

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

RKM-4
The Line

Hotel Central
Place de la Bourse
Brussels, Belgium
September 18, 1963

Mr. Richard Nolte
Institute of Current World Affairs
366 Madison Avenue
New York 17, N.Y.

Dear Mr. Nolte:

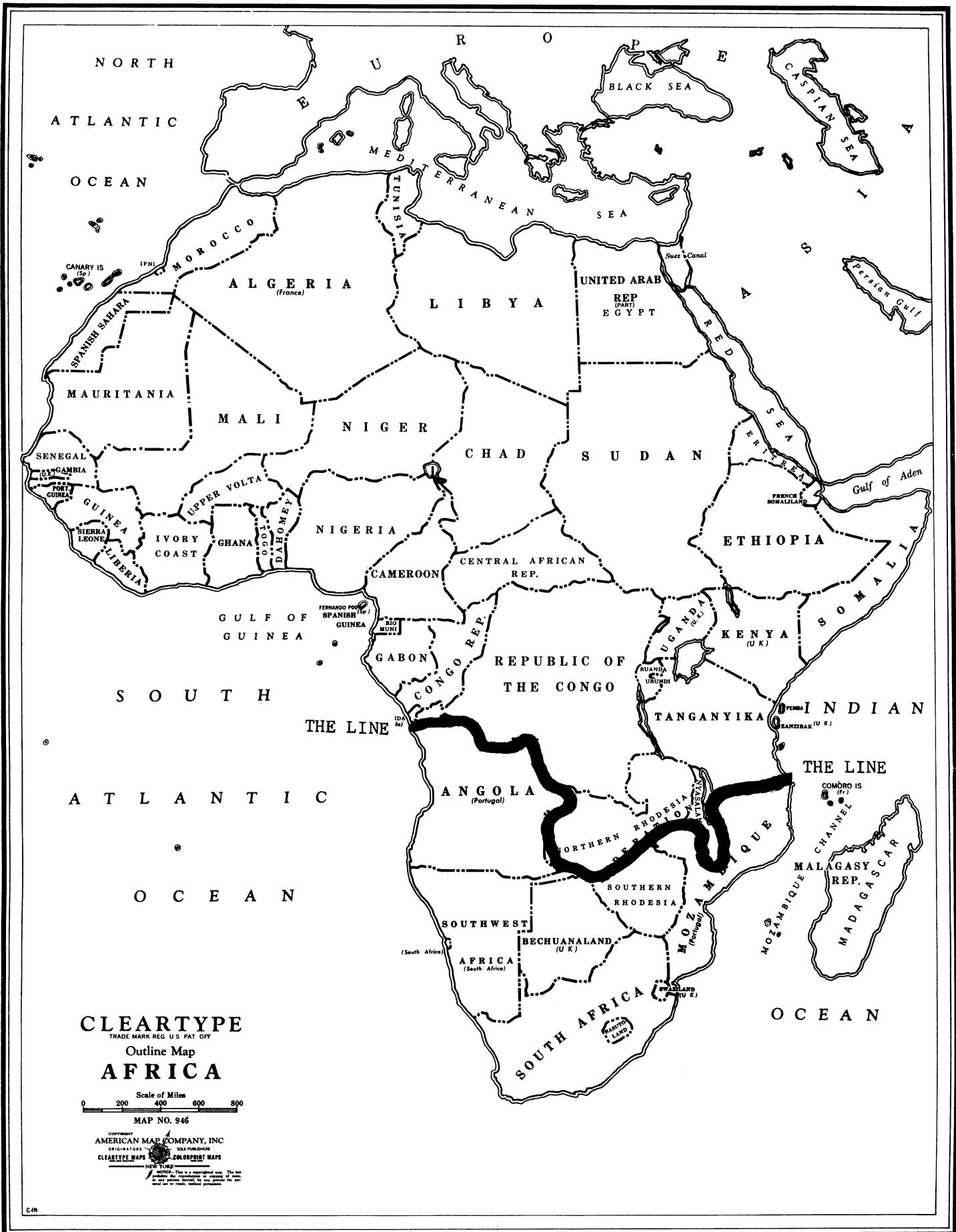
In Africa today a line - The Line - is etched in acid across the continent. It demarcates the contiguous borders of black nationalist states on the north and white supremacist states on the south. The former have vowed to obliterate the latter; the latter have vowed to remain at all costs. Across this line the two groups face each other with varying degrees of incomprehension, suspicion, violence and sullenness. This juxtaposition of mutual hostility can only mean trouble, flux, instability, war, chaos for the next five years or decade or generation. This conflict, of which the more seemly and polite first few rounds (which, of course, were neither seemly nor polite) have already taken place, will likely create a situation in which the Cold War will have its best chance to enter the continent on a large scale. And an important part of the attitude of the uncommitted nations towards the West will depend on western policy toward this conflict.

