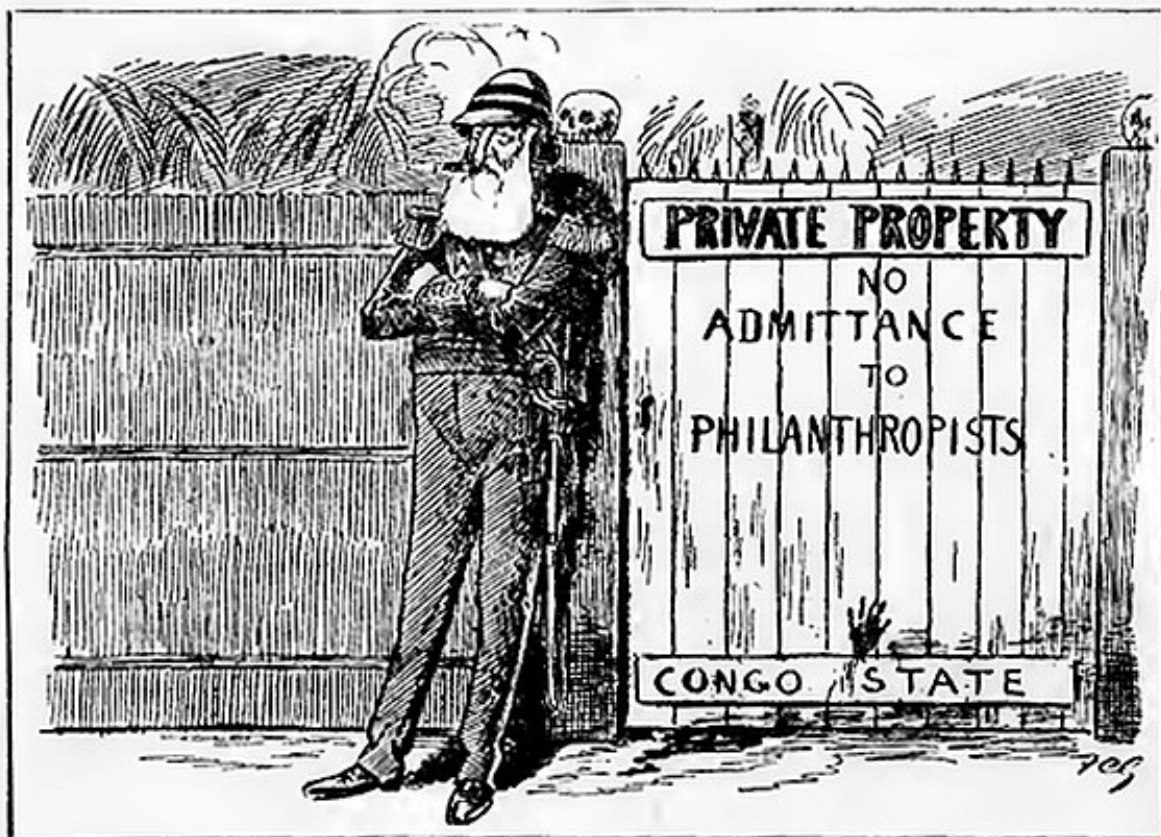


## BACKGROUND MATERIAL for Introduction.

### Further information & background material:

#### 1) Timeline:

- 1876: Creation of *International African Association* in Brussels
- 1884/1885: Congo Conference in Berlin -> Scramble for Africa
- 1884 - 1886: Casement in the Congo working for King Leopold's International Association
- 1885: Founding of *The Congo Free State* as King Leopold's private property
- 1886-1888: Casement with Sanford Exploring Expedition; briefly in charge for trading station in the Upper Congo
- 1890: Roger Casement and Joseph Conrad meet in the Congo
- 1890-92: Casement is organising labour and transport to Stanley Pool (Congo) and operating a trading station
- 1899: *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad is published
- 1900: Roger Casement meets King Leopold in Belgium
- 1901: Casement as British consul is transferred to the Eastern part of the Congo
- 1903: Casement was commissioned to investigate the Congo
- 1904: *Congo Report* by Roger Casement is published
- 1905: *King Leopold's Soliloquy* by Mark Twain is published
- 1908: Belgium parliament took over the Congo Free State from Leopold II



Caricature by British caricaturist Francis Gould.

