

African Notebook

THE VALLEY OF DECISION

THIS seems to be a time in history when many ancient names and formations, from Lhasa to the South Pole, are given a new significance by the competitive coexistence of East and West. (For the sake of the purists I had better say the competitive coexistence of East and West in its latest phase.)

No name or formation is more likely to be given a fresher lease of publicity or more startling aptness by this competition than the Great Rift Valley. For by a curious irony of circumstances it may become a shadowy gulf or front, between the globe's great rivals.

The Great Rift runs for about 4,000 miles from the Dead Sea to somewhere near Beira. It is a great channel of heat-waves, loveliest at Lake Nyasa, running up Tanganyika like a hollow backbone of bush, baobab, thorn and sand, bending through the sultry Lake Rudolf and steaming up the Red Sea to the Gulf of Akaba.

There is also, as everybody knows, a Western Rift, a branch off the trunk of the Great Rift, which drives a crack of much breath-taking beauty up the African plateau through Lake Tanganyika and the Rua Urundi.

Well, the West Rift might come into prominence if the Great Rift front gets too badly buckled. But for the purpose of this debate we will keep our eye mainly on the major crevasse.

Opposing Grips

Its significance begins to become clear when one studies current form and current success in the daily sharpening struggle between Russia and America for Africa. America has a firm grip on the western shoulder of Africa, and Russia has a firm grip on the Eastern shoulder.

And the great possibility is that they are going to split the continent from the top to very nearly the bottom. For the wealth that America can best exploit lies mainly down the Western side, and the people that the U.S.S.R. can best exploit lie mainly down the Eastern side.

Only last week, for instance, the Tunisian President, the astute and able Habib Bourguiba, turned to America for more money. Shortly afterwards when the French, with their curious flair for stupid ruthlessness at the wrong moment, bombed a Tunisian village, M. Bourguiba turned immediately to UNO and the U.S.A., though cautiously welcoming Nasser's eager offer of Russian arms.

Mr. Foster Dulles's reply was prompt — he condemned the French attack on the Tunisian village roundly. As for arms, the American and the British have already defied the worst that French displeasure can do in order to supply M. Bourguiba with what he wants.

Oil Strikes

Colonel Nasser may never be able to persuade America to build his Aswan dam, but as time goes on M. Bourguiba's powers of persuasion are going to grow in



BOURGUIBA
—persuasive

America and he has got quite a considerable amount already.

As for France, it is quite obvious that she is not going to be able to develop her huge oil strikes in the Sahara independently of the other Western powers. Prospecting and development work alone, haunted by Algerian rebels and temperatures of 120 degrees, have cost one of the major French interests £14,000,000 already. English and American groups are even now at work among the shifting dunes doing their share of the exploitation.

If Algeria is to be pacified, and it must be if the Saharan oil wells are to rise to full smooth production of 10,000,000 barrels a year, the Americans and M. Bourguiba will probably have a hand in the pacification. Whatever the form of the final settlement in this Saharan Texas, America has now become deeply involved in Africa both politically and economically.

A glance at the Western side of Africa will show very clearly how America's interests, both ideological and economic, are growing all the way down there. For instance among the ideological interests of America may be classified Liberia and Ghana — and if Canada's possible investment in the Volta River Scheme is counted as an American interest, then there are strong economic strings to be pulled in Ghana as well.

Grappling Hooks

American representation has just been established in French West Africa at Yaounde. In the Congo American economic activities are growing rapidly. Big American investments are going into mineral development in South West Africa and in the Northwest Cape.

From Tunis to Springbok, American economic grappling

hooks have been slung over the West Coast of Africa. The total U.S. investment in Africa, both private and Point Four, is now close on a billion dollars, and its going to be much greater soon.

Just to fill in the rest of the West side of Africa, very briefly, petroleum has also been struck outside Luanda in Angola. The quantities are not vast but the Portuguese have put up a refinery there. It makes a possibility that there may be oil all the way down the central western portion something more than an idle day-dream.

The Congo's uranium, gold and copper and its booming mandated territory of Rua Urundi takes it right up to Lake Tanganyika and the edges of the West Rift. Everywhere one cares to gaze from the Northwest Cape up or the South West Sahara down there are minerals and massive engineering developments to give the West a broad grip and the desire to maintain it.

Prised Loose

But when one looks down the Eastern side, the grip of the West seems being prized loose. Right down the coast as far as Dar-es-

