The chief of the band told Mr. Sheppard that he had been sent out to do this wild work by the State officers. It was intended as a punishment to certain of the neighboring villages for failure to bring in the required amount of rubber. I might add that Mr. Sheppard, who has been eleven years in that region and knew the methods of the Government, believed this statement of the native and holds the Government entirely responsible for the crimes this band of raiders committed. The whole truth about the matter will probably never be known.

I wish to point out, however, that whether the Congo Government is directly or only indirectly responsible for this hideous piece of savagery, it cannot escape responsibility for the conditions which made it possible. Having armed these savage black men and incited them to make war on one another, it cannot avoid responsibility for the consequences of its policy.

And what is the result of it all? Not the improvement and uplifting of the black men, since wherever the white man has put his foot in the Congo State the black man has been degraded into a mere tool in the great business of getting rubber. And what is the effect upon the white men who are condemned to perform this degrading work? All reports agree that these men almost invariably give themselves over to the worst vices, if for no other reason than to escape from the melancholy which their isolation breeds. Some of these men, it is said, condemned on account of their crimes for long terms of service in the interior, give themselves up to despair and kill themselves or commit horrible crimes. It is clear that the native is not the only victim of this system. What a comment on the whole situation is the single fact that only a few months ago an officer of the Government was condemned to fifteen years’ imprisonment, after he had been convicted of killing one hundred and twenty-two persons!

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