



**DR. MORRISON**

**William McCutchan Morrison**  
**Twenty Years in Central Africa**

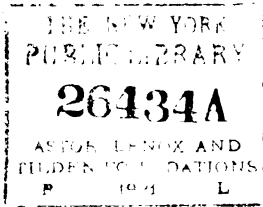
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*By*  
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## APPENDIX A

### **Treatment of the Native People by the Government of the Congo Independent State**

Address of Dr. W. M. Morrison before the Boston Peace Congress  
October, 1904

My reason for appearing before you to-day to address you on this subject is the fact that for seven years I have been a resident of the Congo State in one of the interior districts and have enjoyed exceptional advantages for observing the operation of the Government in its policy towards and treatment of the native people. In the name of an oppressed people who cannot speak for themselves, I have the honor to plead their cause before you.

It is scarcely necessary for me to narrate to you, even in a brief way, the early history of the founding of the Congo State by His Majesty, Leopold II, King of the Belgians, and the so-called International Association, of which His Majesty was the head; nor is it necessary to recount the devious ways by which King Leopold finally secured, first from the United States and later from other Powers, a certain undefined recognition of the new Utopian State which he proposed to found and operate in Africa, the grounds for such recognition being based on the assertion of His Majesty that the foundation stone of the new State, its *raison d'etre*, was to be the "moral and material regeneration of the native peoples" in the great Congo Basin. At the Conference in 1884, in which all the great civilized nations were represented, an international status, more or less undefined, was given to this new African State, and the General Acts of the Conference of Berlin and the subsequent General Act of Brussels contain certain very defi-

nite treaty stipulations, by which the rights of natives and foreigners alike were to be guarded and protected.

The Congo Free State, with King Leopold as absolute sovereign, has been in operation for twenty years, and this has given time to demonstrate whether or not the liberal promises made by His Majesty in 1884 have been fulfilled. This has also given time enough for the Powers to know whether or not the stipulations of the Treaties of Berlin and Brussels have been carried out. This is a question which is very proper and wise to discuss before this International Peace Congress—proper because the Congo State, on account of its ill-defined international status and its persistent violation of its promises and the treaties with the various Powers, is fast becoming once more an international problem, which will require great tact to settle amicably; and proper because the ever increasing ill-treatment of the native people produces uprisings which bring in their train cruelties and barbarities unheard of even in civilized warfare.

It is with deep sadness that I, along with many others who have lived in the Congo State and are acquainted with its workings and have the interest of the natives and foreigners at heart, must now say that every important promise made and every important treaty stipulation is being openly and defiantly violated by King Leopold and his so-called "Congo Free State Government."

In the few minutes allotted to me it will be impossible to go into the details of my personal observations, but I think enough can be given to demonstrate to any unbiased mind that the situation in the Congo State demands impartial, international investigation, and, more than all, international interference.

For the sake of handling the subject we may say that

the Conferences of Berlin and Brussels made, in the interests of the native peoples, the following treaty stipulations with the Congo State: (1) Freedom of trade; (2) Encouragement of missionary and philanthropic enterprises intended for the Christianization and civilization of the native people; (3) The suppression of slavery and slave raiding and the guaranteeing to the natives liberty and protection in their rights as original owners of the land.

Let us discuss these stipulations in the order mentioned.

1. According to the General Act of Berlin, we find that Freedom of Trade was guaranteed. Not only were citizens of all nations granted the right to reside in the Congo State and carry on commerce with the native peoples, but it meant that the native peoples had the right to offer their wares, the products of their land, in the free markets of the world. It especially mentioned the fact that there should never be any monopoly of the land or its products. This is clearly the statement and the meaning of the treaty. The question now is, "Has the Congo State Government, or rather King Leopold, for he is the Government, fulfilled and carried into execution that stipulation of the treaty?" I answer most emphatically, "No."

The gradual and often underground processes by which freedom of trade has been throttled is one of the darkest and most shameless pages in the Congo State's history. One of the first acts of King Leopold, after his sovereignty over the country had been secured by the Treaty of Berlin, was to issue a decree appropriating to the so-called State all the lands not actually occupied by the houses and fields of the natives. Even this latter reservation meant little of real value to the natives for they were given no title to their fields and hence could be dispossessed at any time. Thus

we see that at one stroke of the pen the people were deprived of their ancestral lands.

