delbeke Public Works, and Helleputte, the traitor to reform, accepting the Railways portfolio. The entire nine man Cabinet was held to be strongly pro-Leopold on the Congo issue. --- The Times, 3 May 1907, p.5; 4 May 1907, p.13.

The Official Organ..., May, 1907, pp.2-8.

Congo to Belgium.<sup>1</sup>

Subject to ratification, as was the Colonial Bill, the Treaty preserved intact Leopold's Domaine de la Couronne and the concessionaire companies; in a word, it perpetuated the System. Belgium would gain a Royal dependency, not a colony.

Belgian reformers' difficulties were compounded by disagreement among themselves as to fundamentals --- an affliction from which the Congophile group did not suffer. All agreed that annexation of the Congo would be costly since reprise could only be accepted on the basis of thoroughgoing reform. Whereas Beernaert, Cattier, and Vandervelde were willing to accept this burden, the Radical spokesman, Georges Lorand, was not.

Lorand maintained that in the face of an indifferent and ill-informed Belgian public, Leopold would secure annexation with only token reforms. Rather than see his country become an accessory after the fact, he argued that a referendum or an election on the Congo question was imperative since the present Chamber had no mandate for annexation.<sup>2</sup>

In his opposition to annexation, Lorand shared the official policy of the Socialist Party, though, ironically, the Party's leader, Emile Vandervelde, dissented. At a strategy conference held on 30 June 1907, Belgian Socialists adopted a resolution declaring annex-

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The Times, 7 December 1907, p.91; F. Masoin, i, op.cit., p.210.

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Lorand in L'Express, Brussels, 18 December 1906, cited in the Official Organ..., January, 1907, p.32.

ation under any conditions contrary to Socialist principles and favouring an internationalization of rule in the Congo as the most desirable solution.<sup>1</sup> Vandervelde personally rejected this argument because he felt that Belgium, by her unpleasant association with the Congo State, owed a debt to the oppressed Congo peoples which she must strive to repay.<sup>2</sup>

A more hopeful omen for Congo reform in Belgium was the growing awareness of fundamentals regarding the Congo in the Belgian Press. Leopold was still supported by l'Indépendance Belge and l'Etoile Belge, to be sure, but both journals combined represented daily circulations of only 46,000, compared to 264,000 for the now anti-Congo Le Peuple, La Patriote, and La Gazette.<sup>3</sup>

By 1907, then, Belgian Congo reformers were asserting themselves

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The Times, 2 July 1907, p.5.

Again, in 1908, a Socialist pamphlet maintained that since the Congo lived on rubber, a fall in market prices would place an awesome burden on the Belgian taxpayer. Moreover, it was argued, if the Congo proved valuable, it would be taken away from Belgium in the same manner in which Britain seized the Transvaal, the United States took Cuba and the Philippines and Russia grabbed Manchuria. Such was the 'ethic' of capitalism!! --- Société Coopérative, "Vive le Congo! Pourquoi? Je ne le sais pas! À Bas le Congo! Pourquoi? Si vous voulez le savoir, lisez," Gand, 1908, 35pp.

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The Times, 2 July 1907, p.5.

On domestic issues, of course, Vandervelde was more orthodox. Analyzing the social structure of Belgium and paraphrasing Marx, he described his nation as "the paradise of capitalists", and, alternatively, "the hell, or at any rate, the purgatory of the working classes." --- E. Vandervelde, "The Future of Belgium", National Review, Vol. 47, June, 1906, p.595.

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Cited, in the Official Organ..., February, 1907, p.20.

Le Peuple was the Belgian Socialist Party organ. See also, Supra, p.134.

as never before. The King still remained strong where it counted --- in the Government and in the Committees appointed to negotiate annexation. A Belgian takeover seemed certain, but would Leopold have his way and secure a merely nominal transfer?

Belgian attitudes towards annexation were the subject of close scrutiny in Great Britain. Sir Edward Grey, a now convinced believer in the Belgian Solution, was optimistic. After the December, 1906 Belgian debate, Runciman, speaking for Grey in the House, observed that Belgium would soon annex the Congo and that, in the meantime, Britain could not prejudice this happy result by summoning another international conference.<sup>1</sup> With very little variation this was the British Government's theme throughout 1907 --- a combination of faith in the Belgian Solution not always supported by events --- and restraint lest British interference prejudice the desired result.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Parl. Deb., Vol. 167, 19 December 1906, col. 1508-09.

<sup>2</sup> The following declarations by Government spokesmen during 1907 support this contention: Grey agreed that Belgian annexation would only be considered acceptable by His Majesty's Government if it meant thoroughgoing reform, but, at the same time, Britain would avoid action "which was likely to prejudice a favourable result." --- Parl. Deb., Vol. 169, 19 February 1907, col. 709, 25 February 1907, col. 1226-27.

Grey stated that Belgium must arrive at reform voluntarily and independently and he was confident of this happening:

" I cannot suppose for a moment that the Belgian Government would accept a nominal responsibility which would be merely a veil put in front of the old order of things, and, while having a nominal responsibility, would be content to allow real control not to be in its own hands, and abuses still to go on behind the veil." --- Parl. Deb., Vol. 174, 15 May 1907, col. 1011-16.

Fitzmaurice attributed delay in Belgian annexation to the ministerial crisis and clung to his faith in Belgium:

" In any case, until I see it in black and white, I shall refuse to believe that the Belgian Parliament and the Belgian people will not do their duty in this matter." --- Parl. Deb., (Lords) Vol. 179, 29 July 1907, col. 402-37.

If the British Government was reluctant to assert its views upon Belgium, it was not from want of prodding from C.R.A. sympathizers. During 1907, Parliament heard a host of spokesmen criticize the Congo State and offer much more radical solutions than British passiveness while Belgium debated her course of action.

Sir Charles Dilke favoured Belgian annexation only if it were immediate and with full reform, and he suggested that a more fruitful alternative would be British encouragement of France in exercising her Congo option.<sup>1</sup> Several months later, Dilke declared that Leopold was depriving Belgium of the facts needed to reach a firm decision and suggested that the British Government help fill the gaps.<sup>2</sup>

E.N. Bennett was still more apprehensive. With a Leopoldian Cabinet in power, he maintained, Leopold would secure an annexation favourable to his interests. This would force British Congo reformers into the unhappy position of having to attack not the King but the neutral and strategically located Belgian nation. Despite the fact that the times were unfavourable for an international conference, he continued, Britain must take the risk and summon one.<sup>3</sup>

In the Lords, Monkswell was most informed and outspoken. Arguing that British restraint until Belgian terms were known demonstrated British weakness --- a false impression ---, he criticized Grey for

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<sup>1</sup>  
Parl. Deb., Vol. 174, 15 May 1907, col. 984-1076.

<sup>2</sup>  
Parl. Deb., Vol. 179, 1 August 1907, col. 1253-82.

<sup>3</sup>  
Parl. Deb., Vol. 174, 15 May 1907, col. 984-1076.



not firmly informing Belgium that Britain would act unilaterally if annexation proposals did not comply with the Berlin Act.<sup>1</sup> Monkswell was, significantly, supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury during the debate, who, quoting Sir Harry Johnston's 'conflagration thesis',<sup>2</sup> suggested that the Government adopt a more militant attitude.

Feeling was running so high that even Irish M.P.'s felt obliged to speak out. Mr. Hugh Law, of Donegal West, rose to rebuke McKean for speaking for the Irish Party against Congo reform and stated that he, for one, agreed with Dilke, Parker, Bennett and company.<sup>3</sup>

The British Press, during 1907, mirrored Parliament in its Congo views. All agreed that the present regime was detestable, but only a few completely accepted the view of the Congo reformers that British intervention into the question was desirable before the Belgian Parliamentary Committee reported back.

The Manchester Guardian came closest to total agreement with the Congo reform forces:

" But it is necessary not only to conciliate legitimate apprehensions, but to impress upon those who have a financial interest in the perpetuation of abuses that our patience has its limits. If the Belgian people is demonstrably unable to overcome the opposition to reform we must be resolved to lend them a support more concrete than vocal sympathy."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Parl. Deb., (Lords) Vol. 179, 29 July 1907, col. 402-37.

<sup>2</sup> See Supra, p.104.

<sup>3</sup> Parl. Deb., Vol. 179, 1 August 1907, col. 1253-82.

<sup>4</sup> The Manchester Guardian, 16 May 1907, p.6.

The Times was much more a weather-vane of Government policy. It, too, asserted its faith in the Belgian Parliament, but at the same time cautioned:

"... Only when Belgian rule and responsibility take the place of the present Administration can those who have striven for Congo reform afford to relax their efforts."<sup>1</sup>

Though the Times could not disguise its disappointment when it saw the draft Colonial Bill, it still expressed the hope that the Belgian Chamber would scarcely approve such a document.<sup>2</sup>

The Westminister Gazette also adopted a pro-Grey policy, arguing that the responsibility of office tempered his words:

" The critics of Sir Edward Grey do not appear to suggest that he should do more than he does, but they demand that he should say more. It is, on the contrary, his disposition rather to do more than he says, than to say more than he can do... The enthusiasts do an excellent work, and it is their business to put their case at its highest, but the responsible Minister is bound to mix a little water with their wine."<sup>3</sup>

For his part, E.D. Morel, in 1907, shifted his policy from a frontal attack upon Leopold to one of constant prodding of Sir Edward Grey. In Morel's view, Grey's blandly optimistic pro-Belgian policy was becoming a great danger to the C.R.A. cause. Grey held his hand,

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<sup>1</sup>  
The Times, 17 December 1906, p.9.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Times, 27 September 1907, p.11.  
The actual words were:

"... it (the Colonial Bill) does not afford the flimsiest guarantee of any improvement in the methods by which the Congo is governed."

<sup>3</sup>  
Cited in the Official Organ..., August, 1907, p.27.

reluctant to interfere with what he referred to as Belgium's "freedom of action" when, by acting, he could unilaterally save the day. Morel remarked:

" Our own views have never changed. England can bring this Congo iniquity to an end whenever she chooses to put her foot down..."<sup>1</sup>

Morel argued that a full five months had passed since Grey had promised not to interfere. The C.R.A., said Morel, accepted this advice temporarily though it did not agree. Now Britain must speak out and act. Belgians were being denied the facts. Leopold was courting Belgian fiscal conservatives by stressing that annexation would not cost the Belgian taxpayer a single franc. Only a small minority of Belgians realized that Belgian rule without grants-in-aid would only perpetuate the monopoly system. The British Government should make a full disclosure, publishing all its Congo information, doubling its Consular staff in the Congo and providing them with steam launches, establishing consular jurisdiction, withdrawing exequators from Congo Consuls in Great Britain, forbidding Congo rubber ships access to British waters, blocking off the Nile from Congo State access.<sup>2</sup>

This active programme was necessary, Morel held, if immediate relief for the suffering Congo native were to be effected. A responsible Belgian annexation would take time, and, during the interim,

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<sup>1</sup>  
The Official Organ..., March, 1907, pp.1-2.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Official Organ..., April, 1907, pp.2-3.

something had to be done for the helpless Congolese.<sup>1</sup>

If humanitarian considerations were not enough to force Grey's hand, perhaps self-interest might provide sufficient motive. In July, 1907, Morel, elaborating on Sir Harry Johnston's 'conflagration thesis',<sup>2</sup> maintained that the Congo issue had global implications. The Congo was the heartland of Central Africa. Racial war there could not be localized; it would spread, leading to a colonial conflict that could grow into a world war.<sup>3</sup>

On 7 November 1907, in an "Appeal to the Nation", Morel returned to his earlier theme of Belgian irresponsibility and British inactivity.<sup>4</sup>

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Morel's conscience was troubled by the fact that during all this time no significant change had taken place in the Congo. Despondently, he wrote to Emmott:

"We have not saved a single human life on the Congo." --- Morel to Emmott, 16 April 1907, cited, R. Wuliger, *op.cit.*, p.162.