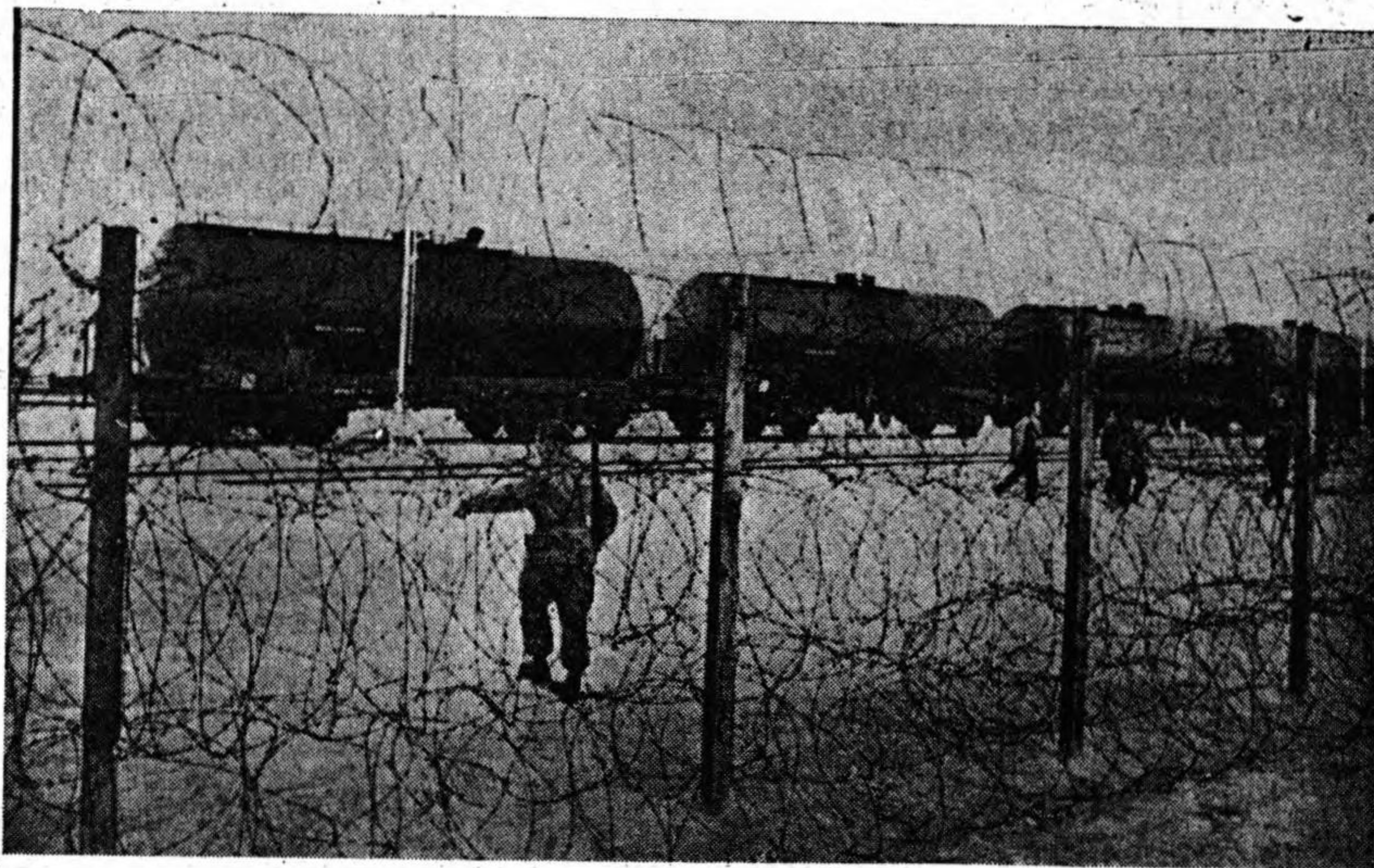
Tanganyika is now a United Nations Trusteeship territory with all the possibilities for confusion that can mean. It is also one more sign of Britain's intention not to waste too much wealth and energy holding on to the East from Sudan to Nyasaland.

Besides there is nothing very tempting in the way of mineral wealth or, for that matter, agricultural wealth to make this area particularly desirable. Tanganyika, of course, contains the late Dr. Williamson's fabulous pipe of diamonds. But the loss of those could be made up in many places from Sierra Leone to Orange River Mouth.

Copper Reserves

It is not until somewhat below that that solid mineral wealth in the shape of huge reserves of copper begin. It is at this point that the Great Rift Valley enters Lake Nyasa and rumbles away to the coast.

Ethiopia, which towers up at the northern African end of the Great Rift, is an exception, at least for the moment. The Americans are very much in evidence



Barbed wire and troops of the French Foreign Legion are needed to protect France's oil pipelines and oil tankers on the narrow-gauge railways from Algerian rebels in the Sahara desert. Pacification of the Algerians is becoming political priority number one for France, for she has poured £250,000,000 into oil development and pipeline construction in the Sahara.

Salaam, or even further, the raucous voice of Cairo Radio is having increasing influence. The strength of this influence can be realised when it is considered that the British reckoned it among the factors militating against their building up a major base at Mombasa.

Kenya already knows what power propaganda from the north can wield. Nobody is certain how long the Sudan will hold out against it.

there, although the Russians have a splendid embassy and have done good works around Addis Ababa.

But there is a question mark hanging over the territory — after Haile Selassie what? Some are certain that this ancient kingdom has inherited some of the seeds of Solomon's wisdom, and that it has been advanced sufficiently rapidly of late to avoid internal

TRENDS

FRENCH AFRICA'S
Rassemblement Democratique Africain, founded in 1946, all but banned in 1950, has become one of the strongest political bodies South of the Sahara. A movement for the emancipation of non-whites, it has previously accepted the idea of equality within a French-African framework, but at a recent conference there were signs of a leaning towards the idea of greater independence for the African states with only federal links with France.

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SAHARA oil exploration and development has attracted a 2,800,000-dollar investment from the Suez Canal Company in an agreement with two French investment corporations.

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FIVE hundred police reinforcements have been flown into Eastern Nigeria from Lagos to cope with demonstrations against the restoration of school fees. Schools in the region have been closed and the police have twice used tear gas to break up demonstrations.

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THE Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland plans to enter the castor bean and castor oil processing industry on a large scale. Experts from overseas have been called in to advise growers.

disasters in a changing world. Others are not so certain.

But whatever way Ethiopia may or may not go, it would seem that old haunt of the advancing East, the eastern African sea-board from Suez to Sofala is only temporarily a Western resting place. If the West plays its cards right and makes friends with the African nationalists fast enough, it may very well retain, at least, goodwill up to the edge of Great Rift Valley.

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