But that is not all. In the earlier years of the State, a goodly number of traders, representing different nationalities—English, French, Belgian, Dutch, Portuguese—went into the country and secured from the Government small concessions, or land grants, on which to build their houses and shops and thus to trade with the natives, exchanging manufactured goods for the raw ivory and india rubber. This meant that the natives received something like the true value for their products. But this freedom of trade, though import and export duties were charged and enormous sums had to be paid for trading licenses, labor, etc., did not bring in sufficient revenue to satisfy King Leopold, whose original philanthropy now began to be metamorphosed into avaricious commercialism. A new idea was conceived. Large areas, sometimes embracing hundreds of square miles, were given over to large land companies for exclusive exploitation, the Government to have one-half the proceeds of the said companies. As a concrete illustration of what this means, I can cite the situation at my own place, Luebo, on the Kasai River. Up to three years ago there were five separate and independent trading companies at that point. Since that time the Government has organized in this region one of its monopolistic concessions and all these old companies have been forced into the combination. The result is that at Luebo there is now only one trading house; the other four, being deserted, have gone to ruin. Before this monopolistic company was formed the price paid to the natives for rubber was about three francs per kilogram. After the company was formed the price dropped to fifty centimes—in other words, from about thirty cents to five cents per pound. To add insult

to injury, the native is forbidden to go into the forest and make rubber and sell it to any one other than the monopolistic company. If he does he is considered a thief for stealing what belongs to the company. Not only are the natives now deprived of the privilege of selling their wares in an open market to the highest bidder, but by the Government's refusing to outside traders the right to buy land and trade within the prescribed territory of the monopolistic companies, an outrage has been committed on the citizens of the very nations which brought the Congo State into existence. I know a man who came to Luebo hoping to buy a small piece of land from the Government and engage in trade. This was absolutely refused and he finally went away, after great loss to himself and the company which he represented.

But this is not all. In some of the companies thus formed the natives were a little slow about bringing in the ivory and rubber at the prices fixed. Then another expedient had to be resorted to. And just here begins that long and bloody story of Congo cruelty and oppression of which I shall speak later.

I have thus shown that now there is no longer any freedom of trade in the Congo State; that the country has been appropriated by the Government; that, with the exception of a small district in the extreme west, the remainder of the great interior districts, with the natives and the products, has either been farmed out to monopolistic companies of exploitation or is retained by King Leopold as his Private Domain, and this Private Domain is being exploited more mercilessly, if possible, than the territories of the companies.

2. But let us notice in the next place what has become of the stipulations of the Berlin Treaty regarding the en-



couragement by the State of missionary and other philanthropic enterprises, having for their purpose the Christianization and civilization and education of the native people.

In the early years of the Congo Government, just as we saw in the matter of freedom of trade, all went well in Protestant missionary work, which was being carried on by societies from England, the United States and Sweden. The missionaries were permitted to buy land and establish stations without hindrance. Within the past five or six years, however, since the organization of the monopolistic trading companies above referred to, the Government has declined any longer to sell even the smallest plots of land for mission purposes. This fact, combined with the statement that the law prohibits a foreigner from residing for more than fifteen days in a place without owning the land, has practically brought any expansive mission work to a standstill. I, myself, and other members of the mission, have been ordered away from places where we had asked the privilege of purchasing land. It is true that short-term leases have been offered in some cases; but it can be easily seen that it is impossible to undertake any permanent mission work, establish schools, build houses, etc., with the possibility of being turned out at the expiration of the lease and all work gone to naught. The mission of which I am a member has, within the past six years, asked for the privilege of purchasing land and establishing stations at four different places, but we have always been refused. Other missions report similar difficulties. The Congo State ventures a defense of itself on this charge by stating that there are several scores of Protestant missionaries in the country, together with a number of Protestant mission stations. It, however, forgets to mention that these stations were all secured prior to the last five or six years. Another favorite

method of interference with mission work is by annoying and harassing the people in the vicinity of the missions, thus causing them in some cases to flee into the forests and elsewhere for safety. I have seen a mission station which had near it at one time a large village of several thousand people. The village was entirely deserted. The same situation of affairs is being continually reported from various sections of the Congo State. Recent letters from the missionaries on our station at Luebo bring the news that for many months the people have been compelled to work in the building of a new State Post—and every State Post thus built means another link in the chain of slavery. On account of this long continued forced service for the Government, the people have not had opportunity to cultivate their fields. The result is that a famine is threatened; and yet, famine or no famine, the poor natives must furnish food for the great crowd of soldiers, camp followers, and, last but not least, the white Government officials.