Seven months later, Morel again returned to the problem of interminable delay, this time stating publicly:

"The governing statesmen of the world would be making of themselves personal participators in crime if they permitted the carnival of outrage to go on uninterruptedly on the Congo, while discussion dragged out in Belgium for another twelve months." --- The Official Organ..., November, 1907, pp.2-3.

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*Supra*, p.104.

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The Official Organ..., July, 1907, pp.7-14.

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The "Appeal to the Nation" appeared in all the major British newspapers and was signed by an impressive list of personalities, including the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President of the Free Church Council, the Presidents of the National Liberal Association and the C.R.A., the Lord Mayors of the principal British cities, and the heads of various missionary societies. --- The Times, 7 November 1907, p.7. The Manchester Guardian, 7 November 1907, p.6.

The Belgian King and Government could not be trusted; the Belgian people were being misinformed. The draft Colonial Bill was a sham trick of Leopold's to keep financial control while shouldering Belgium with the burden of administering the colony. Great Britain could not and would not accept "the shadow for the substance." She must prepare for unilateral action if no better terms for annexation than this were forthcoming.

By the end of 1907 Morel was alarmed about the possibility of having to fight Belgium should annexation go through. Reluctant to oppose a neutral Parliamentary government, Morel stepped up his pressure on Grey. The 'be kind to Belgium' policy had failed miserably. If Belgium annexed now, under the terms of the draft Colonial Bill and the Transfer Treaty it would be a disaster, but, if she did not, Congo reform was back where it had started in 1904.<sup>1</sup>

Morel could not restrain his growing resentment against Grey. In the Official Organ... he published a biting dialogue between two fictitious diplomats:

- "A. "How is the Congo question going to develop?"  
 B. "There is no Congo question, my dear friend."  
 A. "Indeed! I was under the impression there was."  
 B. "That was a mistake. There is a psychological question only, now."  
 A. "Oh! Leopold."  
 B. "No, the British Foreign Minister."<sup>2</sup>
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<sup>1</sup>  
 The Official Organ..., December, 1907, pp.2-11.

<sup>2</sup>  
 The Official Organ..., December, 1907, p.11.

## II

The winter of 1908 brought with it important new developments in the annexation negotiations in Belgium. Premier de Trooz had died in late December and Schollaert, the same man who had served as Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee created to draft the Colonial Bill, had consented to form a Government.

More significantly, Leopold had at last backed down on the question of the Fondation de la Couronne, and agreed to sign an Additional Act to the Treaty of Transfer whereby he surrendered to Belgium the *Domaine de la Couronne* in return for a compensation of fifty million francs. In addition, he was permitted to retain as his personal property, a plantation of 40,000 hectares where experimental coffee and cocoa growing would be carried out.<sup>1</sup>

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In a letter to Schollaert on 24 February 1908, Leopold agreed to surrender the *Domaine*, and he signed the Additional Act to the Transfer Treaty on 5 March. On 25 March, the Parliamentary Committee approved the Additional Act by a vote of ten to two, with five abstentions. --- F. Masoin, *op.cit.*, i, pp.210-11.

This was not really a capitulation. The draft Treaty of Transfer and Colonial Bill had been blocked in committee on this very question of the *Domaine de la Couronne* and its Fondation, and Leopold was in danger of losing everything. This way, his complete financial independence was checked, but he still possessed legislative and executive independence over the future Belgian colony.

Leopold, however, was unhappy, and displayed his childish pique in full public view. In a letter to the Belgian Olympic Games Committee, in answer to their request for funds to enable Belgians to participate, Leopold pleaded that the suppression of the Fondation, which had been designed to encourage everything useful to the Belgian nation, made it difficult to find the funds for the request!! --- reported in the Times, 11 June 1908, p.5.

As for Leopold's other ploy, the Fondation de Niederfullbach, its fate was not decided until after Leopold's death, when his daughters --- who were virtually disinherited by this Fondation --- contested its legality in the Belgian Courts. In 1913, the Brussels Court of Appeals ruled that the Fondation's funds belonged to the State, and, in 1921, the properties included in the Fondation were divided between Belgium and her Colony. --- J. Stengers, *op.cit.*, pp.25-70.

On 14 April 1908 there opened an extended Congo debate in the Belgian Parliament that was to continue, save for adjournment for the 24 May elections, until annexation became a reality in August of that year.<sup>1</sup> With Leopold's surrender of the Fondation de la Couronne, the outcome was a forgone conclusion. Liberals Beernaert, Hymans, Franck and Delvaux now felt free to support annexation and debate ended on 14 August. On 20 August the Colonial Bill and the amended Transfer Treaty passed the Chamber by a vote of eighty-three to fifty-four, with nine abstentions,<sup>2</sup> and on 9 September it went through the Senate, sixty-three to twenty-four, with eleven abstentions, out of a total of one hundred and ten. Annexation was promulgated on 18 October 1908, and Belgium took over the administration of the Congo State on 15 November of that year.<sup>3</sup>

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Belgian Electoral Law called for election of only one-half the Chamber at a given time, and, though the Catholic Party lost two seats, reducing their Chamber majority to eight, the results could hardly be said to have indicated a trend away from the Schollaert Government or its annexation policy. The Socialists, increasing their number by five, recorded the biggest gain, but the failure of the Left Opposition to gain a victory destroyed Lorand's argument that the Catholic Government had no mandate to annex the Congo. --- Supra, p.45. Election figures were given in the Times, 16 June 1908, p.11.

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The eighty-three aye votes, as Morel was quick to note, totalled exactly fifty per cent. of the Chamber's full complement of one hundred and sixty-six seats. This, Morel argued, was hardly an indication of the Will of the Belgian people. --- E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, pp.208-09.

On the other hand, the fifty-four no votes were virtually all cast by Socialists, excluding their leader, Vandervelde, who abstained. Georges Lorand, who had consistently opposed annexation, was another nay-sayer. --- F. Masoin, op.cit., i, p.219.

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F. Masoin, op.cit., i, p.219; F. Challaye, op.cit., p.308; R. Buell, op.cit., ii, p.444.

Though changes had been made in the Treaty of Transfer, very little alteration took place in the draft Colonial Bill which became the new Belgian Colonial Charter. Certainly, Congo reformers were happy to see Belgium get the best terms possible in her transfer negotiations, but it was the Belgian programme - or lack of same --- for future rule in the Congo that most deeply concerned both the C.R.A. and the British Foreign Office.

During 1908 a series of important communiques were exchanged between the British and Belgian Governments on the issue of reform in the Congo. On 27 March 1908 Grey forwarded to Hardinge an official Memorandum stating the British Government position.<sup>1</sup> This Memorandum is an invaluable indication of the ambivalence in Grey's policy that Morel found so irritating.

To begin with, Grey asserted the British right to offer suggestions and observations on the Congo State and its administration. Recognizing that the final choice of systems and methods was up to Belgium, Grey listed three priorities that, however Belgium solved them, solve them she must. Firstly, some relief must be afforded the natives from their presently excessive taxation. Secondly, land grants must be given the natives so that they could not only grow more food, but also accumulate surpluses enabling them to trade. Finally, traders of all nationalities must be allowed to buy enough land to establish factories and direct trade relations with the natives.

Defending these points with concrete evidence drawn from the

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Grey to Hardinge, 27 March 1908, in Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 3 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 4135, pp.88-120.



Consular Reports of Michell, Beak and Thesiger,<sup>1</sup> the British Memorandum went on to criticize severely the concessionaire companies, as well as the ineffectual Reform Decrees of 1906. The concessionaire's right to

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See Supra, pp.85-86 for Consular Reports in 1906.

During 1907, British Consuls in the Congo had been instructed to travel extensively and report on the effect of the new Reform Decrees. Their reports completely confirmed the ugly conclusions Morel, in the pages of the Official Organ..., had been reaching with respect to the palliative Leopoldian Reforms and the character of the personnel expected to apply them.

In Ubanghi and Stanley Falls district, Vice-Consul Michell found:

"As I anticipated however, in my (earlier) Memorandum, the new orders and circulars considerably modify the apparent sense of the Reform Decrees, and that, in several particulars, to the disadvantage of the natives." --- Africa No. 1 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 3880, p.6.

Based on his travels in Katanga, Vice-Consul Beak criticized the Congo State's European personnel. He paraphrased the Belgian quip, 'ses affaires marchaient mal; il est parti pour le Congo', and added his own observations:

"The failure to attract suitable candidates is not difficult to understand when it is realized that the whole service is run on commercial lines, that promotion depends not on administrative capacity, but on ability to collect taxes. The absolutism of King Leopold and his intolerance of failure have resulted in the creation of what is known locally as 'l'esclavage blanc' --- more pitiable, perhaps, than any black slavery." --- Beak to the Foreign Office, 6 September 1907, Africa No. 1 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 3880, p.55.

Finally, summarizing the findings of his Vice-Consuls in a General Report to Grey, Consul Thesiger had this to say about the labour tax:

"... it presses with extreme severity upon the native, who is practically tied down, in those districts where the tax is enforced, from one year's end to another to a life of continual labour for the State, receiving in return for his produce a price far below market value, and for his work a remuneration less even than the low cost of labour as fixed by the State itself." --- Consul Thesiger to Grey, 31 December 1907, in Africa No. 1 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 3880, p.59.

levy labour taxes was condemned:

" It amounts, in fact, to a system of forced labour differing in name only from slavery, and cannot, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, be reconciled with Article VI of the Berlin Act."<sup>1</sup>

The Reform Decrees were dealt with no less severely:

" It is impossible to escape the suspicion that, while pretending to introduce real measures of reform by the Decrees of the 3rd June, 1906, every effort was made to render those Decrees illusory and to perpetuate the system of bondage and slavery in order to swell the profits of the monopoly system."<sup>2</sup>

Nor was the British Note entirely negative; it offered a series of suggestions designed to bring about the changes considered to be absolutely necessary. To alleviate the oppressive taxation, the Belgians should introduce currency in their State as quickly as possible. The concessionaire companies should be required to pay the native a fixed and fair wage, by law, else exploitation would continue despite paper reforms. Lastly, to give the native just opportunity, large increases in allotments of land to them should be made; in this respect, it should be noted by Belgium that the natives are nomadic and need ample space to move from agricultural season to season within their tribal areas.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Grey to Hardinge, 27 March 1908, in Africa No. 3 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 4135, p.88.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.120.

<sup>3</sup> Observing these elements in the British Note, one is tempted to suggest that, somehow, E.D. Morel managed to penetrate the corridors of the Foreign Office and supervise the drafting of the Note. These aspects of the Memorandum would not have seemed out of place in the columns of the Official Organ...!

Unfortunately for the cause of Congo reform, Grey was too cautious to terminate the Note without paying some homage to Belgian sensitivity. He therefore inserted two paragraphs of praise and self-effacement which drastically weakened the force of his proposals:

"... (His Majesty's Government) has every confidence in the earnest desire of the Belgian Government to introduce thorough and far-reaching reforms into the present system of administration in the Congo, and they are therefore particularly anxious to maintain an attitude of strict forbearance, and to abstain from any act which might be construed as interfering with the complete liberty of action of the Belgian Government in the future management of the internal affairs of the Congo."<sup>1</sup>

Still more damaging was a paragraph which read:

" As already stated, His Majesty's Government merely submit these views for the friendly consideration of the Belgian Government, and if the latter have measures in view other than those above suggested, His Majesty's Government would greatly appreciate any information which could be communicated to them on the subject."<sup>2</sup>

When the White Paper containing this Memorandum was tabled in June, 1908, the words 'merely submit' were sufficient to cause Morel to lose not only his composure, but any faith he still may have nourished that Grey would protect the Congolese Africans' interests.<sup>3</sup> Also disturbing was the complete absence of any reference in the Memorandum to the

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Africa No. 3 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 4135, p.88.

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Ibid, p.90.

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Morel bitterly repeated the words 'merely submit' in his attack upon Grey in Great Britain and the Congo, pp.206-07, published in 1909.

possibility that Britain would withhold recognition of any annexation that did not provide for concrete reforms. Indeed, Grey seemed to give Belgium a free hand, based upon a naive optimism that any one acquainted with the last decade of Congo history could hardly share.

