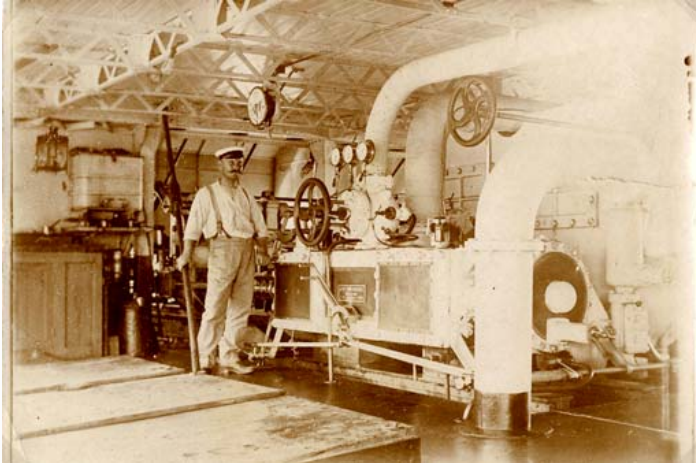


A Man from the Congo River

Jouko Aaltonen



Akseli Leppänen was far away from home when he wrote these words in his diary: “It seems as if everyone gets less civilized here.” In the turn of the 20th century, a trip to Africa was for many white men a path to riches and adventures on railways built on bones, deep into the vast machinery of colonial rule.

The waterway of the Congo River was used to enslave the surrounding lands which were turned into a labour camp based on terror, “the heart of darkness”, as Joseph Conrad later put it. The worldview and self-image of the young and idealistic Akseli were put to test in the heat of the Belgian Congo. He too used the chicote, a whip made of hippopotamus leather.

Kongon Akseli approaches the history of racism and European colonialism through a Finnish story. The film juxtaposes archive material with images of today’s Congo, a country dealing with the long shadow of its past.

Tii Starck | Translation by Senni Lähde

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