
Imperialism and the Congo

1902 *ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA*

Congo Free State†

The Congo Free State (*État Indépendant du Congo*) is one of the largest of the political divisions of Equatorial Africa. It occupies a unique position among modern states, as it may be said to owe its existence to the ambition and force of character of a single individual. It dates its formal inclusion among the independent states of the world from 1885, when its founder, Leopold II, king of the Belgians, became its head. But to understand how it came into existence, a brief account is needed of its Sovereign's connexion with the African continent. In 1876 King Leopold summoned a conference at Brussels of the leading geographical experts in Europe, which resulted in the creation of "The International Association for the Exploration and Civilization of the Congo." To carry out its objects, an International Commission was founded, with Committees in the principal countries of Europe. Committees were in fact so established, but the Belgian Committee at Brussels, where also were the headquarters of the International Commission, displayed from the first greater activity than did any of the other committees. It turned its attention in the first place to East Africa, and several expeditions were sent out, which resulted in the founding of a Belgian station at Karema on Lake Tanganyika. But the return of Mr (afterwards Sir) H. M. Stanley¹ from his great journey of exploration down the Congo, forcibly directed the attention of King Leopold to the possibilities for exploration and civilization offered by the

† From *The New Volumes of the Encyclopædia Britannica constituting, in Combination with the Existing Volumes of the Ninth Edition (1875-89), the Tenth Edition of That Work* (London, Edinburgh, and New York: Encyclopædia Britannica Company, 1902), 3:200-207. This encyclopedia article suggests the state of informed public opinion about the Congo in the year *Heart of Darkness* appeared in book form. The Ninth Edition contains no entry on the Congo Free State, and its article on the Congo was apparently written in the late 1870s, before the 1884 Berlin conference that recognized Leopold's domain.

¹ Henry M. Stanley (1841-1904), Anglo-American journalist and explorer. His first expedition to Africa (1868-71) was commissioned by the *New York Herald* to find the lost explorer David Livingstone, whom he greeted with the now-famous question. He was the first European to follow the Congo River from its source to the sea (1874-77), and he later helped to organize the Congo Free State and traveled to the Congo on King Leopold's behalf (1879-84). [Editor]

On the invitation of the king, Mr Stanley visited Brussels, and on November 25th 1878 a separate committee of the International Association was organized at Brussels, under the name "Comité d'Études du Haut Congo." Shortly afterwards this committee became the "International Association of the Congo," which in its turn was the forerunner of the Congo Free State. The Association was provided with a nominal capital of £40,000, but from the first its funds were largely supplemented from the private purse of King Leopold; and by a gradual process of evolution the work, which was originally, in name at least, international in character, became a purely Belgian enterprise.

Mr Stanley, as agent of the Association, spent four years on the river, in exploring and concluding treaties with local chiefs. The first station was founded in February 1880 at Vivi, and before returning to Europe in August 1884 Mr Stanley had established twenty-two stations on the Congo and its tributaries. Numerous expeditions were organized by King Leopold in the Congo basin, and the activity of the International Association and its agents began seriously to engage the attention of the European Powers interested in Africa. On behalf of Portugal, claims were advanced to the Congo, based on the discovery of its mouth by Portuguese navigators centuries before. In the interests of France, M. de Brazza was actively exploring on the northern banks of the Congo, and had established various posts, including one where the important station of Brazzaville is now situated.

The fact that the International Association of the Congo had no admitted status as a sovereign power rendered the tenure of its acquisition somewhat precarious, and induced King Leopold to make determined efforts to secure for his enterprise a recognized position. Early in 1884 a series of diplomatic events brought the question to a head. * * * The United States of America was the first Great Power, in a convention signed on the 22nd of April 1884, to recognize the Association as a properly constituted body. Simultaneously, King Leopold had been negotiating with the French Government, the Association's most serious rival, not only to obtain recognition but on various boundary questions. * * * Germany was the next Great Power to recognize the position of the Free State, on the 8th November 1884, and the same recognition was subsequently accorded by Great Britain on 16th December; Italy, 19th December; Austria-Hungary, 24th December; Holland, 27th December; Spain, 7th January, 1885; France and Russia, 5th February; Sweden and Norway, 10th February; Portugal, 14th February; and Denmark and Belgium, 23rd February. While negotiations with Germany for the recognition of the status of the Congo Free State were in progress, Prince Bismarck issued invitations to the Powers

to an International Conference at Berlin. The Conference assembled on the 15th of November 1884, and its deliberations ended on the 26th of February of the following year by the signature of a General Act, which, on behalf of the European Powers to other regions of Africa as well as the Congo basin.