The Belgian reply to the British Memorandum was presented to Hardinge on 25 April 1908.<sup>1</sup> Though it included several admirable reforms to be included in the new Colonial Law, such as the employment of currency, a good and rapid judicial system, a diminution in the amount of forced labour required by the State and the gradual replacement of a money tax for the oppressive labour tax, the Belgian Memorandum refused to promise concrete changes in the organization of the concessionaire companies. Arguing that these companies were, after all, composed of individuals who had accumulated vested interests in the State, the Note would go no further than to hint obliquely at possible changes:

"It is, on the other hand, to be remarked that the maintenance of the Companies does not exclude the possibility of fresh arrangements being made."<sup>2</sup>

The general tone of the Memorandum was one of vagueness and of gradualism concerning reform. First, the Belgian Government would have to study the nature of other colonial regimes in the Congo Basin with a view to determining how the principles of the Berlin Act were applied so as to harmonize with rights granted to companies and individuals.

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<sup>1</sup> Africa No. 3 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 4135, pp.123-25.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p.125.

It took very superficial acquaintance with France's practice in the French Congo to realize that Belgium was seriously considering maintaining the concessionaire system --- granted, in modified form --- so long as France continued to do so.

Lastly, the Belgian Government summed up its position in words reminiscent of those employed by her King twenty-three years earlier at Berlin:

"They (the Belgian Government's plans) can be summarized thus: an immediate amelioration in the moral and material conditions of existence of the inhabitants of the Congo, and the extension, as rapidly as possible, of a system of economic freedom to the different regions of that vast country."<sup>1</sup>

Responding to the indignation of the Congo reformers both in Parliament and outside, Grey's reply, given on 23 June 1908, was decidedly stronger than his earlier Memorandum of 27 March.<sup>2</sup> Now, at long last, Grey committed himself to the withholding of recognition subject to specific and detailed pledges from Belgium that she intended to uphold both the letter and spirit of the Berlin Act:

"The Belgian Government would of course, in accordance with the provisions of the Berlin Act which was binding upon all the Powers, notify us of the annexation, and we must reserve our liberty to discuss the actual measures to be applied in the Congo by the Belgian Government before committing ourselves in reply to that notification."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, p.125.

<sup>2</sup>  
Grey to Hardinge, 23 June 1908, in Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 4 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 4178, pp.129-31.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid, p.129.

And, again:

"His Majesty's Government... would urge upon them (Belgian Government) the desirability of affording at the earliest possible moment some definite statement, as distinct from general assurances, of the measures they propose to take to give effect to their intention to respect the Treaty rights as explained in the correspondence which has taken place between the two Governments."<sup>1</sup>

The formal Belgian Memorandum of 12 July 1908<sup>2</sup> was somewhat conciliatory. Belgium wanted it understood that she was a respector of Treaties and that her new colony would be governed according to the Berlin Act. However, at this time, the Note stated, it could only repeat the earlier promise that land grants to natives would be made once inquiry into tribal needs was made, that care would be taken to see that the concessionaire companies did not infringe upon State laws, and that domain lands would be made available to missionaries and traders.

Earlier in the correspondence the British Government had asked their Belgian counterpart to promise to submit insoluble questions to arbitration. Now, the Belgian Government hedged on the weak grounds that her Parliament had to approve such a decision and that it could not be so bound in advance. It did concede that it was sympathetic to arbitration when all else failed, but hoped that the problem would become academic by virtue of a settlement among all Powers possessing territory within the Conventional Congo Basin. Hopefully, the Note

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, p.131.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, pp.132-40.

requested that the British Government accept the transfer of the Congo to Belgium "without reservation".<sup>1</sup>

From the reformers' point of view, lack of courage was Grey's only weakness. There was no doubt that he grasped the fundamentals of the Congo System or that he earnestly sought a constructive change. The difficulty was in his reluctance to make Britain's attitude and intentions quite clear to Belgium.<sup>2</sup>

Grey's Memorandum of 27 March<sup>3</sup> was, literally, a case of the British Government's "submitting" her views for Belgium to consider, or not, as she saw fit. On the other hand, the 23 June despatch<sup>4</sup> seemed to indicate that Britain could reserve her recognition of the transfer pending Belgian reforms.

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The French text read:

"... qu'ils ne persisteraient pas dans ses réserves." --- Ibid, p.133.

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It should be stressed that the vacillation and equivocation attributed herein to Grey is on the basis of his public statements in Parliament and in correspondence with the Belgian Government. Grey, privately, could be far more outspoken, as in a personal letter to Sir Arthur Hardinge, when he wrote:

"... My own personal feeling is that we are justified in any measure which will result in taking the Congo out of the hands of the King. He has forfeited every claim to it he ever had; and to take the Congo away from him without compensation would be less than justice, for it would leave him still with all the gains he has made by his monstrous system." --- Grey to Hardinge (private), 28 February 1908, cited in G.M. Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon, London, 1937, pp.198-200.

The sad point was that there were several worlds of difference between Grey's public and private utterings.

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See Supra, pp.156-60.

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See Supra, pp.161-62.

What proof had the C.R.A. that the June Memorandum and not the March one, was more meaningful? After all, this was not Grey's first volte face. In Parliament back in February, 1908, he had given a pledge of sorts that Britain would not tolerate a perpetuation of the Congo System indefinitely.<sup>1</sup> As well, in a reply to a Question put by Dilke in April, the British Foreign Secretary had promised to lay full Papers concerning the nature of the Belgian annexation treaties before His Majesty's Government took any steps to recognize the transfer.<sup>2</sup>

To Morel, these vacillations were highly disappointing, and, more than that, a recognition of the failure in part of the C.R.A. programme. The organization's entire policy, once Belgium began to seriously discuss annexation at the end of 1906, had been to press Grey into a firm statement that Britain under no circumstances, would tolerate any annexation that did not bring with it at least a simultaneous Belgian guarantee of reform.

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Parl. Deb., Vol. 184, 26 February 1908, col. 1839-84.

Grey remarked that should Belgium fail to annex, a whole new phase of the Congo question would open, demanding a complete re-examination of Britain's policy. But, he added, while the Congo State "has morally forfeited every right to international recognition", it was much more likely that Belgium would quickly offer a practical solution to the dilemma. In the meantime:

"... it is impossible for us to intervene officially... in any way that is likely to promote a satisfactory solution. When the Belgian Government proposes its own terms to Parliament, then we can express our opinion."

Morel responded favourably to this pledge, and, when the Belgian debate on annexation began in April, 1908, without Britain's offering her views in a firm manner, he felt betrayed. --- The Official Organ..., March, 1908, p.3; July, 1908, p.1.

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Parl. Deb., Vol. 187, 30 April 1908, col. 1392-93.



Though by the eve of Belgian annexation in August, 1908, Morel's pressure had succeeded in moving Grey in this direction, it was now too late to prevent what Morel had dreaded --- a Belgian takeover with only vague mutterings about the eventual abolition of forced labour.

It had not been for want of trying on his part that Morel had failed to win a strong declaration from Grey. During those crucial months of 1908 leading up to Belgian annexation, Morel, as a supplement to the usual method of memorializing Grey with fresh Congo information and views,<sup>1</sup> experimented with the personal approach and had several meetings à deux and à trois with the British Foreign Secretary.<sup>2</sup>

Though, in reality, the two men were not really far apart in their views,<sup>3</sup> they disagreed as to the future prospects for the Congo. Grey, the eternal optimist, was on the whole, satisfied with the tone of the correspondence with Belgium and felt its spirit to be a far more constructive one than that which had permeated the despatches of the

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Texts of three different C.R.A. Memorials to Grey, on 20 March 1908, 7 April 1908 and 8 August 1908 appeared in the Official Organ... of April, 1908, pp.5-13, and August, 1908, pp.5-11.

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Morel wrote Cadbury of his meeting with Grey in April, 1908 --- Morel to William Cadbury, 14 April 1908, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.191-92.

On 30 June, Morel and Sir George White met with Grey and urged him to act unilaterally if no responsible Belgian solution appeared by the end of the Belgian session --- E.D. Morel, Memorial to C.R.A. supporters on talk with Grey, 30 June 1908, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p. 198.

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At their April meeting, while Grey pressed for the abolition of forced labour, Morel advocated a Belgian renunciation of her claim to the products of the forest since this would, inter alia, end forced labour. --- R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.191-92.

Congo State. In his view, the Belgian Government seemed determined to end forced labour.<sup>1</sup> Much more pessimistic, Morel cast a gloomy eye towards the present evidence of Belgian intentions. True, the Additional Act had removed the *Domaine de la Couronne* from Leopold's grasp; true, the Colonial Law provided for real improvements in the Budget and the Judiciary. But in essence, the Leopoldian philosophy was preserved intact. Proposed Belgian changes still carried with them the assumption that the native owned nothing, though he could be given a boon or two from time to time. Only when the Belgians got down to essentials would Morel take hope --- that is, when the lands and their products were declared to be the property of the native.<sup>2</sup>

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### III

There was a certain irony in the fact that 1908 was Morel's most

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<sup>1</sup>

Parl. Deb., Vol. 193, 30 July 1908, col. 1836-44.

Grey's retrospective view of the Congo question, outlined in his autobiography some seventeen years later, is an even more striking indication of what can charitably be described as his naivete:

"... I was convinced that a great and beneficent change would be effected as soon as the administration was in the hands of a Government that was not concerned with trading profits and private gain, and also that the abuses, of which we heard, could not continue under a Government that had to account for its acts to a freely elected popular Assembly." --- Sir Edward

Grey, Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916, Toronto, 1925, i, p.190.

<sup>2</sup>

The Official Organ..., April, 1908, pp.9-13; August, 1908, p.11; E.D. Morel, "The Belgian Parliament and the Congo", in the Contemporary Review, Vol. 94, September, 1908, p.355.

disappointing year as C.R.A. Secretary, for, by then, he was commander-in-chief of a smoothly functioning organization. The C.R.A. had learned a great deal about modern propaganda in its earlier battles with Leopold's Press Bureau, and, by 1908, it stood unchallenged as the most effectively organized pressure group of its day.<sup>1</sup>

Now a hierarchical body, the C.R.A. boasted an Executive numbering thirty-three,<sup>2</sup> including both a Finance and Parliamentary sub-committee. C.R.A. Auxiliary branches grew up overnight and now spread throughout Britain.<sup>3</sup>

Membership qualifications were straightforward; those who con-

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For an account of the C.R.A.'s structure, policy, tactics and membership, see *Supra*, pp.87-107.

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The members of the C.R.A. Executive were: Morel (Secretary) Lord Monkswell (President), G.H. Brabner (Treasurer and Chairman of the Finance Committee); Parliamentarians J. Ramsay MacDonald (Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee), Sir Gilbert Parker, Austin Taylor, E.N. Bennett, F.A. Channing, C.P. Trevelyan, Sir Charles Dilke; distinguished clergymen Canon Scott Holland, the Bishop of Liverpool, the Bishop of Southwark, J. Scott Lidgett, John Clifford, R.J. Campbell, J.A. Shakespeare, Thomas Law; outstanding public figures Harold Spender, F. Swanzy, J. St. Loe Strachey, Colonel Stopford, John Holt, H. Grattan Guinness, Dr. Thomas Hodgkin, the Earl of Listowel, H.R. Fox Bourne, Professor L.R. Wilberforce, F.W. Fox, E.W. Brooks, Henry N. Gladstone, C.M. Douglas and W.A. Albright. --- in C.R.A. organizational brochure.

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Some of the leading C.R.A. branches and their executives were: London; President --- Lord Monkswell, Vice-President --- J.W. Wilson, Secretaries --- Mr. and Mrs. John H. Harris, Treasurer --- Travers Buxton, Members of Council --- E.D. Morel, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton and his son, Noel, Liverpool; Joint Presidents --- Arthur Black and Alexander Guthrie. Devon County; Joint Presidents --- C.R. Fox and Lord Clifford of Chudleigh. Northumberland and North Durham; President --- Dr. Thomas Hodgkin. Bristol; President --- J.S. Fry. Manchester; President --- the Dean of Manchester. ----- C.R.A. organizational brochure.

tributed ten shillings or more per annum were full members, entitled to receive all copies of the Official Organ... and all other C.R.A. literature. Associate members --- those who paid five shillings --- received all literature save the Official Organ...<sup>1</sup>

Morel's time-honoured tactics were employed. Public meetings,<sup>2</sup> reports from the Congo, letters to the Press and the Foreign Office, infiltration of national Church meetings,<sup>3</sup> the Official

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So numerous were the publications of the C.R.A. that membership dues in no way met costs.