Geographically, The Line can be drawn across the continent from the splotchy thatch of savannah-forest along the southern Congo border, where it falls away south into the unpeopled sterility of Angola's eastern frontier, down to Victoria Falls. From there it follows the Zambezi downstream as the river demarcates the border between Northern and Southern Rhodesia, until it reaches Mozambique on its plunge toward the Indian Ocean. From this point it follows the straight line of the border between Portuguese East Africa and Tanganyika.

The state of advancement of the conflict along The Line is highly varied. In Angola, Portuguese colonial soldiers have been burning villages with gasoline and have been ambushed by black guerrilla bands since March, 1961. In Northern Rhodesia a black nationalist government has emerged and in Southern Rhodesia an internally self-governing white supremacist state has existed since the 1920's. However, the restraining hand of the United Kingdom has had a calming effect. But Northern Rhodesia, like its neighbor Nyasaland, is heading for full independence as a black nationalist state and Southern Rhodesia appears to be moving toward complete independence as a white supremacist nation governed by views not dissimilar to those of South Africa. In Mozambique, about which there is an extreme paucity of solid information, the situation so far seems to have been calm. This is felt to be largely due to factionalism in the African nationalist movement there.

The history of The Line follows a definite pattern of which the following is an example:

As soon as Belgium granted independence to the Congo in the summer of 1960, African nationalists from neighboring Angola had a base, a privileged sanctuary from which to operate. Nine months later a guerrilla war broke out which has not ceased to grow in scope since then. When I visited Angola in August, 1961, with



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AFRICA

Scale of Miles
 0 200 400 800

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a band of nationalist guerrillas it was evident that substantial portions of the country had been in rebel hands for months; the Portuguese planes that bombed and strafed us were a totally ineffective manifestation of the Portuguese presence. The struggle in Angola, though probably only a curtain-riser for the more general conflict, is extremely brutal. Neither side takes prisoners. In a place near the spot I visited, the Portuguese owner of a sawmill, along with his family, was sliced into planks on his own buzz-saw. The Portuguese troops and white settlers sometimes machine-gunned the entire younger male population of a distrusted African village, pushing their bodies into the river and watching them float off to the crocodiles.

The war in Angola is now only intensifying. Within the last month the independent African nations, through a committee created at the conference of heads of African states at Addis Ababa last May, began funneling funds and more modern weapons to the main nationalist party, the União de Populações de Angola. The Congolese government has officially recognized an Angolan government-in-exile. At the same time the Portuguese show no indication of giving up this expensive and seemingly futile war. In an important policy speech of August 16 Portugal's dictator, Antonio de Oliveira Salazar, said: "Our conduct (will be) defense of the territories which constitute Portugal to the limit of our human and material resources... As a nation we are the trustees of a sacred heritage".

In the other Portuguese colony in southern Africa, Mozambique, it is less clear what is going on. However, a crucial development was Britain's grant of independence to her trust territory of Tanganyika, just to the north. Since then, the Tanganyikan capital of Dar-es-Salaam has become a center of planning and conspiracy for the nationalist groups of Mozambique, just as the Congo became such for the Angolans. If Mozambique has remained peaceful to date, this is chiefly the result of nationalist disunity. Mozambique shares so many features with Angola that revolution is almost certainly in the offing. The head of the main revolutionary group, Eduardo Mondlane, recently claimed that his party has fifty branches inside and outside Mozambique and that violence will break out before the end of this year. This also seems to be the conclusion of the Portuguese high command which, though it hardly has troops to spare, has quietly been reinforcing its East African garrisons. It is unlikely that the long Tanganyika-Mozambique border will continue to be tranquil.

The history of The Line's demarcation between Northern and Southern Rhodesia is both more complicated and at a less advanced stage. It begins perhaps with the African opposition to Britain's joining together of the two Rhodesias and Nyasaland, an event which took place in 1953. The Central African Federation, as the resulting conglomeration was called, was to be a multi-racial state subscribing to a loosely defined concept of racial partnership. Its progress toward nationhood would be smoothed by unmistakable economic advantages: Northern Rhodesia would earn foreign exchange through her copper exports, Southern Rhodesia with her large and relatively skilled white population would develop light industries to produce for Federation markets, and Nyasaland with her huge surplus of potential laborers would supply the work force.