The provisions affecting the Congo may be briefly stated. A Conventional Basin of the Congo was defined, which comprised all the regions watered by the Congo and its affluents, including Lake Tanganyika, with its eastern tributaries, and in this Conventional Basin it was declared that "the trade of all nations shall enjoy complete freedom." Freedom of navigation of the Congo and all its affluents was also secured, and differential dues on vessels and merchandise were forbidden. Trade monopolies were prohibited, and provisions made for civilizing the natives, the suppression of the slave trade, and the protection of missionaries, scientists, and explorers. Provision was made for the Powers owning territory in the Conventional Basin to proclaim their neutrality. Only such taxes or duties were to be levied as had "the character of an equivalent for services rendered to navigation itself"; and it was further provided that (Article 16) "The roads, railways, or lateral canals which may be constructed with the special object of obviating the innavigability or correcting the imperfection of the river route on certain sections of the course of the Congo, its affluents, and other waterways, placed under a similar system as laid down in Article 15, shall be considered, in their quality of means of communication, as dependencies of this river and as equally open to the traffic of all nations. And as on the river itself, so there shall be collected on these roads, railways, and canals only tolls calculated on the cost of construction, maintenance, and management, and on the profits due to the promoters"; while as regards the tariff of these tolls, strangers and natives of the respective territories were to be treated "on a footing of perfect equality." The International Association not having possessed, at the date of the assembling of the Conference, any recognized status, was not formally represented at Berlin, but the flag of the Association having, before the close of the Conference, been recognized as that of a sovereign state by all the Powers, with the exception of Turkey, the Association formally adhered to the General Act.

Thus early in 1885 King Leopold had secured the recognition of the Association as an independent state. * * * In April 1885 the Belgian Chamber authorized King Leopold "to be the chief of the state founded in Africa by the International Association of the Congo," and declared that "the union between Belgium and the new State of the Congo shall be exclusively personal." This act of the Belgian Legislature regularized the position of King Leopold, who at once

began the work of organizing an administration for the new state. In a circular-letter addressed to the Powers on the 1st of August 1885. His Majesty declared the neutrality of the "Independent State of the Congo," and set out the boundaries which were then claimed for the new state, but it was not until fifteen years later that the frontiers of the Free State were finally settled. * * * The net result of [various treaties] is to leave the Congo Free State with France, Portugal, and Great Britain as her neighbours on the north, with Great Britain and Germany as her neighbours on the east, and with Great Britain and Portugal on her southern frontier. * * *

The international position of the Free State is a somewhat anomalous one. It is an independent state administered as if it were a colony. By his will dated the 2nd August 1889, King Leopold bequeathed to Belgium "all our sovereign rights over the Independent State of the Congo, as they are recognized by the declarations, conventions, and treaties concluded since 1884 between the foreign Powers on the one side, the International Association of the Congo and the Independent State of the Congo on the other, as well as all the benefits, rights, and advantages attached to that sovereignty." It was subsequent to the execution of this will that the Belgian State in July 1890 acquired the right * * * of annexing the Free State in ten years and six months from that date. In the year 1895, owing to its financial difficulties, the Free State was obliged to ask the consent of the Belgian Government to a project for raising a further loan. The Belgian Ministry of that time believed the occasion opportune for advancing the date of the annexation of the Free State as a Belgian colony. A Bill was introduced with this object into the Belgian Legislature, but after long delays and a violent Press campaign the Ministry fell, the Bill was withdrawn, and the Chambers voted a further loan to the Free State to enable it to tide over its immediate difficulties. However, either on the decease of the sovereign, or at some earlier date, the Belgians must come to a decision whether or not they will accept the responsibility for King Leopold's African kingdom.