Morel himself struggled desperately to keep his young family. His West African Mail, often ignored during the busy Congo years of 1907 and 1908, was a gargantuan consumer of funds, its advertizing having dropped off sharply. Cadbury increased his subsidy from £ 200 to £ 300 but Morel seriously considered dropping it entirely and living only on the generosity of Holt and Cadbury. Once more he considered taking a salary from the C.R.A., but once again he declined on the grounds it might damage the cause. --- E.D. Morel to William Cadbury, 14 May 1907, cited, R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.166-67.

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The actual number of public and town meetings during 1907 and 1908 is inestimable. Everywhere from London to Taunton, not one but as many as five meetings were held. --- See the Official Organ..., January, 1907 to March, 1908 for fifty-four such meetings.

The largest and most impressive single gathering was held at Queen's Hall, London on 21 February 1908, the Lord Mayor of London presiding in State. The Times called it the largest public gathering on a moral issue since the days of the overseas slave trade campaigns. --- The Times, 22 February 1908, p.14.

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Probably even more numerous than C.R.A.-organized meetings were the many and varied Church meetings and convocations dedicated in part to Congo reform: the Anglicans at Canterbury on 3 May 1907, the Congregationalists of England and Wales in the same month, the Baptist Union in October, and the Society of Friends, the Wesleyan Methodists and the Christian Endeavour Council all in November, 1907. --- The Official Organ..., May, 1907, pp.29-40; November, 1907, p.49.

In April, 1908, the Free Church Council ordered to be distributed a circular to nine hundred local councils urging the observance of a special Congo Sunday throughout Britain on 14 April of that year. --- E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, p.18.

Organ...<sup>1</sup> --- these were the tasks that occupied the under-staffed C.R.A.. Between 11 October and 29 December 1907, for example, J.H. Harris spoke at twenty-seven meetings, his wife at seventeen, Monkswell at twelve and Morel the same number.<sup>2</sup>

Without the dedicated assistance of the enthusiastic Harrises, it is doubtful whether Morel could have maintained such an incredible flow of Congo reform material before the British Public. Yet, there was little harmony between Harris and Morel. Morel, fearing that Harris coveted the leadership of the movement, constantly censured Harris for acting as if he, not Morel were C.R.A. Secretary and mastermind. Each time he was rebuffed, Harris would apologize.<sup>3</sup>

In 1908, C.R.A. membership continued to grow. Taking their cue from the Government itself, which felt concerned enough with the issue

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<sup>1</sup> Morel kept his Official Organ... readers informed of every development that could possibly have had any bearing on the Congo campaign. After a time he developed title headings that became characteristic. His editorial occupied prime space and was titled "the Outlook", written and dated from Morel's home at Howarden. Then there would follow "Correspondence with the Foreign Office", "this Month's Evidence from the Congo", "Belgian Sayings and Doings", and the "Tidal Wave", which was Morel's metaphorical reference to the many public meetings held throughout Britain during 1907 and 1908.

<sup>2</sup> The Official Organ..., November and December, 1907.  
The pace was exhausting, particularly for Monkswell who was not a young man. His illness and death in late 1909 was no doubt hastened by his unsparing devotion to the cause.

<sup>3</sup> See R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.172-73.

to allocate space in the Speech from the Throne,<sup>1</sup> the Earl of Cromer and the Archbishop of Canterbury firmly aligned themselves on the side of reform.

Lending prestige to Congo reform by virtue of his long association with British Imperial administration in Egypt, Cromer condemned the Congo State for playing the role of commercial exploiter and suggested that, pending Belgian annexation, the British Government could do much to alleviate distress in the Congo by appointing more consuls and furnishing them with independent means of travel.<sup>2</sup>

It was the Archbishop of Canterbury, however, now a dedicated Congo reformer, who showed the greatest insight into the future problems of the C.R.A.. What grounds did the Government have, wondered the Prelate, for assuming that it would be easier to deal with Congo misrule after annexation than it was before? Indeed, if the Belgian Parliament were tricked into supporting an evil system, it would make the task of British reformers exceedingly difficult.<sup>3</sup>

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Delivering the Speech from the Throne on 29 January 1908, King Edward VII remarked:

" My Government are fully aware of the great anxiety felt with regard to the treatment of the native population in the Congo State. Their sole desire is to see the government of that State humanely administered in accordance with the spirit of the Berlin Act, and I trust that the negotiations now proceeding between the Sovereign of the Congo State and the Belgian Government will secure this object." --- Parl. Deb., Vol. 183, 29 January 1908, col. 9.

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Parl. Deb., Vol. 184 (Lords), 24 February 1908, col. 1270-1305. Morel, pleased at Cromer's stand, described him as "the most successful administrator of modern times." --- the Official Organ..., March, 1908, p.3.

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Parl. Deb., Vol. 184 (Lords), 24 February 1908, col. 1270-1305.

If there was no scarcity of members for the C.R.A. Morel had to accept the problems this numerical strength produced. Advice was an inexpensive commodity and Morel received a great deal of it, some of it contradictory.

Parker, Strachey, Trevelyan, and MacDonald, after an interview with Grey on 19 March 1908, were convinced of the latter's firmness and assured Morel that Sir Edward would never accept an annexation that failed to produce a complete change of System.<sup>1</sup> W.T. Stead on the other hand, cautioned Morel against overrating Grey's firmness. Once before, on the issue of armaments, Stead had been disappointed. Now he cautioned:

"Grey (once before) put his tail between his legs and bolt(ed) for his life. Take care he does not treat you in the same way."<sup>2</sup>

On the question of annexation itself, some would-be counsellors of Morel showed curious logic. Sir George Goldie, for instance, the dynamic founder of the Royal Niger Company, advised Morel to be more practical and accept annexation by Belgium in any event, because neutral Belgium was more easily controlled by the Powers than the Powers could jointly control the Congo.<sup>3</sup> This was essentially the conclusion reached by Valentine Chirol of the Times. He suggested that Morel

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Trevelyan to Morel, 19 March 1908; Parker to Morel, 24 March 1908; Strachey to Morel, 26 March 1908; all cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.190.

2

W.T. Stead to Morel, 28 February 1908, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.189.

3

Ibid, p.168.

accept an annexation now and press for gradual reforms afterwards since Britain was not prepared to use force.<sup>1</sup> To Morel, such talk was defeatism thinly disguised, and he would have none of it.

Continuing this theme, many who were not C.R.A. members argued in favour of what Morel called a "sham solution." They suggested that, even assuming a horrible state of affairs in the Congo, European political considerations dictated a conciliatory policy towards Belgium. Lucien Wolf, for instance, in a series of articles for the Daily Graphic in 1907, suggested that Britain, by insisting upon reform as a prerequisite to annexation, rendered a Belgian takeover impossible since Belgium was not prepared to furnish extensive grants-in-aid to her new colony. Since there was no other practical solution, Britain should consent to Belgian annexation and hope that all would work out in time. It should be remembered, he continued, that Germany would not take kindly to British interference with the just processes of an independent and neutral State.<sup>2</sup>

In this respect, the champion of the "German Bogey" thesis was L.J. Maxse of the National Review. He, too, was not blind to Congo misrule, but being an extreme Germanophobe, had supported an anti-German policy that involved the wooing of Belgium away from neutrality and into the camp of the Entente.<sup>3</sup> Any political action which served

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<sup>1</sup> Chirol to Morel, 26 October 1907, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.169.

<sup>2</sup> E.D. Morel, "A Reply to Lucien Wolf's Articles in the "Daily Graphic", Liverpool, June, 1907, 23pp.

<sup>3</sup> Writing the Introduction for "Germany on the Brain" --- the Obsession of 'a Crank' in 1915 as a justification in retrospect for his strongly anti-German line, Maxse blasted Haldane, Lloyd George and Lord Esher mercilessly for not having courted Belgium earlier. If such a policy had been followed, he argued, the task of subduing the "barbarous Boches" would have become much easier. --- Ibid, p.8.



to alienate Belgium and force her to look to Germany was simply not in the British interest. Maxse, accordingly, communicated these sentiments to Morel,<sup>1</sup> and allowed his National Review to publish diatribes disguised as 'the other side of the picture' articles.<sup>2</sup>

Morel's rebuttal of the "German Bogey" thesis was intriguing. Those who feared offending Germany feared war in Europe. But, British inaction, not action, was most likely to produce the very calamity they dreaded. A Belgian perpetuation of the System would lead to colonial conflict in Central Africa, a conflict that could not be localized.<sup>3</sup>

In most cases, debate with Morel on the Congo issue was suicidal. The C.R.A. Secretary, living and breathing Congo reform, studying European developments only insofar as they related to Belgium and the Congo, was almost invincible. Only one man, the formidable C.P. Scott, scored a victory over Morel --- and that on an academic point --- not over C.R.A. goals.

In March of 1908, Scott's Manchester Guardian published a leading article agreeing with the general conclusions of the C.R.A. Memorial of March, 1908, to Grey concerning the proposed Belgian Transfer

<sup>1</sup>  
L.J. Maxse to Morel, 25 July 1907, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.170.

<sup>2</sup>  
For instance, Baron Wahis, "The True Situation on the Congo", in the National Review, Vol. 48, November, 1906.

<sup>3</sup>  
E.D. Morel, "Belgium and the Congo", in the Contemporary Review, Vol. 93, January, 1908, pp.52-53.

Treaty, but criticizing the line of argument therein.<sup>1</sup>

Citing Coke as his authority, Scott argued that Leopold's claim to the ownership of the lands and products of the Congo State was not "unique and horrible" as Morel would have it, but in fact, the basis of the Crown Land principle, deeply rooted in British and European jurisprudence.<sup>2</sup> Leopold's crime was in the application of a theoretically sound doctrine. Whereas the English Crown was identified with the English people, Leopold ignored the national interest in the exploitation of his Crown Lands, thus making his Congo Free State "the most monstrous pun in the history of the world".

The next day, the flustered Morel dashed off a remarkably candid if unimpressive rebuttal.<sup>3</sup> True, the Congo State was a "horrible pun", but to cite Coke as did the Guardian, "savoured of antiquarianism" in Morel's view. The key fact in the Congo question, he asserted, was that the native be given the right to buy and sell in the products of the soil.

Scott, of course, had not disputed that, in practice, subjects of

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The Manchester Guardian, 27 March 1908, p.6.

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The actual reference was:

"Coke lays it down that by the theory of English law the King is 'sovereigne lord or lord paramount, either mediate or immediate, of all and every parcell of land within the realme': in other words that the ultimate ownership of all land resides in the Crown." --- Ibid, p.6.

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Manchester Guardian, 1 April 1908, p.10. Letter was dated 28 March 1908.

a modern State had the right to exercise effective ownership of the land, and in a footnote to Morel's letter,<sup>1</sup> he denied that the doctrine of State sovereignty was an antiquarianism. Scott chose to end the fruitless academic quarrel since his goal was at one with Morel's:

" If Belgium annexes the Congo the 'political pun' does not disappear unless Belgium rules with a single eye to the welfare of the Congo people; four million selfish alien rulers would be no more truly identical with the Congo State than a single selfish alien ruler. Our whole point is that it is a mistake to burden a just indictment with unsound political philosophy or bad international law."<sup>2</sup>

Once it became apparent that Belgium was going to annex, foreign aspects of the campaign took on a lesser degree of importance. The whole purpose of Morel's efforts here had been to convince the British Government that international opinion was favourable to a new Congo

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, p.10.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, p.10.