Source: [https://thereaderwiki.com/en/Congo\\_free\\_state](https://thereaderwiki.com/en/Congo_free_state)

King Leopold II (of Belgium) states in the Opening Speech of the *International Geographic Conference* in 1876: “To open up to civilization the only part of our globe which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the darkness in which entire populations are enveloped, is, I venture to say, a crusade worthy of this age of progress [.]” Kevin C. Dunn, *Imagining the Congo: The International Relations of Identity*, New York 2003, p.21

=> The outcome of the conference was the creation of the *International African Association* with Leopold as its Chairman.

## 2) The Congo Conference



Image Source:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin\\_Conference#/media/File:Cartoon\\_depicting\\_Leopold\\_2\\_and\\_other\\_emperial\\_powers\\_at\\_Berlin\\_conference\\_1884.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin_Conference#/media/File:Cartoon_depicting_Leopold_2_and_other_emperial_powers_at_Berlin_conference_1884.jpg)

The Berlin Conference taking place in 1884-1885, which is also known as the Congo Conference, organised the colonization in Africa and resulted in what came to be known as the *Scramble for Africa*.

### 3) Rubber



Congolese labourers tapping rubber.

Source: [https://thereaderwiki.com/en/Congo\\_free\\_state](https://thereaderwiki.com/en/Congo_free_state)

“The ivory trade, long the chief source of wealth extracted from Africa, is by the turn of the century being rapidly overtaken by a sudden growth in the need of rubber. Following the 1890 invention of an inflatable rubber tire, the popularity of bicycle riding soars – seven million bikes are in circulation by 1895 - and, soon, after the market for automobile tires also expands rapidly. The double development leads to a huge demand for rubber. In the forests of the Congo, the wild rubber vine, easily

tapped, abounds, and as the need – and price – for the product mounts, the region's economy is transformed. Between 1890 and 1904, earnings from the rubber increase year by year [...] with profits reaching 700%. The “Congo Free State” – Leopold's personal fiefdom, independent of Belgium – becomes the most profitable colony in Africa.

To maximize his profits and to keep potential European competitors at bay, King Leopold - a mere six years after signing the 1885 Berlin “free-trade” agreement – takes absolute and exclusive control of a hundred thousand square miles of the Congo's richest rubber-producing region. He issues what becomes a protracted series of secret decrees to his officials in Africa, declaring himself the sole owner of not only the land but also the forests and minerals [...]. Henceforth, Leopold declares, the Africans are tenants of the Congo Free State [see map on slide] and subject to his authority; they may own only the small patches of cultivated land around their huts; all the rest is declared “vacant” [see slide with quote by Joseph Conrad where it states on the map: UNEXPLORED] – which is to say, the property of Leopold.

In 1888 Leopold establishes the Force Publique, armed native troops chosen to serve in areas distant from those of their birth and under the command of European officers. He also instructs his agents zealously to ensure – at the point of the bayonet if need be – that the “slothful” natives be transformed into a rigorously productive workforce. [...]

The effects on the native workforce is catastrophic. As the demand for rubber soars, so too does the level of barbarity inflicted on the indigenous population. Several of the braver missionaries – William Sheppard, for one – are among the few to speak out against the endemic cruelty. [...]

[E.V.Sjoblom another missionary] speaks: “Within my own knowledge,” [...] forty-five towns have been burnt down. Soldiers are stationed in every village – the so-called sentry-system – they live off the people, and drive them into the forest to gather india-rubber. I saw one soldier seize an old man who, to keep from starving, had dared to fish for food in the river; they shot him dead right in front of me. If the natives' quota of rubber is short, I've seen sentries beat them so badly that some die, then they cut off their hands and bring them to the Commissioner as proof they are doing their job.”

Duberman, Martin: *Luminous Traitor: The Just and Daring Life of Roger Casement, A Biographical Novel*, Oakland 2019, p. 43 f.

### **King Leopold in Mark Twain's Soliloquy on Roger Casement:**

“It is most amazing, the way that that consul acts—that spy, that busy-body, One doesn't need to drowse through his monotonous report to see that; the mere subheadings of its chapters prove it.” Twain, Mark: *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, p.17

### **Joseph Conrad on Roger Casement:**

“He [Casement] could tell you things! Things I have tried to forget, things I never did know. He has had as many years of Africa as I had month – almost.” Dudgeon, Jeffrey: *Roger Casement - The Black Diaries*, Belfast 2019, p.89