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Physical Features

Except for its short coast-line on the Atlantic, and for a small area on its north-eastern frontier, the Free State lies wholly within the geographical basin of the Congo. It may roughly be divided into three zones—(1) the small coast zone west of the Crystal Mountains, through which the Congo breaks in a succession of rapids to the Atlantic; (2) the great central zone bounded on the north by the Congo and the Mobangi river, on the east by the Mitumba range of

mountains, and on the south by the Congo-Zambezi watershed and the Portuguese frontier; and (3) the smaller zone east of the Mitumba range, including the upper courses of some of the Congo tributaries which have forced their way through the mountains, and west of Lake Mweru and the upper course of the Luapula, as well as a small area which belongs geographically to the Nile valley. * * * The Congo and its tributary streams form, both from the point of view of the physical geography and the commercial development of the Congo Free State, its most important feature; but next in importance are the immense forests which clothe the banks of the rivers, the remains of the great forest which appears at one time to have covered the whole of the centre of the continent. The wooded savannahs, where it is anticipated that in the course of time numerous herds of cattle may be reared, are mostly situated on the higher lands of the Central zone, where the land dips down from the Mitumba Mountains to the Congo.

Climate.—Situated on the Equator, between about 5° N. and 11° S. lat., the Congo Free State shows only a slight variation of temperature all the year round. From July to August the heat increases slightly, with a more rapid rise to November. During December the thermometer remains stationary, and in January begins to rise again, reaching its maximum in February. March is also a month of great heat; in April there is a steady decline into May, with a more rapid decline in June, the minimum being reached again in July. * * * Storms of extreme violence, accompanied by torrential rain, and in rare instances by hailstones, are of not uncommon occurrence. On the coast and along the course of the lower river fogs are very rare, but in the interior early morning fogs are far from uncommon. Europeans are subject to the usual tropical diseases, and the country is not suited for European colonization.

Area and Population

The area is roughly estimated at 900,000 square miles, and the native population is variously estimated at from 30,000,000 (Stanley) to 14,000,000 (Saint Martin). The estimated area is probably above rather than below the proper figure. The vast bulk of the population belongs to the *Bantu* stock, but there are found, in the great forests along the river banks, sparsely distributed bands of the pigmy people, who probably represent the aboriginal inhabitants of Central Africa. In the north-eastern corner of the State, in the upper basin of the Welle and the Mbomu, the *Azandé*, a race of warriors and hunters with a social, political, and military organization superior to that of the *Bantu* tribes of the Congo basin, had intruded from the north, and were forcing their way southwards

towards the Congo when the agents of the State appeared in that region and their farther progress. Traces of Arab blood are still found in the districts where the slave traders from the east coast had established stations. The European population at the end of 1886 numbered 254, of whom 46 were Belgians. In 1890 there were 744 Europeans, of whom 338 were Belgians; in 1895, 1076, of whom 691 were Belgians. In January 1900 the European population was as follows:—Belgians, 1187; Italians, 176; British, 99; Dutch, 95; Swedes, 81; Portuguese, 72; French, 53; Germans, 42; Danish, 39; Americans, 33; Norwegians, 25; Swiss, 13; Austrians, 7; Spaniards, 6; and other nationalities, 30,—a total of 1958.

Stations

There are no large towns in the European sense, but a number of stations have been established, some of which have acquired a certain importance and have become the centre of a comparatively large European population. Of these, *Boma* is the headquarters of the local administration, and the residence of a British vice-consul. It is situated on the right bank of the Lower Congo, about 60 miles from its mouth, is one of the principal ports of call for steamers, and the centre of a considerable trade. In 1899 the number of steamers entering the port of Boma was 84, of 164,035 tons, and the number of coasting vessels 196, of 6484 tons. *Banana*, close to the mouth of the Congo and Banana Point, possesses one of the best natural harbours on the west coast of Africa, and is capable of sheltering vessels of the largest tonnage. There are a number of European factories, some of them dating from very early days, and the place is still the centre of a considerable commerce. The French consulate is situated at Banana. In 1899 the number of seagoing vessels entering the port was 108, of 205,610 tons, and the number of coasting vessels 244, of 13,353 tons. *Matadi* is situated on the left bank of the Congo, at the highest point of the lower river which can be reached by seagoing vessels. It is the point of departure of the Congo railway. The railway company has constructed two jetties at which steamers can discharge their cargo. *Matadi* is probably destined to eclipse both *Boma* and *Banana* as a port, but at present no statistics are available as to the number or tonnage of the vessels calling there. *Lukunga*, situated on the banks of the river of that name, a southern tributary of the Congo, about half-way between *Matadi* and *Stanley Pool*, was formerly the capital of the Falls district, and the chief recruiting station for porters on the Lower Congo. *Timba*, the present capital of the district, is a station on the Congo railway, the half-way house between *Matadi* and *Stanley Pool*, where the trains stop for the night. It is about 117 miles from *Matadi* and 143 from *Ndolo*,