Sometimes our schools and church services at Luebo have been broken up for weeks at a time, owing to the people having fled to the forests by thousands in order to escape capture or other outrage at the hands of the Government soldiers.

It can thus be seen that a great wrong is being done, not only to the citizens of these countries who are willing to make a great sacrifice in order to disseminate the blessings of Christianity in that dark land, but a greater wrong is done to the native people whom the Government seems to desire to keep in deeper ignorance and darkness because it puts every obstacle in the way of missionaries. The Government itself sends out no teachers, it establishes no schools and, to cap the climax of its shameless policy, it even throws barriers in the way of the missionaries.

3. Having seen how the native has been shorn of his ancestral forests and deprived of the privilege of freedom of trade, and having seen how the Government, by its interference with mission work, is thus endeavoring to shut out from the people the light of education, Christianization and civilization, we shall now proceed to notice whether the Government has kept that part of its promise regarding the suppression of slavery and slave raiding; whether or not it has secured to the native his liberty and is protecting him in his rights guaranteed by the treaties. I make bold to say that I believe the condition of the native people, as a whole, is far worse than it was before King Leopold and his gang of "moral and material" regenerators began their operations in Africa. Words fail me to attempt to describe this dark, bloody and treacherous page of Congo State history. The system of forced labor and military service is the most heartless and iniquitous in the history of modern colonization enterprises. If possible, it even surpasses in cruelty and relentless heartlessness that of the Spaniards in their conquest of Mexico and Peru.

I can only briefly outline this history of forced labor and military service as I have seen it in operation there. Shortly after the founding of the Congo State india rubber was found to exist in many parts of the country; but, as the collecting of it was necessarily a slow and laborious process, some means had to be devised by which to force the native people to make rubber and bring it to the Government posts. The Government, instead of leaving the dealing in rubber to independent traders, now entered itself into the rubber business and henceforth became nothing but a great commercial, slave-driving monopoly.

King Leopold, at the Conference of Brussels, secured the desired means of forcing the natives to make rubber.

This means was a native army to be recruited and armed for the ostensible purpose of suppressing the Arabs, but, as it turned out, for the purpose of binding into deeper slavery his unfortunate African subjects. This native army, now numbering upwards of 30,000 men, composed of captives made among the fiercest tribes, often cannibals, armed with repeating rifles and officered by Europeans—this native army, I say, is the terror of the whole Congo State and is also the means which the Royal Sovereign uses to compel his helpless and defenceless subjects to make and bring the rubber to the Government posts. The great majority of these soldiers have been captured and forced into military service, or they have been furnished by villages which have been levied upon. They are then trained, armed with rifles, and transported to a region remote from that in which they were born. There, being out of sympathy with the people with whom they have been placed, there is little danger of mutiny. They are heartless in their treatment of the unfortunate people with whom they come into contact.

At Luebo the great majority of the soldiers whom I saw were from the Bangala tribe, far away to the north; at Boma, the capital of the State, I have seen and talked with soldiers belonging to the Baluba tribe. These men were thus more than a thousand miles distant from their native homes. This pitting of tribe against tribe, producing jealousy and not infrequently bloodshed, is one of the most shameful features of the Congo State régime. Time and again at Luebo, when it was rumored that a Government official or the soldiers were coming, I have seen the people, filled with terror, flee into the forests for safety. I have seen villages, in which officers and soldiers had quartered for the night, pillaged and desecrated in the most shameless

manner, and that, too, right under the eyes of the Government officials. I have seen the soldiers actually attacking and plundering villages only a few hundred yards from my house. These same soldiers, in attempting to capture a woman who was fleeing for her life, invaded the private home of two of our missionaries.

It was only after a bitter protest on my part that the Government official was prevented from forcibly removing from Luebo thousands of people and compelling them to live at the State Post at Luluaburg.