It was foolish of Morel to quarrel with what was one of his strongest sources of support in the British Press. Far more realistic than the Times, the Guardian in August, 1908, after annexation had become a reality, observed:

"How far the Belgian Government will accede to them (reforms), short of extreme pressure, remains to be seen; the "reforms" of the Congo Government itself are still mainly farcical.

... The omens, so far as they can be discerned from the debates in the Belgian Chamber, are not favourable. The Colonial Law passed is at best jejune and at worst a reactionary measure." --- Manchester

Guardian, 22 August 1908, p.8.

By comparison, the Times, on this occasion, was more equivocal. Belgium had studied the question during nearly four months of continuous debate and as a result, could not be said to have rushed through a hasty takeover, the Times declared. A difficult task lay before her, but the Times was convinced that the "gritty" Belgian nation would carry the day. --- the Times, 22 August 1908, p.9.

Conference and, as an added possibility, to convince the United States Government that it should jointly sponsor with Great Britain a Conference of the Powers.

For a while in 1907, the United States Congo reform campaign had given cause for optimism. In the wake of the Kowalsky scandal, the United States Senate passed a Resolution sponsored by Senator Lodge of Massachusetts offering full Senate support for a Presidential decision to act as American Treaty rights dictated in the Congo basin.<sup>1</sup>

In Continental Europe, there were no significant changes in the policy of strict neutrality adopted by the various Powers. Some individuals, to be sure, continued in their devotion to the cause.

In France, Pierre Mille and Félicien Challaye founded the "International League for the Defence of the Natives of the Conventional Basin" in 1908.<sup>2</sup> In Italy, the Press continued to rake the coals of the Congo controversy, but by now the issue was merely the pretext for

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The Resolution passed the Senate on 15 February 1907. See the Official Organ..., March, 1907 for text.

There was some disagreement as to the interpretation of this Resolution. The original draft censuring Leopold's State by name was amended to employ the phrase, "basin of the Congo" instead. While Morel chose to be satisfied with the Resolution, Valentine Chirol was not, and interpreted it as meaning the United States was not prepared to act on the Congo. --- Chirol to Morel, 13 March 1907, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.161.

On the other hand, there were now newly appointed American consuls in the Congo and their findings only confirmed the reports of their British and Italian counterparts. Surely, American Congo reform partisans argued, the United States Government would take the initiative if Belgium refused to annex as promised by the end of 1908. --- U.S.C.R.A., "Congo Misrule Today", Boston, December, 1908, 8pp.

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In the Official Organ..., June, 1908, p.10.

battle between enemies of long-standing.<sup>1</sup> The outlook in Germany was bleaker still. Even the ever hopeful Morel conceded that Germany, without consular representation in the Congo even at this late hour, offered Congo reformers few signs of encouragement.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
The Giornale d'Italia, for instance, had old scores to settle with La Tribuna and was able to persuade the Italian Journalists' Association to condemn its rival for having accepted Press Bureau bribes. --- L. Ranieri, op.cit., p.220.

<sup>2</sup>  
The Official Organ..., January, 1907, p.32.

**Chapter Six**

**GREAT BRITAIN AND THE BELGIAN CONGO**

**1908 - 1913**

## I

When Belgium annexed the Congo, it was with the prior knowledge that Britain would delay recognition until she was given, as was her due as a Signatory Power to the Berlin Act, a definite promise of specific, enumerated reforms.

On the other hand, others were quick to acknowledge the Belgian takeover. Italy, for instance, gave official recognition on 18 November 1908, a mere three weeks after her Minister in Brussels was informed of the act of transfer.<sup>1</sup> On 23 December 1908, France waived her right of preference and voiced her approval of the Belgian reprise,<sup>2</sup> and on 18 January 1909, Germany followed suit.<sup>3</sup>

Sir Edward Grey was now left with the remnant of a once flexible Congo policy. He could recognize the fait accompli as the other Powers had done, or he could refuse to do so and hope that the importance of securing British approval would count sufficiently in Belgian minds to induce reform.

So long as the C.R.A. persisted as an effective force in British politics Grey had in fact, no choice but to withhold recognition. This, indeed, was the main consideration behind a discouraged C.R.A.

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<sup>1</sup>  
L. Ranieri, op.cit., p.258.

<sup>2</sup>  
F. Masoin, op.cit., i, p.220.

<sup>3</sup>  
R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.215.

Executive's decision to fight on.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, a reluctant Sir Edward Grey became increasingly insistent in his correspondence with the Belgian Government in the year following Belgian annexation.

Grey's 4 November 1908 Note to Belgium<sup>2</sup> was admirable, even from the C.R.A.'s viewpoint.<sup>3</sup> Justifying British concern not only on the grounds of treaty rights but also because the Congo bordered on British

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In his editorial for the August, 1908 issue of the Official Organ..., written after Belgium had passed the Treaty of Transfer, Morel left little doubt that the C.R.A. would continue:

" The Association has now to decide whether it has done all that a Body not invested with Executive power can be expected to do, or whether it shall continue its labours until the Belgian Government has given adequate proof of its determination to restore their just rights to the native races of the Congo. Already the enemies of the Association are discounting its demise. The wish is father to the hopes it inspires. If the Association decides that its work is not yet wholly done, we feel confident that it will not appeal in vain for the further encouragement and support of Public opinion, which for nearly five years has extended to it a steady and increasingly widespread confidence." --- the

Official Organ..., August, 1908, p.4.

At the 9 October meeting of the C.R.A. Executive, Morel received unanimous approval for continuing the battle. --- The Official Organ..., September-November, 1908, pp.22-26. (the paper now began appearing quarterly rather than monthly).

Privately, not all were in favour of fighting on. John Holt wrote Morel suggesting surrender on the grounds that Belgian delaying tactics coupled with a flagging public enthusiasm that was sure to occur sooner or later, offered the C.R.A. little hope of success. --- Holt to Morel, 21 August 1908, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.206-07.

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Grey to de Lalaing, 4 November 1908, in Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 5 (1908), Vol. LXXI, Cd. 4396, pp.142-46.

3

See, for instance, E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, p.117.



territory and its misrule threatened the peace of the region, Grey suggested, as an interim measure pending reform, that Belgium return to the status quo ante 1891 in the Congo when tribal communal land tenure dictated Congo policy. In addition, he expressed concern over treatment of British missionaries and traders and warned that no British recognition of transfer could possibly be entertained until reforms satisfactory to both the British Government and British Public Opinion were adopted.

The Belgian reply, given on 15 March 1909, was unsatisfactory. Still offering only vague promises of reform, the Belgian Note questioned whether her laws needed the prior approval of a foreign government and why Britain alone of all the Powers doubted Belgium's word.<sup>1</sup>

Grey's answer, transmitted to Count de Lalaing on 11 June 1909,<sup>2</sup> sharply censured the Belgian Government for having perpetuated forced labour in the Kasai and for having increased the food tax in Leopoldville.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 2 (1909), Vol. LIX, Cd. 4701, pp.566-74. Arrogance and vagueness were married in the Belgian remarks:

"... ces principes, appliqués suivant une méthode identique à celle adoptée dans les autres possessions du bassin conventionnel du Congo, ayant pour effet de résoudre la question des terres indigènes au Congo belge dans un sens plus favorable aux intérêts des natifs que dans la généralité des colonies de l'Afrique équatoriale." --- Ibid, p.568.

<sup>2</sup>  
Grey to de Lalaing, 11 June 1909, Ibid, pp.574-75.

<sup>3</sup>  
Grey's conclusions were derived from the latest Consular Reports, transmitted after Belgian annexation, by Consul Thesiger. For Thesiger's indictment of the Kasai region, see Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 1 (1909), Vol. LIX, Cd. 4466, pp.538-64.

There was a ring of finality to Grey's remarks:

" To this sort of thing, so amply described in the published reports of His Majesty's consuls, His Majesty's Government cannot give recognition and they are sure that the Belgian Government desire to put an end to it, for it is, in fact, indistinguishable from slavery. They are anxious to recognize the Belgian Government of the Congo, but they cannot do so until it is clear that the abuses of taxation and forced labour, including the system carried out by the Kasai Company, have ceased, and the treatment of natives in these respects has been assimilated to that which is found in other European colonies."<sup>1</sup>

Though Grey was capable of adopting a firm and resolute attitude towards the Congo, as his correspondence indicated, he was no less ambivalent publicly in 1909 than he had been earlier.<sup>2</sup>

His most damaging statement yet, in the eyes of reform partisans, was uttered in Parliament in May, 1909, in reply to criticism of his policy from Sir Charles Dilke. Grey remarked:

"It is quite true that we have not receded from anything we have said with regard to the Congo, but he (Dilke) thought we were over-cautious, but if this question were rashly managed it might make a European question, compared with which those with which we had to deal in the last few months might be child's play."<sup>3</sup>

For Morel, this was the last straw. No longer would he display forced moderation where Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Office, or Belgian

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Grey to de Lalaing, 11 June 1909, Africa No. 2 (1909), Vol. LIX, Cd. 4701, p.575.

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Supra, pp.156-65.

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Parl. Deb., Fifth Series, Vol. 5, 27 May 1909, col. 1395-97.

sensitivities were concerned. Describing Grey's 'child's play' speech as a "moral shock to the country" and a "temporary loss of nerve", Morel cited the Foreign Office as the real culprit in the case since it was this body upon whom "Sir Edward Grey must of necessity rely to a great extent."<sup>1</sup>

Now it was important for Morel once and for all, to deal with the "German Bogey" thesis for he knew that it was Grey's fear of Germany that had prompted the latter's ominous remarks. For pessimists who believed that war with Germany was inevitable, Morel suggested that Britain run the risk now, while she still possessed a marked naval superiority, because the Congo issue was a strongly moral one on which to stand fast. For optimists, who feared alienating Belgium and thus upsetting the delicate European balance of power, Morel suggested that this danger would not necessarily diminish if Britain acted firmly. On the contrary, so long as Belgium persisted in her involvement in

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The Official Organ..., June, 1909, pp.193-214.

Morel went on to cite what appeared to him as Foreign Office blunders during the past few years. The proposed British conference to decide the Bosnian question, the 'backing of the wrong horse' in the Young Turk revolution, allowing Russia to occupy Tobriz in Northern Persia --- all these were described as errors based upon inadequate or inaccurate information.

Later in the year, in his Great Britain and the Congo, he returned to this attack of the Foreign Office professional:

" In the early days of our struggle, when we stood alone, a mere handful, poor in this world's goods, weak in everything but doggedness, the butt of furious personal attack, the Foreign Office turned to us a frowning and unsympathetic countenance. We were a nuisance: we troubled the serenity of its invincible calm. We impudently questioned the righteousness and the wisdom of its monumental torpidity in the face of the national sponsorship for an enterprise which had degenerated into a great slave machine making innumerable victims." --- p.254.

the iniquitous Congo System she made her neutral position in Europe impossible.<sup>1</sup>

Morel's attack on Grey, once begun, could not be halted. Next, he turned to one of Grey's articles of faith, the Entente with France. Could Foreign Office apathy be due to French pressure?<sup>2</sup> If so, Britain should ask herself whether she was prepared to sacrifice her "moral independence in international affairs" for the sake of the Entente. If such were the case, Morel continued, what had begun as a colonial understanding had now become a virtual "Alliance" boding ill for the future peace of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, there was the question of British policy, or lack of same, towards the Congo:

"What is the use of refusing to recognize annexation when the Belgian Government tells us that it cares not a fig whether we recognize annexation or not, and acts accordingly!"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ibid, pp.193-214.

<sup>2</sup>  
Morel observed:  
"... The nation should apply itself seriously to the task of ascertaining how far the conditions of the French Congo may have been, and may be (arising out of our entente with France), the explanation of the story of the Foreign Office's handling of King Leopold and his Ministers under two British Governments." --- Ibid, pp.275-76.

Morel was completely premeditated in his attack upon the Entente. This was, he felt, the only lever he possessed. By threatening the Foreign Office with a campaign against their precious Entente, he hoped to move them to action on the Congo at last. --- Morel in a letter to Gilmour, 5 October 1909, cited in R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.239.

<sup>3</sup>  
Ibid, p.277.