the terminus of the railway on *Stanley Pool*. *Ndolo* is situated a short distance from the Pool, and has two channels by which vessels can enter and leave the port. Extensive works have been undertaken, and it is intended to make *Ndolo* the headquarters of the steamers that ply on the inland waterways. Quays and a slip for launching vessels have been constructed. *Leopoldville* is the capital of the *Stanley Pool* district, and was one of the earliest stations founded by the Association. It is situated about 7 miles from *Ndolo* on the flanks of *Mount Leopold*, and it is considered probable that it may some day supplant *Boma* as the headquarters of the administration when the increased importance of the middle and upper river regions makes it necessary to move the centre of administration from the lower river. * * *

Constitution

The Free State is an absolute monarchy, but the Sovereign has never set foot in his African territory, which is administered from Brussels. There is no "constitution," but King Leopold's power is circumscribed in certain directions by the General Act of Berlin, to which the Free State adhered in 1885, by which freedom of trade and free navigation of the Congo and its affluents are secured. Civil and criminal codes have been promulgated by decrees, and in both cases the laws of Belgium have been adopted as the basis of legislation, and modified to suit the special requirements of the Free State. In addition to the decrees, which are signed by the Sovereign and countersigned by the Secretary of State, provision is made for the issue of Regulations and Ordinances by the Governor-General. The Governor-General may, in case of urgency, issue an Ordinance suspending for a limited period a Decree issued by the Sovereign. Ordinances issued by the Governor-General remain in force for six months, at the termination of which period they expire, unless they have in the meantime been superseded by Decree. All Decrees are published in the *Bulletin Officiel*, which is issued monthly at Brussels. The Sovereign is assisted in the task of government by a Secretary of State, whose duty it is not only to countersign all Decrees, but to superintend their execution. There are three Departments of State, each presided over by a Secretary-General in subordination to the Secretary of State. These departments are:—(1) Foreign Affairs, (2) Finance, (3) Interior. There is also a Treasurer-General, and a chief of the Cabinet of the Secretary of State. All these officials have their headquarters at Brussels. The headquarters of the local administration are at *Boma*, on the lower river, the King being represented by a Governor-General, who is the head both of the naval and military authorities. He is assisted by a Deputy Governor-General, by a

number of Inspectors, a Secretary-General, and several Directors. A Consultative Committee or Council of the heads of the various departments and higher officials advises the Governor-General on all matters which he may lay before it. There are seven departments of the administration:—(1) Justice, (2) Transports, Marine and Public Works, (3) Superintendence of State Lands, (4) Agriculture and Industry, (5) Defence, (6) Force Publique, and (7) Finance. For administrative purposes the Free State is divided into 14 districts, each of which is governed by a Commissary, with a staff of Assistant Commissaries, Sub-Commissaries, and clerks.

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Judicial Machinery

Until May 1897 the Upper Congo was under military law, but from that date civil law has been administered throughout the State, wherever the authority of the State extended. Courts of First Instance have been instituted in the various districts, and there is a Court of Appeal at Boma which revises the decisions of the inferior tribunals. There is a further appeal, in all cases where the sum in dispute exceeds a thousand pounds, to a Superior Council at Brussels composed of a number of juriconsults, who sit as a Cour de Cassation. In consequence of repeated charges of the ill-treatment of natives being made against officers of the Administration, King Leopold instituted a Commission for the Protection of Natives, and nominated several missionaries of different denominations to serve on it. It is the duty of the Commission to report to the judicial authorities, or to the Governor-General, any cases of the ill-treatment of the natives which may come to the knowledge of its members.

Religion and Instruction

The native population are pagans, fetish worshippers, and on a very low plane of civilization. The State makes no provision for their religious teaching, but by the Berlin Act missionaries of all denominations are secured perfect freedom of action. The State has established three agricultural and technical colonies for lads up to the age of fourteen. Each of these colonies, which are situated at Boma, Leopoldville, and New Antwerp, makes provision for the training of five hundred boys, who are recruited from those rescued from slavery, from orphans, and from children abandoned or neglected by their parents. Practical instruction is given in various subjects, but the main object is to provide recruits for the armed force of the State, and only such lads as are unfitted to be soldiers are drafted into other occupations. A few native children are sent to

Belgium to be educated. Missionaries have displayed great activity on the Congo, and are encouraged by the Administration. In 1900 there were 300 missionaries, of whom 180 were Roman Catholics and 120 Protestants, scattered among 76 mission stations. The missionaries do not confine themselves to religious instruction, but seek to raise the general level of the native population. In many districts cannibalism is rife, and degrading ceremonies are practised. There are two Roman Catholic bishops, one of whom resides at Leopoldville, the other at Baudouinville, and Roman Catholic churches for the European population are maintained at Boma and Matadi.

