

King Leopold and the Belgian Congo

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It is widely debated why exactly King Leopold decided to conquer the Congo, but the general consensus seems to be that it was out of the belief that “the highlands of the Congo may be as rich in gold as the mountains of the western slope of the American Continent” (Stead). In the mid-1870s, the King hired Henry Stanley, who was familiar with many parts of Africa, to help him go about conquering. During the following years Stanley stayed in Africa, talking various tribes into signing over their lands and rights. After this was completed the King officially took over the [Congo](#), renaming it the [Congo Free State](#). This was especially ironic because all natives of the country were either forced to give up their way of life in exchange for virtual slavery in the ivory trade, agriculture, or the rubber traffic, or die trying to escape fate. [Leopold](#) was undeterred by the amount of suffering and death in the Congo, brought on by his rule. Belgian soldiers and officials were known for their cruelty in their methods to make, and then keep, Congo natives wo...

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