<sup>4</sup>  
The Official Organ..., June, 1909, p.214.

In other words, Grey could refuse to recognize as long as he wished. Until the British Foreign Secretary made it clear to Belgium that Britain was prepared to establish Consular Jurisdiction, declare the Congo an outlaw state, and occupy Boma in order to protect British subjects in the Congo if Belgium did not act and act quickly --- then, Great Britain had no Congo policy.<sup>1</sup>

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Morel's logic hinted at a thorny problem of international law concerning the presence of consuls in an unrecognized regime. Could it not be said that the mere presence of British consuls in the Congo after it became Belgian was tantamount to de facto recognition by Britain of the new regime? One legal authority states:

" A consul may continue to discharge his functions and enjoy his privileges and immunities under an unrecognized regime, not because he has a right under international law to do so, but because he is permitted to do so for policy reasons and by the good will of the unrecognized regime."

" The continued maintenance of consular officers in a country under the control of an unrecognized government is fundamentally incompatible with the purposes of non-recognition in the long run. The former presupposes a desire for international relationship; the later, the absence of this desire. The prolongation of this anomaly could easily lead to conflicts over the proper treatment of "former consuls"."--- Luke T. Lee, Consular Law and Practice, London, 1961, pp.54-55.

If Lee's interpretation stands --- and Belgium did allow British consuls to continue their activities in the Congo --- then Grey's policy was contradictory. The point was, though, that, inconsistent or not, British Consular Reports were the sole reliable evidence that promised reforms were indeed being carried out; thus, British Consuls would remain in the Congo since Belgium was, for her part, not about to precipitate a showdown by expelling them, which she had the right to do, vide Lee.

Morel's bitterness continued throughout 1909,<sup>1</sup> but it did not engender discouragement or defeatism. The C.R.A. continued to sponsor Public Meetings,<sup>2</sup> Memorials,<sup>3</sup> National Manifestos,<sup>4</sup> the formation of new branches,<sup>5</sup>

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Indeed, the seeds of Morel's later belief in democratic control of foreign policy were firmly sown here. Almost pathological in his suspicions, he stormed:

"We have secret influences here against us. Let there be no mistake about that: powerful influences too. Permanent officialdom is in the main against us: never let us forget it, for its tentacles reach far. The diplomacy of France is against us, and works in a hundred subtle ways... Diplomacy always denies what is true, if denial suits its secret purposes." --- in the Official Organ..., October, 1909, p.295.

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For an account of Public Meetings see the Official Organ..., January to October, 1909.

3

C.R.A. Memorials to Grey, 4 February, 27 July 1909, in the Official Organ..., April, 1909, pp.123-38; October, 1909, pp.338-51.

4

The C.R.A. "National Manifesto" of 23 December 1908 appeared in the major British newspapers; see, for instance, the Times, 23 December, 1908, p.10.

5

A Women's branch of the C.R.A. was founded in December, 1908, with Mrs. Alfred Emmott as President and Mrs. John Harris as Secretary, to deal with the treatment of women and children in the Congo. --- the Official Organ..., January, 1909, p.1.

the winning of new adherants.<sup>1</sup>

Remarkably, in view of Morel's outspoken attitude, throughout 1909 the mainstream of the C.R.A. remained faithful to him and his cause.<sup>2</sup> In Parliament, no less than three Congo debates were held and Congo reformers Dilke, Parker, White, Bennett and others echoed the C.R.A. Secretary's 'tough line' against British Foreign Office inactivity.<sup>3</sup>

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Sir Arthur Conan Doyle was one of these new converts. He wrote an Introduction for Morel's latest and most bitter attack upon Belgian intransigence, Great Britain and the Congo, as well a scalding diatribe of his own, The Crime of the Congo, New York, 1909. Conan Doyle, though a late arrival on the C.R.A. scene, adopted a most extreme position. While Morel still favoured the summoning of an international conference and the possible revitalization of the Navigation Commission to run the Congo if Belgium did not reform by the end of 1909 (in Great Britain and the Congo, p.183, 210), Conan Doyle was prepared to go farther, and suggested partition among France, Germany and Great Britain. He had no compassion for Belgium whatsoever:

"The Belgians have been given their chance. They have had nearly twenty-five years of undisturbed possession, and they have made it a hell upon earth. They cannot disassociate themselves from this work or pretend that it was done by a separate State. It was done by a Belgian King, Belgian soldiers, Belgian financiers, Belgian lawyers, Belgian capital, and was endorsed and defended by Belgian governments. It is out of the question that Belgium should remain on the Congo." ---

A. Conan Doyle, The Crime..., p.123.

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In 1909, the Harrises left the C.R.A., not because of disagreement over aims but partly through friction between John Harris and Morel (see *Supra*, p.169), and partly through new opportunity. Fox Bourne had died in early 1909 and Harris was chosen by the Aborigines' Protection Society to succeed him as Secretary. --- R. Wuliger, *op.cit.*, pp.131-32.

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Parl. Deb., Fifth Series, Vol. 1, 25 February 1909, col. 943-60;  
Vol. 5, 27 May 1909, col. 1385-90,  
1395-97, 1408-11;  
Vol. 8, 22 July 1909, col. 632-41,  
651-57, 666-69, 671-73.

On the other hand, some counselled moderation. Valentine Chirol, pointing to the tense international situation in the Near East, asked Morel to relieve some of the pressure on the harrassed Sir Edward Grey.<sup>1</sup>

If Morel was now immoderate in his views, it was not for no reason. Developments in Belgium and the Congo during 1909 augured so poorly for Congo reform that this was probably why many of Morel's supporters remained faithful despite their leader's growing fondness for invective against Grey.

To begin with, Jules Renkin, the new Belgian Colonial Minister, while undertaking a study tour of the Congo in the late spring of 1909, had declared, in a speech delivered in Boma on 10 May, that the government of the Congo was purely a domestic issue concerning Belgium alone.<sup>2</sup>

Still worse, Belgium's first Colonial Budget, tabled in 1909, estimated a rubber yield equal to revenue from the same source under the old administration and, significantly, omitted any reference to a Belgian grant-in-aid for the Congo.<sup>3</sup>

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R. Wuliger, op.cit., p.222.

2

Ramsay MacDonald, reporting the speech, asked Grey for his views. Grey replied that the speech was delivered at a banquet and did not appear to be a declaration of policy. --- Parl. Deb., Fifth Series, Vol. 10, 31 August 1909, col. 171-72.

3

For a complete analysis of this Budget, see E.D. Morel, Great Britain and the Congo, pp.222-32.



Leopold himself, while no longer the Congo autocrat he once was, still persisted in his outworn mercantilism. In Antwerp on 12 June 1909, before a large gathering, he remarked:

"The Colonial Law provides that the product of customs receipts and taxes shall be exclusively devoted to the needs of the colony. But apart from these budgetary resources, is the nation not free to give to its sons the right of obtaining from the lands as yet unappropriated and from the mines as yet untapped, the resources which will increase the openings available to their activity? Thus without calling upon the taxpayer, revenues can be secured from the Congo's virgin soil. Why should not lands and mines in the Congo be attributed to the promoters of Banks in the Far East, of founders of Belgian Steamship Companies?...

The greatest satisfaction of my life has been to give the Congo to Belgium. (Loud applause) The Congo is richer than you think. The duty of a Sovereign is to enrich the nation. Vive the prosperity of Belgium."<sup>1</sup>

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## II

On 28 October 1909, the Belgian Colonial Minister, Jules Renkin, announced his long-awaited reform proposals.<sup>2</sup> Renkin's scheme called for the abolition of the Leopoldian System in its essentials. However, reform was to be gradual and in three stages. The lands falling under Belgian jurisdiction --- that is, the old *Domaine Privé* and the

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from Speech, *Ibid*, pp.290-91.

<sup>2</sup> Excerpts of the Belgian Reform proposals appeared in the Times, 1 November 1909, p.9. Full text in Accts. & Papers, Congo No. 1, (1911), Vol. CIII, Cd. 5559, pp.177-82.

Domaine de la Couronne --- would be opened up to free trade. Three areas were designated to be liberated from the yoke of State monopoly, to be effective 1 July of 1910, of 1911, and of 1912, and in each area the native would be permitted to harvest forest produce.

While the reforms were a recognition by Belgium of the moral opprobrium associated with forced labour and the labour tax, there were two major weaknesses in the scheme. Firstly, the reform programme was gradual and meant further delay. Secondly, the concessionaire companies, accounting for two-fifths of the State's area, were unaffected by the reforms.

Reaction to the proposals was immediate in Belgium and in Britain. Emile Vandervelde, recently returned from a Congo voyage himself, was critical.<sup>1</sup> The reforms were "vague and disquieting" on the vital question of ownership and definition of vacant lands; there was an inexplicable delay in carrying through the programme; the company districts --- the worst scenes of abuse --- were untouched. Vandervelde stated that he would do his best to put 'teeth' in the Reform Bill in the Belgian Chamber and that he would also support a call for another international conference aimed at amending the Berlin and Brussels Acts to secure better enforcement of their provisions, not just by Belgium but in all Powers holding territory in the Conventional Congo Basin.

In England, the reform proposals were the signal for a Times volte face on the Congo issue. Though the Times expressed doubts at

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E. Vandervelde, "Belgium and the Reforms on the Congo", in Contemporary Review, Vol. 96, December, 1909, pp.652-59.

first,<sup>1</sup> a few weeks later on the strength of observations by both its Brussels Correspondent<sup>2</sup> and its Foreign Editor,<sup>3</sup> the paper remarked in a leading article:

"More important than the letter of any reforms is the way in which they are applied. Even more satisfactory than the approval of M. Renkin's proposals manifested by the Belgian Congo reformers is their testimony that the Belgian nation are in earnest on the question, and that even already there has been a vast improvement in the spirit of the whole Congo administration."<sup>4</sup>

The Manchester Guardian, too, seemed pleased that Belgian reformers were pleased:

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Their leading article read, in part:

"While we welcome the present reforms as showing that the Belgian Government understands and is preparing to remedy the evils from which the Congo is suffering, our confidence would be greater if M. Renkin were not so lavish in his assurances that the charges of cruelty and oppression are without foundation." --- Times, 1 November

1909, p.9.

2

Times, 29 November 1909, pp.5-6.

He argued that while on paper, a case against the reforms could be made, Britain should accept them because Belgian reformers Beernaert, Speyer, Cattier and Vandervelde (but see *Supra*, p.189) approved the new measures and asserted that the old System had been repudiated. Finally, he cautioned British reformers:

"Those who in England have the real interest of the Congo at heart may do well to consider whether their zeal may not outrun their discretion. If they doubt the adequacy of the new reform scheme, can they not at least give Belgium the benefit of the doubt."

3

Chirol wrote Morel criticizing the latter for having advocated a "Jameson raid" upon Katanga, and voiced his own approval of the Renkin reform proposals. --- Chirol to Morel, 17 November 1909, cited in R. Wuliger, *op.cit.*, p.243.

4

Leading article, the Times, 29 November 1909, p.11.

"Is there any alternative now but to assist in every possible way the working of Belgian public opinion? The Congo Reform Association does not suggest one, and though it does well to remind us how many abuses are left untouched by the reforms, it is due to the Belgian reformers to recognise their difficulties and to appreciate the great advance that has now been made."<sup>1</sup>

The C.R.A. itself was not slow to react. It organized its largest demonstration yet on 19 November 1909 at Albert Hall,<sup>2</sup> where the Archbishop of Canterbury attacked the reforms not only because they were gradualist and incomplete, but also because they contained no explicit condemnation of the old System.<sup>3</sup>

Meanwhile, Morel and Conan Doyle were organizing their counter-attack against the Times for having abandoned the cause. Morel blasted the Congo Budget again for its silence on the grants-in-aid issue, and the Times for accepting a "sit-down" policy while some Congo natives, at least, were being compelled to wait three years for reform.<sup>4</sup> Conan Doyle, for his part, admonished Renkin for whitewashing the past. Why did not Belgium follow the British example of judging their pro-Consuls --- (Clive and Hastings) --- and bring Baron Wahis before an investigatory commission? Did the Times not realize that a benevolent British attitude would "indefinitely prolong the evil which we are

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<sup>1</sup>  
Manchester Guardian, 11 November 1909, p.6.