Finance

In the years that preceded the founding of the Congo Free State the funds for carrying on the work of the International Association of the Congo were provided by King Leopold out of His Majesty's privy purse, and for some time after the recognition of the Free State this system was continued. Mr Demetrius Boulger states that, in the first ten years of his work on the Congo, King Leopold spent £1,200,000 from his private fortune. The first five years of the existence of the new State were greatly hampered by the provision of the Berlin Act prohibiting the imposition of any duties on goods imported into the Congo region, but at the Brussels Conference, in the summer of 1890, a declaration was signed by the Powers signatory to the Berlin Act authorizing the imposition of import duties not exceeding 10 per cent. [of their value], except in the case of spirits, which were to be subject to a higher duty. * * * The Free State is in fact a great commercial undertaking as well as a governing body. It has established plantations in various parts of the State domains, or Crown lands, but these are mainly in the experimental stage, and the bulk of the revenue from the State domains is derived from the collection of caoutchouc, or rubber, from the forest, and the trade in ivory. In 1886 the total revenue of the State only amounted to 74,261 francs. * * * The following table shows the rapid advance made in the revenue derived from the State domains:—

Year	From State Domains
	Francs
1886	74,261
1891	1,319,145
1896	5,887,404
1900	11,200,000

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Defence

The Administration was at first compelled to recruit soldiers among races outside the State territories, but in 1886 a small beginning was made in recruiting among the local tribes. The greater part of the army consisted in 1901 of locally-raised levies, recruited partly by voluntary enlistment and partly by the enforced enlistment of a certain number of men in each district, who are selected by the Commissary in conjunction with the local chiefs. In 1899 the effective force was fixed at 11,850 men, divided into 23 companies, and commanded by 200 European commissioned officers and 241 sergeants. The term of service for volunteers does not exceed seven years, while the militiamen raised by enforced enlistment serve for five years on active service, and for two years in the reserve. The men are armed with the Albani, the officers with the Mauser rifle. There are seven camps of instruction, and the artillery includes Krupps, Maxims, and Nordenfeldts. A fort has been erected at Chinkakassa near Boma, commanding the river below the Falls, and there is another fort at Kinshassa on Stanley Pool to protect Leopoldville and the railway terminus. * * *

Land and Production

On the 1st of July 1885 it was decreed that "unoccupied lands are considered as belonging to the State." There are three forms of ownership recognized in the Free State—(1) the right of the natives to land in their actual occupation; (2) private ownership by Europeans of land which they have acquired, and of which they are the registered owners; and (3) State ownership of all the land not included in either of the two former categories. * * * There is a separate department for the management of the Domain or Crown lands. Plots for factories and blocks of agricultural land are sold at certain fixed rates, but the main contribution to the State revenue from the Domain lands is obtained * * * from the collection of rubber and ivory. In 1891 and 1892 the State endeavoured to obtain a monopoly of the rubber trade, and circulars were issued to the Commissaries in certain districts instructing them that not only was the collection of rubber by the natives to be regulated, but that in future the natives were to be compelled to sell their rubber to the State. Vigorous protests by the private trading companies were made against this attempted violation of the freedom of trade secured by the Berlin Act, and eventually the circulars were withdrawn and an arrangement made by which certain

areas were reserved to the State and certain areas to private traders. * * *

Minerals

Comparatively little is known of the mineral wealth of the country. Iron is widely distributed, and worked in a primitive fashion. It has been found in the Manyanga country, the Manyema country, on the Upper Congo, in the Urua country, in the basins of the Kasai and the Lualaba, and in Katanga. Immense ironstone hills, estimated to contain millions of tons of ironstone of superior quality, have been reported in the southeastern region. The wealth of Katanga in copper has been described by several travellers, and the expedition sent out in 1891 reported that the richest deposits are to be found in the southern districts on the bank of the Lufira river. Copper is also reported in other districts, such as Mpala and Ulvira on Lake Tanganyika. Gold has been discovered in Katanga, but before the advent of Europeans was held in less repute than copper. Lead, tin (Mobangi basin), sulphur, and mercury are also reported to exist, but until the introduction of European methods it is impossible to say what are the mineral resources of the Congo region, and whether they can be worked at a profit.