Much real progress was indeed made, and its symbol was the giant Kariba power dam on the Zambezi. But as with so much economic planning for underdeveloped areas (e.g., plans worked out in the early stages of the Alliance For Progress), political factors intervened. The prevailing African hostility to the Federation grew. Instead of racial partnership as had been officially proclaimed, increasing domination by Southern Rhodesia seemed to be the rule. Riots broke out in Nyasaland where a fairly well organized nationalist movement had developed; a state of emergency was declared. Trouble flared in Northern Rhodesia as well.

Given the vocal and sometimes violent African opposition to the Federation, and given the pragmatism of the British in matters of decolonialization, the U.K. decision of December, 1962 to allow Nyasaland to secede from the Federation was not surprising. This in effect ended the Federation's life, although it was not until June, 1963 that the actual unscrambling was negotiated around the conference table at Victoria Falls. For if Nyasaland could secede from the Federation with the aim of achieving statehood, so could Northern Rhodesia. Thus the die was cast for two new black nationalist states.

Also in December, 1962 a crucial election took place in Southern Rhodesia. The predominantly white electorate voted to oust the moderately liberal prime minister, Sir Edgar Whitehead, and to substitute for him Mr. Winston Field, a local tobacco farmer who does not even give lip service to racial partnership. The running of his electoral campaign was reliably reported to have been aided by two professional organizers sent in and paid for by the government of the Republic of South Africa.

Southern Rhodesia, like the other two members of the moribund Central African Federation, will probably become an independent state. This is the aim of its present leaders. The United Kingdom, which has certain reserved powers accorded to it by the original Southern Rhodesian Constitution of 1923, may attempt to use its influence so that independence will await an extension of the franchise to a greater proportion of the African population. However, it is difficult to see how Prime Minister Field and his South Africa-oriented Rhodesian Party can accept substantial changes in that direction.

The independent African states and the divided African nationalist movement of Southern Rhodesia obviously do not want to see the nation become independent under its present white supremacist constitution and leadership. One of the resolutions of the African heads of state conference at Addis Ababa "Reaffirms its support of African nationalists of Southern Rhodesia and solemnly declares that if power in Southern Rhodesia were to be usurped by a racial white minority government, the states members of the Conference would lend their effective moral and practical support to any legitimate measures which the African nationalists leaders" deem necessary "for the purpose of recovering such power and restoring it to the African majority".

During the week of September 9 of this year the question of Southern Rhodesian independence was brought before the Security Council by Ghana's delegate, Alex Quaison-Sackey, on behalf of the thirty-two independent African nations. He darkly intimated that the transfer of sovereignty and of some federal military units to Southern Rhodesia might cause "a second Algeria". His resolution of September 13 inviting the U.K. to refrain from either of these moves led the British to use their veto for the third time in U.N. history.

The Southern Rhodesian Zimbabwe Peoples' Congress, the divided nationalist party, has adhered to the goal of one-man-one-vote, which of course the present white regime could never allow.

Thus the Central African Federation, which had been a buffer zone of not specifically racial states over which England had a certain influence, broke up, allowing The Line to emerge more clearly defined. Britain's bold attempt to create a multi-racial state has failed; and when the demolition of the Federation is complete less than four months from now, racial states will be facing off against each other.

Even with the best intentions of good neighborliness, the Africa of north of The Line and that to the south would have no easy time getting along. As it is, the white supremacists of the south segregate, humiliate and ruthlessly suppress the African in their own territory, which naturally creates little good will in the black north. And the African nationalist states of the north openly proclaim their ambition to see white-dominated Africa destroyed. The first resolution of the African Charter drawn up at Addis Ababa and subsequently signed by all the independent African states speaks of:

The Imperious and urgent necessity of coordinating and intensifying their (the African states) efforts to accelerate the unconditional attainment of national independence by all African territories still under foreign domination (and asserts that) it is the duty of all African states to support dependent people in Africa in their struggle for freedom and independence.

Further, the resolution establishes a special fund to supply "the necessary practical and financial aid to the various African nationalist movements". A committee has been established to direct the collection and expenditure of this fund. It has headquarters in Dar-es-Salaam and is run by the representatives of nine nations. That it may have substantial resources at its disposal is indicated by the initial 1,000,000-pound assessment levied on the five African British Commonwealth countries alone.

What was decided at Addis Ababa was simply that all the independent black nationalist states of Africa should join together in a concerted effort to foster revolution and eventual African control south of The Line.

The white territories - Southern Rhodesia, the Republic of South Africa, Southwest Africa, Angola, and Mozambique - obviously have common interests. Whether they too will join together in an effective opposition to the rest of the continent remains to be seen. But it is certain that they will fight to preserve themselves: No less certain than the intention of the Africans to extirpate them.

Sincerely,
Richard Mathews

Richard Mathews