<sup>2</sup>  
Ibid, 20 November 1909, p.11. The report declared that Albert Hall, with a capacity of 10,000 was full to the doors!

<sup>3</sup>  
The Times, 20 November 1909, p.11.

<sup>4</sup>  
Ibid, 1 December 1909, p.25.

trying to set right?"<sup>1</sup>

Turning to the reforms themselves, Morel added a few criticisms of his own. Showing the figures that British and German grants-in-aid to their colonies amounted to almost double the revenue collected by hut and poll taxes, he sought in vain for evidence that Belgium was prepared to do the same.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, while Belgium abandoned her claim to the natural wealth of the land, she persisted in claiming ownership, giving the natives trading rights as a gift rather than as their due. What the State gave, the State could take away, and Morel was not prepared to rest his case until he had persuaded Grey to accept nothing short of a solemn Belgian pledge that her reforms were PERMANENT and immutable.<sup>3</sup>

Though the Belgian reforms became law in February, 1910, and went into effect in the First Area in July of that same year, once again the test of their utility lay in their application. Accordingly, British Consular Reports would be vital testimony as to the sincerity of Belgium. Both Morel and Grey knew that if the Reports proved favourable recognition could no longer be withheld.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 3 December 1909, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> E.D. Morel, "Belgium, Britain, and the Congo", in the Nineteenth Century, Vol. 67, March, 1910, pp.407-23.

<sup>3</sup> The Official Organ..., January, 1910, p.400.

<sup>4</sup> The Official Organ..., October, 1910, pp.609-15; Parl. Deb., Fifth Series, Vol. 23, 4 April 1911, col. 1970-71.

Grey remarked:

"His Majesty's Government will not recognize the annexation until they have laid before the House positive evidence that the state of affairs is satisfactory."

On the whole, British Reports were encouraging, particularly with regard to those recently opened areas.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, Consuls Campbell and Mackie, travelling in the Aruwimi and Uele districts, not scheduled for reform until 1912, found that the Administration had accelerated the production of rubber and were forcing the natives to devastate the forests in order to meet their tax demands.<sup>2</sup>

Grey forwarded the Reports on the Uele and Aruwimi districts to his Minister in Brussels, Sir Arthur Hardinge, on 3 March 1911. Hardinge was asked to tell the Belgian Government that no British recognition could be made so long as the collection of rubber taxes persisted anywhere in the Congo.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>  
Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 2 (1911), Vol. LII, Cd. 5860, pp.603-89. Consul Mackie, on 30 May 1911, reported:

"... the situation as depicted in Mr. R. Casement's reports of 1903-04 has undergone so radical a change that, beyond a few isolated acts of cruelty committed by individual offenders, nothing of the nature of systematic abuse could be detected." --- p.654.

<sup>2</sup>  
Reporting on the unopened territories, Mackie had this to say:  
"... The general aspects of the situation in '1912 zones', as set forth in the report of my tour through the Aruwimi district, does not altogether inspire confidence." --- Ibid, p.656.

Moreover, Consul Campbell understood the logic behind Renkin's staggered reform programme:

"... and personally I am at a loss to understand why it is not possible to abolish that system (forced labour) throughout the entire country during the course of 1911 unless it be that the budget would suffer were the change too abrupt." --- Acting-Consul Campbell to Grey, 25 August 1910, cited in Africa No. 2 (1911), Vol. LII, Cd. 5860, p.604.

<sup>3</sup>  
Grey to Hardinge, 3 March 1911, cited, Ibid, p.651. This meant, of course, unless the Belgians suddenly accelerated their programme, until after July, 1912.

Five days later Grey received a transmission from Hardinge containing Renkin's reply.<sup>1</sup> The abolition of the rubber monopoly could not occur until July, 1912 because the colony did not possess enough trained officials to enforce the reforms any earlier. Hardinge added a few observations of his own; in his view Renkin was delaying because he sought to balance off his budget deficits with receipts from the Third Reform Area as long as possible. Britain could not recognize the Congo transfer under these circumstances until after July, 1912 when it probably would be safe to end the question.

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### III

1911 witnessed the turning point in the Congo reform campaign. The Renkin Reforms by themselves were not sufficient to produce a complete victory for the C.R.A., but when they were augmented by additional measures during 1910 and 1911,<sup>2</sup> and when Britain's Congo Consuls gave them their qualified approval, Morel's task was completed.

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<sup>1</sup>

Hardinge to Grey, 8 March 1911, cited, Ibid, pp.651-54.

<sup>2</sup>

In 1910, Renkin had decided to modify the existing Colonial Law to provide vice-governors-general in the Congo powers to make ordinances. The aim was decentralization, especially for regions like Katanga so remote from Boma, and it marked a distinct departure from old Congo State ways. --- Hardinge to Grey, 25 November 1910, Africa No. 2 (1911), Vol. LII, Cd. 5860, p.620.

In addition, in 1911 the Colonial Council decided to liquidate the Government's holdings in the A.B.I.R., Anversoise, and Kasai Companies and to end the rubber monopolies granted to these firms by 1913. --- Grant Watson to Grey, 22 July 1911, 12 August 1911, Ibid, pp.691-702.

Amelioration of conditions in the Congo coincided with a general change for the better in Belgium when Leopold died in December, 1909, and was succeeded by his nephew and heir, Albert I.

Albert, alleged to have all along opposed his uncle's Congo policy,<sup>1</sup> visited the Congo in April, 1909 --- something his predecessor had never done ---, but his Accession Speech reflected his resentment over British concern and seemed in the same vein as some of his uncle's earlier polemics:

"The nation, of her own free-will, wishing to fulfil the work of her King, has just assumed Sovereignty over the Congo territories. Conscious of her duties, and with a firm purpose, she has outlined the colonial policy which she wishes to follow. It is a policy of humanity and progress. To a justice-loving people a colonizing mission can only be one of high civilization. By accepting it loyally, a small country shows itself great... Belgium has always fulfilled her promises and, when she undertakes to apply to the Congo a programme worthy of herself, no one has the right to doubt her word."<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact that there was a new sovereign presiding over a new series of reforms in a new Belgian colony did help to reduce tensions. In fact, in 1911 the Belgian Royal Family paid a visit to

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Emile Cammaerts in his biography of Albert, asserts, however that there is no evidence to support this contention. --- E. Cammaerts, Albert of Belgium, London, 1935, p.68.

2

Ibid, pp.69-70, cited.



George V and prompted the Times to exude friendliness and cordiality.<sup>1</sup>

As for Morel and the C.R.A., here too, a realization that their struggle was nearing its end manifested itself. In late 1910, Morel felt free to leave England on an extended visit to Nigeria where he reported on the debate raging there as to whether Lugard's principles on indirect rule or direct administration based exclusively upon British Law should be applied to the Colony.<sup>2</sup>

The holding of a testimonial for Morel served as another indisputable sign that his job was done. On 29 May 1911, at a gathering presided over by Lord Cromer, the worthy Morel was presented with a gift of £ 5,000 and a statue of a native chief done in bronze by Herbert Ward.<sup>3</sup>

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The Times, 15 February 1911, p.9.

There was, though, a slightly premature enthusiasm in the Times' remarks, perhaps as an attempt to persuade both itself and others that the Congo issue had been long since resolved:

"During the anxious and protracted negotiations between King Leopold and the Belgian Government with regard to the conversion of the Congo into a Belgian colony, there were moments when the persistent efforts of a large section of public opinion in England to draw attention to the necessity of ensuring reforms which were equally desired, it must be remembered, not only by the United States, but by the Belgian Parliamentary Opposition, provoked a certain feeling or resentment among a people conspicuous for its love of liberty and its dread of the least suggestion of "foreign interference"."

2

Morel's findings appeared in the Times and the Manchester Guardian, both of whom had commissioned his investigation, and were compiled in his Nigeria, Its Peoples and Problems, published in 1911. --- F.S. Cocks, op.cit., pp.137-39.

3

R. Wuliger, op.cit., pp.285-87. Morel's many friends and associates made the event possible through their generosity.

Yet, most indicative of all was a report tucked away in an obscure corner of the Official Organ....Morel, it seems, had written to Barbour requesting that he determine the United States Government's views on the question of recognition of the Congo transfer. The reply, delivered by Acting Secretary of State Huntington Wilson on 13 September 1911, stated that the United States had extended de facto recognition and was not bothering to take any further action on the question.<sup>1</sup> In other words, Congo reform was over in the United States.

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#### IV

The British Consular Reports from the Aruwimi and Uele districts --- the last area to be opened to free trade --- arrived in the Foreign Office in late 1912 and early 1913.<sup>2</sup> They were generally

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The text of the letter read:

"As far as all practical purposes of intercourse with the Congo is concerned, this Government has proceeded on the basis of Belgium's responsibility for all the acts of that territory, de facto, and has not thought that formal recognition of annexation is necessary. In instructing the American Minister at Brussels some time ago to apply to the Belgian Foreign Office for the recognition by the Belgian Government of Mr. Charles C. Broy as American Vice- and Deputy Consul-General at Boma, the Department was simply carrying out the rule and custom of asking Consular recognition by the de facto authorities, it not being a question of de jure determination." --- dated 13 September 1911, Department of State, Washington, cited in the Official Organ..., October, 1911, p.739.

2

Consul Lamont to Grey, 20 November, 1912, Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 1 (1913), Vol. LIX, Cd. 6606, pp.437-55; Consul Lamont, transmitting Vice-Consul Purdon's Report, to Grey, 16 December 1912, Ibid, pp.457-75.

favourable insofar as taxation was no longer found to be excessive and the natives were permitted to cultivate the land. One of the chief difficulties, though, was that the administration was understaffed and, on subordinate levels, not of the best quality.<sup>1</sup>

This was the last step, as both Morel and Grey had acknowledged. Earlier, Morel had insisted as well that there was no permanency to the Belgian reforms.<sup>2</sup> But this condition had been fulfilled by virtue of a pledge given by Count de Lalaing to the new British Minister in Brussels, Sir Francis Villiers, that the Belgian Government was pleased with the reforms and had no intention of reversing its decisions.<sup>3</sup>

On 17 March 1913, the C.R.A. forwarded its final Memorandum to Sir Edward Grey. It was glad that conditions in the Congo had "undergone an immense change for the better" and it regarded its task as completed.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, however, this same problem plagued all European Colonial Administrations in Africa at this time.

<sup>2</sup> Supra, p.192.

<sup>3</sup> Villiers to Grey, 18 January 1912, Accts. & Papers, Africa No. 1 (1912), Vol. LIX, Cd. 6145, p.345.

When Morel learned of the de Lalaing pledge he remarked:  
 "The two main objects for which the C.R.A. was founded have, therefore, been secured." --- the Official Organ..., August, 1912, p.745.

<sup>4</sup> It would have been out of character for Morel to close his voluminous correspondence with Grey without offering some further criticism. Expressing his mild disappointment that one-sixth of the Congo still fell under a somewhat mitigated concessionaire company domination, he asked Grey to insist upon vigilance through the British Consular Staff in the Congo, and suggested that Grey press the Belgian Government to ensure wide publicity throughout the Congo for its reform legislation so that petty administrative tyrants would not take advantage of native ignorance of their rights.

This was not part of the C.R.A.'s original programme. Having begun by seeking a minimum standard of enlightened Belgian rule, Morel was now hoping that a reconstructed Belgian Congo would be the scene of a new African enlightenment and rebirth.

At its Executive Meeting held on 25 April 1913, the C.R.A. passed a Resolution recommending that the British Government recognize the Congo transfer and the C.R.A. dissolve itself because, as Morel put it, it was not "our job" to watch over the Congo forever and a day.<sup>1</sup> Though the Resolution was amended to keep the C.R.A. alive until actual British recognition was extended, the C.R.A. had not long to wait.

