



British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement, 1896-1913

Dean Pavlakis

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The Congo Free State was under the personal rule of King Leopold II of the Belgians from 1885 to 1908. The accolades that attended its founding were soon contested by accusations of brutality, oppression, and murderous misrule, but the controversy, by itself, proved insufficient to prompt changes. Starting in 1896, concerned men and women used public opinion to influence government policy in Britain and the United States to create space for reforming forces in Belgium itself to pry the Congo from Leopold's grasp and implement reforms. Examining key factors in the successes and failures of a pivotal movement that aided the colonized people of the Congo and broadened the idea of human rights, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement* provides a valuable update to scholarship on the history of humanitarianism in Africa. The Congo Reform movement built on the institutional experience of overseas humanitarianism, the energy of evangelical political involvement, and innovations in racial, imperial, and nationalist discourse to create political energy. Often portrayed as the efforts of a few key people, especially E.D. Morel, this book demonstrates that the movement increasingly manifested itself as an institutionalized and transnational campaign with support from key government officials that ultimately made a material difference to the lives of the people of the Congo.

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