Animal and Vegetable Products

Elephant and hippopotamus ivory formed for some years the most important article of export. When Europeans first entered the Congo basin the natives were found to have large stores of "dead ivory" in their possession. These stores are still being drawn on for export, supplemented by the "live ivory" obtained by the killing of elephants in the present day. In July 1889, as a precaution against the extermination of the elephant, the King issued a decree prohibiting the killing of elephants without special permission. Large herds still exist in the Congo forests, especially in the eastern and northeastern districts. A reference to the commercial statistics will show that ivory is still the second most important export from the Free State. It is, however, a bad second to caoutchoue, the rubber of commerce, which is obtained from the rubber-bearing liana—*Landolphia florida*—which exists in practically inexhaustible quantities. In 1886 the value of the rubber exports only amounted to 159,000 francs. In 1900 the value had risen to 28,973,505 francs. Palm oil, palm nuts, gum copal, and timber are other natural products which swell the volume of exports, though not at present to any considerable extent. Timber is as yet only exported to the value of between £3000 and £4000, but the vast forests contain many

trees, the wood of which is sufficiently valuable to pay the cost of transport to Europe. Ebony, teak, African cedar, mahogany are a few only of the woods that abound on the Congo. Coffee and tobacco are found in a wild state, and there is an immense number of fruit-bearing trees, and of plants yielding spices and essences which may in time be turned to profitable account.

Agriculture

Until the advent of Europeans the natives, except in the immediate neighbourhood of some of the Arab settlements, did little more than cultivate small patches of land close to their villages. They grew bananas, manioc, the Spanish potato, the sugar cane, maize, sorghum, rice, millet, eleusine, and other fruits and vegetables, as well as tobacco, but the constant state of fear in which they lived, both from their neighbours and from the Arabs, offered small inducement to industry. Future agricultural development will depend on the success which attends the efforts to turn the native into a regular labourer. Plantations have been established both by the State and by private companies, and already small quantities of coffee, cocoa, tobacco, and maize have been exported. There are no statistics of the number of domestic animals in the country, but there is a number of horses, mules, donkeys, cattle, and pigs, and it is believed that cattle-rearing may be profitably undertaken in the eastern portions where the country rises towards the Mitumba Range, when the political conditions and improved transport arrangements make such an experiment possible.

Industries

In some districts the natives possess considerable skill in working in wood, ivory, and metals, but the Congo industries are at present purely local. Iron and copper are extracted by certain tribes, which enjoy a practical monopoly of this kind of work. The knives, spears, and shields of native workmanship frequently show both ingenuity and skill, alike in design and in execution. European fabrics have, among the tribes nearest the coast, already affected the weaving of cloths by the natives, but over a great part of the State territory the natives still manufacture cloth from vegetable fibres. They employ four different colours; yellow, the natural colour, black, red, and brown, which are obtained by dyeing, and these colours they combine into effective designs. In some tribes a rude form of printing designs on cloth is practised, and on the Sankuru and Lukenye a special kind of cloth, with a heavy pile resembling velvet, is made by the Basongo-Meno and other tribes.

Commerce

The following table shows the total exports under the headings—(1) Special Commerce, which includes only such articles as originate from the Congo Free State; and (2) General Commerce, which includes exports of all kinds from the Free State, whatever their place of origin:—

Year	Special	General
1887	1,980,441	7,667,949
1890	8,242,199	14,109,781
1895	10,943,019	12,135,656
1898	22,163,482	25,396,706
1899	36,067,959	39,138,283

The following table shows the value of the principal products exported from the Free State (Special Commerce) at three periods:—

Articles	1887	1895	1899
	Francs.	Francs.	Francs.
Caoutchouc	116,768	2,882,585	28,100,917
Ivory	795,700	5,844,640	5,834,620
Palm nuts	590,781	1,242,898	1,293,413
Palm oil	462,609	935,658	734,511
Timber	12,200	91,312
Miscellaneous	14,583	25,038	13,186
	1,980,441	10,943,019	36,067,959

The increasing importance of the trade with Belgium is shown in the following table, in which will be found the value of the general exports to Belgium, Holland, and Great Britain at three periods:—