In keeping with his pledge to inform Parliament beforehand, a final Congo debate was held on 29 May 1913, during which Grey remarked:

"... in our opinion the time has now come when it would be neither justifiable nor politically expedient that we should refuse to give the Government of Belgium that recognition of their annexation of the Congo Colony which has practically been given by all the other Powers."<sup>2</sup>

On 21 June 1913, nine years and three months after its founding and six days before the British Government extended official recognition to the Congo transfer, the C.R.A. closed shop.<sup>3</sup> There were

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The Official Organ..., July, 1913, pp.981-92. The Resolution was forwarded to Grey.

It is interesting to note that Lord Mayo, E.N. Bennett, and Harold Spender disagreed with Morel and favoured the continued existence of the C.R.A. until Belgium extended complete legal recognition of the existence of native communal and tribal rights. They were, of course, a distinct minority.

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Parl. Deb., Fifth Series, Vol. 53, 29 May 1913, col.346-47.

The House of Commons heard words of praise for Morel as well when Sylvester Horne observed:

"... the fact that we stand to-day in as satisfactory a position as we do is, I believe, very largely due to the courageous leadership of one man, Mr. Morel, who gathered together evidence and put the whole world in possession of it." --- Ibid, col. 352-56.

3

The Official Organ..., July, 1913, pp.177-80.

speeches of lavish praise for Morel,<sup>1</sup> and hearty congratulations shared all around. It was fitting that Morel should have chosen the words of John Bright, employed on a similar occasion over sixty years before to conclude the Official Organ...:

" They have learned that there is nothing that can be held out to the intelligent people of this Kingdom so calculated to stimulate them to action, and to great and persevering action, as a great and sacred principle like that which the League (the Anti-Corn Law League) has espoused. They have learned that there is in public opinion a power much greater than that residing in any particular form of government..."<sup>2</sup>

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For instance, the Reverend Scott Lidgett:

"We thank God for such a gift to the twentieth century as Mr. Morel."

And, Sir Harry Johnston:

"... E.D. Morel --- the David who beat down Goliath."

2

John Bright in his speech suspending the Anti-Corn Law League, cited in the Official Organ..., July, 1913.

## CONCLUSION

## I

In the years following Belgian annexation but preceding British recognition of this act --- that is, in the most crucial years of all from the C.R.A.'s point of view --- European considerations greatly complicated the Congo issue and affected its course. Specifically, it was the consideration that the neutral and strategically located Belgian nation held the key to a European land war that prompted Germany and France to subordinate the Imperial aspects of the Congo question to its European side. This was the decisive factor in the rapid recognition extended by both these Powers to Belgian annexation of the Congo in 1908.

There would seem to be some logic, however weak, in seeking to explain Britain's Congo policy in terms of the European aspects of the issue. Indeed, such a study has been made by Mary Elizabeth Thomas in an article written for the June, 1953 issue of the Journal of Modern History.<sup>1</sup>

Miss Thomas presents a documented study of secret 1912 Anglo-Belgian military conversations as they affected Anglo-Belgian relations,<sup>2</sup> as

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<sup>1</sup> Mary E. Thomas, "Anglo-Belgian Military Relations and the Congo Question, 1911-13, in the Journal of Modern History, Vol. 25, June, 1953, pp.157-65.

<sup>2</sup> For a complete examination of the secret Anglo-Belgian military conversations in 1906 and again in 1912, see Luigi Albertini, The Origins of the War of 1914, London, 1957, iii, pp.419-21, 424-25. For an example of how German revanchists and apologists tried to distort the importance of these talks, see H. Lutz, op.cit., p.17 and Alexander Fuehr, The Neutrality of Belgium, New York, 1917, pp.75-81.

well as an examination of the efforts of France, through her persuasive Minister at the Court of St. James, M. Paul Cambon, to persuade Britain to recognize the Congo transfer in the interests of the Entente. From this study, Miss Thomas observes:

" It may be concluded that so important had Belgian nonhostility become that despite some strong domestic opposition, the British government finally abandoned the policy adopted in 1908 and accorded long-delayed recognition to Belgian annexation of the Congo."<sup>1</sup>

Where was this "strong domestic opposition" to recognition in 1913? E.D. Morel and the C.R.A. were fully resigned to a British recognition by this date. Moreover, a study of the Congo issue between 1908 and 1913 reveals that when recognition came, it was on the basis of favourable British Consular Reports --- that is, on the basis of African considerations.

However much this British recognition may have coincided with Entente interests and wishes, it is impossible to attribute British recognition to the efforts of Cambon,<sup>2</sup> Sir Henry Wilson (director of military operations on the Committee of Imperial Defence), or Sir Francis Villiers, and not ultimately, to the efforts of E.D. Morel and

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<sup>1</sup>  
Mary E. Thomas, op.cit., p.165.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Miss Thomas seems reluctant to accept the conclusions of her own evidence. She cites a letter from Cambon to Poincaré reporting on the former's lack of success in persuading the British Government to recognize the Belgian Congo. Cambon had been told by Sir Harold Nicolson speaking for the Foreign Office, that reforms would have to be a reality in all of the Congo before Britain could consider recognition --- that is, until after 1 July 1912, at least. --- Cambon to Poincaré, 29 March 1912, cited, in Thomas, op.cit., p.162.



his associates.<sup>1</sup>

It was Morel's unchallenged reputation in Liberal circles as an authority on the Congo question that turned the tide in the C.R.A.'s favour. If Morel opposed recognition until after 1912, the British Public believed him and this went for Liberal Cabinet Ministers, back-benchers, and rank-and-file. To Samuel, Morley, Burns, Dilke, Sir George White, Sir Henry Norman, and many others the issue was clear. Grey well knew this and could not run the risk of a possible Party split by abandoning Congo reform.<sup>2</sup> Thus, in a very real sense, Grey's policy was determined not by the Foreign Office or the War Office, but by a zealous Public Opinion whose champion was E.D. Morel.

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## II

There remains the final problem of assessment. Did British attitudes and policy towards the Congo substantially affect the

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<sup>1</sup>  
Ultimately, chronology is Miss Thomas' greatest foe. A hypothetical British recognition, dictated by Entente interests, in, say, 1910, would certainly have been termed a 'sell-out' by the C.R.A. But Morel had been aware of this danger and had taken all the precautions at his disposal --- memorials, public meetings, pamphlets, recruitment of influential public figures, and so on.

<sup>2</sup>  
Long after the issue was dead, in his revised edition of Red Rubber which appeared in 1919, Morel stated that at a private meeting in 1909, some two hundred and fifty Liberal Members of Parliament promised to vote against the government if Grey did not promise to insist upon Belgian initiation of reforms. --- E.D. Morel, Red Rubber, revised edition, New York, 1919, pp.209-10.

future history of the Belgian Congo? Secondly, would the small and politically weak Congo reform party in Belgium, in the face of a British abandonment, have been strong enough to assert their will on the vested interests in Brussels who sought to maintain the lucrative Congo System as long as they could?

The answer to the second question, though one of conjecture, would appear to be in the negative. The fact that Vandervelde and Lorand were described as lacking in loyalty for thwarting Leopold, and that they constantly looked to Britain in their Belgian campaign is evidence of a sort.

The initial question poses still greater difficulties. As it was, even with British persistence, Belgium began her African enterprise with a tarnished record of participation in the old Congo State. Some of the precedents established then lived long afterward --- for instance, according to Professor Stengers, between 1908 and 1957 a very insignificant flow of grants-in-aid from Belgium to her colony took place.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the lack of higher education facilities, of trade unionism, of training in limited democracy through at least a limited franchise all testified to the general Belgian reluctance to rid herself of mercantilist notions of Imperialism; finally, the Société Générale, with its labrynth-like structure in Katanga and elsewhere was yet another questionable legacy from the old Congo State.

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J. Stengers, op.cit., pp.343-70.

Speaking of Belgium's contributions to the Congo, he remarks:

"C'est un grand, c'est un noble effort --- mais il ne se situe pas sur le plan de l'aide financière." ---, p.368.

Perhaps, we can come closest to a verdict on the C.R.A. campaign and its influence upon the Congo then and later if we remember that the C.R.A.'s initial goal was to promote at least a minimum standard of modern European imperial morality in the Congo. The remarkable insight of a Manchester Guardian leading article is useful here, for it presents both an excellent judgment on the old Congo State and, implicitly, a testimony to the noble work of the C.R.A. in exposing this abomination to the world:

"The tropical regions of Africa have been occupied to be exploited; their permanent retention is in a high degree problematic. Few can be optimistic enough to anticipate a favourable final judgment upon the share of any nation in the making of this chapter of history. But even a mistaken mission may be executed with varying degrees of honesty or ruthlessness. The evidence which has accumulated during the last few years proves that if there be any one of these enterprises unilluminated by a spark of idealism and conducted with the perfection of pitiless calculation it is the commercial speculation which is known as the Congo Free State."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Congo was 'beyond the pale'. Paraphrasing the Guardian, it was the achievement of the C.R.A. that it "illuminated the Congo with a spark of idealism" when it secured, finally, the adoption of reform for the Congo peoples. It did its job and did it well. That the subsequent history of the Belgian Congo is not an account of "Paradise Regained" in no way diminishes the C.R.A.'s victory.

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The Manchester Guardian, 21 November 1906, p.6.

Beyond the reference to the Congo regime, the statement is remarkably prescient in the light of the recent history of Africa as a whole.

## III

Finally, a brief comment on the British campaign itself seems appropriate.

It is hard for a sophisticated world to picture a throng of 10,000 gathered in Albert Hall to support a movement in favour of a people so remote to the British as were the Congolese in 1909. It is even more difficult to understand how the C.R.A. was able to mobilize Public Opinion so effectively and for such a long period as nine years. It is still more difficult to reconcile this widespread concern with the simultaneous manifestations of what was in 1909, an essentially White Supremacist nation.

In this respect, it is noteworthy that Sir Harry Johnston's 'conflagration thesis' of racial conflict gained widespread popularity and its conclusions echoed in Parliament and in the Press for years afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, such inconsistencies only slightly detract from what was a highly creditable moral campaign waged without ulterior motive. In his autobiography, Sir Edward Grey makes this point clear, though he does rather gratuitously dismiss the last and most important aspect of the C.R.A.'s campaign --- that is, after Belgium

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<sup>1</sup>  
See Supra, pp.104, 145, 152.

had annexed and before she had reformed.<sup>1</sup>

In a review of the Congo controversy, Grey cannot emerge unscathed. Even allowing for the responsibility of Office, his fears, his indecision, his vacillation, rendered to him the worst of both worlds. Since he wavered between conviction and weakness in his correspondence with the Belgian Government, unreconstructed Belgian nationalists chose to remember his firmness and to overlook his caution. Since he periodically gave public vent to his fears, he irritated --- and alienated --- the more earnest of the reformers. The fact remains that, whatever dangers there were in British unilateral action after Belgium had annexed, these could have been avoided by firmer action BEFORE the Belgian takeover. A more resolute Foreign Secretary, having been in office since 1906 as Grey was, would never have allowed his position to deteriorate as Grey had done.

What of E.D. Morel? He was emotional, stubborn, quick to take offence at criticism, and in the end, a sensationalistic, dogmatic and somewhat irresponsible propagandist. Weighed against these shortcomings were his virtues --- his honesty, integrity, dedication and

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Grey wrote:

"King Leopold did at last relinquish it (the Congo). From that moment the representations of the British Government ceased; the Congo Reform Association dissolved itself; the agitation stopped. This should fairly be noted as proof that the stir of British public opinion about the Congo was, what it professed to be, genuinely philanthropic and disinterested.

The transfer of the Congo to Belgium was regarded not only with satisfaction, but with relief; and the expectation that Congo reform would result proved to be justified, and the hope has been fulfilled." --- Sir Edward

Grey, op.cit., i, p.192-93.

tenacity in the face of obstacles that would have caused lesser men to despair long before.

To sum up, Morel was in the tradition of Wilberforce and the Saints whom he so admired --- cut from the same cloth, with some of their weaknesses but with their more than compensating virtues. It is impossible not to conclude that Morel's efforts were a highly significant ingredient in the modern history of the Congo.

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