Only a few months before starting on my furlough for America a squad of soldiers came to Luebo, accompanied by a white officer. They claimed to have come to recruit soldiers. "Recruiting" is a Congo euphemism for slave raiding. Though I had extracted from the officer the promise that he would take no one away by force, yet, without a moment's warning, he began seizing the men. Many fled into the forests, where they were pursued. Some eighteen or twenty men were thus captured, and I saw them going away under guard, with ropes round their necks, in the true Arab slave raiding style. A year ago I boarded the railway at Leopoldville to come down to Matadi. On the same train were several open cars or trucks loaded with Government slaves who had been captured in the district east of Luebo. They were being taken they knew not where. They told me that they had come to the State post in their vicinity to bring their tribute of ivory and rubber. Upon arriving at the post, they had been surrounded by the soldiers, captured, put on a Government steamer, and when I saw them on the railway they were fully a thousand miles from their homes. They begged me for food, saying they were nearly starved.

At Luluaburg the Government some years ago imported

and stationed several thousand Zappo Zapps, a powerful cannibal tribe, with which the State had formed an alliance. These Zappo Zapps, though allies of the State and though under the immediate surveillance of the Government officials, have been for many years the recognized slave raiders and slave dealers of the whole region. Many times I have seen the Zappo Zapps passing by my door offering for sale men, women and children whom they had captured in the districts beyond Luluaburg. In fact, I can buy a slave any day in Luluaburg at from eight to twelve dollars apiece, sometimes even cheaper than that.

A large gang of these Zappo Zapps, under one of their most prominent chiefs, was sent on a raiding expedition near to one of our stations, Ibanche. For weeks we had heard of the most terrible outrages going on. At last we sent one of our esteemed missionaries, Rev. W. H. Sheppard, to investigate. As he came into the vicinity of the disturbances he found the villages burnt and deserted. Upon arriving at the camp of the Zappo Zapps, he found a large stockade. Inside of this stockade, only a few days before, had occurred a horrible butchery of innocent men, women and children, who had been invited there apparently on a friendly visit. Because they could not pay the enormous tribute of ivory and rubber and slaves which was demanded they were shot down in the stockade. Dr. Sheppard saw and counted eighty-one hands which had been severed at the wrists and were slowly drying over a fire. The leader of the expedition informed Dr. Sheppard that he had been instructed by the Government officials at Luluaburg to bring back the hands in order to show that his work had been well done. Dr. Sheppard also saw forty bodies piled in a heap on the outside of the stockade.

But what is the use of going farther into this revolting

narrative of bloodshed, mutilation, oppression and slavery? The self-styled Sovereign of the Congo State has proved recreant to the sacred trusts committed into his hands by the Powers in 1884. His promised philanthropic Government has been metamorphosed into a State whose real motto is, "Rubber, rubber at any cost."

In other civilized countries engaged in governing subordinate races there is a strong public protest at home against any malicious ill-treatment of the natives—a healthy public sentiment simply demands a reasonably just government.

One of the saddest features of this Congo situation is the fact of seeming moral bankruptcy of the Belgian nation. I know full well that Belgium has no official connection with the Congo; yet, with the exception of a few public voices raised in protest, the great body of the Belgian nation seems not only indifferent, but actually defends the policy of King Leopold in Africa. The question now is: shall the jealousy and the lethargy of the Powers which originally recognized the Congo State permit another Armenia in Africa?

The Congo Government points to its prosperity, to its millions of dollars worth of exports, to its railways and steamboats, to its plantations and beautiful military posts and monopolistic companies which are paying fabulous dividends. I point to the lash and the chains and the repeating rifles and the 30,000 cannibal soldiers which have made all this so-called prosperity possible—a prosperity which is felt in Brussels, but not on the Congo. Instead of the taxes going back for the benefit of the native people, they either stop in the coffers of King Leopold and the stockholders of the monopolistic companies, or they are

sent back to the Congo to build more railroads and more steamboats and more State posts and to buy more rifles.

King Leopold has arrogated to himself absolute power; there is no Congress or Parliament to hold any check. His avarice and relentless greed can run unbridled; the poor natives are defenseless and helpless, and they are holding up the chains of their slavery, their mangled bodies and their impoverished fatherland to the civilized world, pleading for relief from the Government which has been placed over them as a cruel taskmaster.

Surely this International Peace Congress will not turn a deaf ear to the cry of the needy and the oppressed in Africa.