Country	1890	1895	1899
	Francs.	Francs.	Francs.
Belgium	2,217,599	8,999,660	32,367,828
Holland	8,073,208	885,405	1,656,561
Great Britain	833,941	592,496	281,593

Shipping and Navigation

There is a fortnightly service of steamers between Antwerp and Boma and Banana. There is also frequent steam communication with Liverpool, Hamburg, Rotterdam, and Lisbon. In 1899 there entered at Boma and Banana 192 seagoing vessels of 369,645 tons, and cleared 197 vessels of 375,715 tons. Of the tonnage entered, 191,843 was Belgian; 79,037, British; and 65,682, German. Of the tonnage cleared 189,933 was Belgian; 85,588 was British; and 67,113, German. During the same year 440 coasting vessels of 19,838 tons entered, and 451 vessels of 20,557 tons cleared from the same ports.

Internal Communications

From the mouth of the Congo to the beginning of the rapids, which render the river unnavigable—a distance of about a hundred miles—the State maintains a fleet of seven steamers, in which passengers and goods are transported from the larger ocean-going steamers to Matadi, the point of departure of the railway. Matadi can, however, be approached by ships of considerable burden. Before the railway, all merchandise and goods for the interior had to be carried by porters from the coast to Stanley Pool. This method was both costly and inconvenient. The journey took three weeks. In 1887 the King granted to the Congo Industrial and Commercial Company a concession to construct a railway from the lower river to Stanley Pool, and, after a survey had been made, a Congo Railway Company was founded in Brussels in July 1889, with a capital of 25 million francs, of which the Belgian Government subscribed 10 millions. The moving spirit in this great enterprise was Colonel Thys. The work was begun almost immediately, but nearly insuperable difficulties were encountered, both engineering and financial. The line was finally completed in March 1898, and formally opened to traffic in the following July—nine years after its practical inception. The length of the line is 260 miles, and its inland terminus is at Ndolo on Stanley Pool, a short distance from Leopoldville. There is a weekly service of three passenger trains in each direction, two days being occupied on the journey. The trains do not run during the night. The single through fare for Europeans is £20, and the freight charges are proportionately high, judged by European standards, though considerably below the charges which had to be paid before the railway was built. The cost of constructing and equipping the railway was 68 millions of francs. Other railways which are projected are a short line from Boma to the Lukulu river, for the purpose of open-

ing up the Mayumbe province; a line or lines of railway between the navigable waters of the Upper Congo and Lake Tanganyika, with subsidiary lines which would develop the rich provinces of Manyema, Urua, and Katanga; and a railway in the Upper Welle district, for the purpose of opening up the north-eastern provinces and affording rapid access to the leased territories on the Upper Nile.

Waterways

It is, however, in the splendid navigable waterways of the main Congo stream and its tributaries that the Free State has found, and will continue to find, its most powerful instrument in the development of its resources. * * * The State maintains on these waterways a fleet of steamers which in 1900 numbered 26 vessels, for the purpose of preserving authority, provisioning the stations, promoting trade, and operating the postal service. Private trading companies, French, Belgian, and Dutch, and several Missionary Societies also maintain steamers on the inland waters, and the number is being rapidly increased since the docks have been built at Ndolo and the railway offers increased facilities for transport. Away from the railway and the waterways, transport is still mainly effected by porters.

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1910 ENCYCLOPÆDIA BRITANNICA

[European Reaction to Leopold's Abuses]†

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The discussions which from time to time took place in the Belgian parliament on the affairs of the Congo State were greatly embittered by the charges brought against the state administration. The administration of the state had indeed undergone a complete change since the early years of its existence. A decree of the 1st of July 1885 had, it is true, declared all "vacant lands" the property of the state (*Domaine privé de l'état*), but it was not for some time

† *The Encyclopædia Britannica: A Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, Literature and General Information*, 11th ed. (New York: The Encyclopædia Britannica Co., 1910), 6:920-22. After recounting the history of the formation of the Congo Free State for several pages, following word-for-word the account of the 10th edition (see above), this entry then discusses the abuses of Leopold's administration of the Congo and the increasing European clamor for a change of regime. See the selection by Alan Simmons in this Norton Critical Edition for an analysis of the influence *Heart of Darkness* may have had on the Congo reform movement. Notes are the Editor's.

1. Private domain of the state (French).