

Full Berlin Conference script: Short version (about 10 minutes)

German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck: Opening Speech

My fellow Europeans, Turks, and Americans! Welcome to Berlin on this 15th day in November 1884. For the next three months, will be discussing our claims in Africa, particularly Congo, which has been claimed by France, Portugal, and Belgium.

Please remember Dr. Livingstone's three Cs: We go to Africa seeking to spread Commerce, Christianity, and Civilization. We must ensure that the Arab slave trade of Africans comes to an end. We also must ensure that trade must be free. The riches of Africa must benefit all European equally. Without further ado, I cede the floor to Henry Morton Stanley, the greatest explorer of our time.

Henry Morton Stanley: Part I

As you all know, I have spent much of my esteemed life exploring Africa. In in 1870s, I traveled through Zanzibar on my successful quest to find Dr. Livingston, which I'm sure you all read about in one of my best sellers, *Through the Dark Continent*.

Several years ago, I returned to Africa, this time venturing to Congo at the head of King Leopold's scientific exploration. I found Congo to be a wild land, a thick rain forest full of an "inexhaustible treasure of gold, vast quantities of elephant's teeth, honey, riches of gums, ostriches' feather and amber-grease." The riches of Africa would make any white man rich. European guidance is sorely needed.

Portuguese claims to Southern Africa

We Portuguese were the first to map the African continent. All European claims are possible only because of our navigators like Prince Henry and all that came after him. They "single handed[ly]...traced the contour of the west, south, and east coasts of Africa [and] initiated the modern European colonization of the Continent" back in the 1400s. We claim the entire land of Southern Africa, based on our 1607 Treaty, which gave the Portuguese mining rights of the land. We also claim land in Senegal, the Gambia, Benin, and Congo, as we were the first country to establish trading there.

British reaction to Portuguese claims of Southern Africa

Portugal, I know your ancient king sailed around Africa and drew some little maps. However, this does not mean great swaths of the continent belong to you now! Maps drawn by your voyagers are completely false. The position of lakes and rivers must have been drawn from inaccurate native stories or fantasies.

Also, you've had no power in the region for centuries, and any treaty you claim to have is out of date. Besides, while in Africa, you started the slave trade that we are not trying to end. Your colonies were overrun by Arabs who reported that "the Portuguese have left nothing behind them but ruined fortresses and palaces...nowhere is there to be seen a single trade of any real improvement."

Portuguese reaction to Britain

We still remain in the East, particularly along the Zambezi river on the East. It should NOT be disputed that we remain the colonial powers in Mozambique due to our Treaty. We also have a 400-year claim to Angola, on the west coast. Therefore, it only makes sense that all the African land between these countries should remain ours as well. Of course, we also have the rights to land in Congo, which we shall speak about later.

British claims: Part 1

Portugal, I agree you should control Angola and Mozambique, but we claim the land in between and the rest of South Africa. After fighting the Dutch and African tribes, we have succeeded in controlling the area (with the exception of Zululand. We are still working on that). A Constitution was established in 1853. We have built railways, and many British citizens have immigrated to the colony. The French want to give part of this area to the Portuguese, but the Portuguese Treaty is defunct. The Portuguese left, and we British have succeeded in controlling it.

We also claim the entire east coast. Stanley will remember that Dr. Livingston's expedition through the region was funded by Britain. He discovered Lake Victoria and surrounding land for the British Empire. It is because of these brave English explorers that Central Africa was opened up to Europeans, and therefore, it should be us British who should continue to control the areas.

German reaction to British claims

You British surely cannot be allowed to control the entire eastern seaboard of Africa! Remember, it was German. Explorer Von der Decken who lost his life exploring the Kilimanjaro region. We Germans claim the colony south of Lake Victoria. France, surely you do not want the British to own half of the continent?!?

British claims: Part II

We are not done. We British also claim all of Egypt and Sudan. We defeated the Egyptian army when they tried to take over Berbera. We also control The Suez Canal because we bought out Egyptian shares of the canal when the nation went bankrupt.

We also claim all of Nigeria, which we purchased from an African King in 1861. We also claim the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone and Gambia.

German claims:

We Germans claim the areas of the Cameroons, Namibia, and Togoland for Germany. Earlier this year we opened eight German factories there. We have begun teaching African natives German, and have brought some Africans back to Berlin to showcase the power of their motherland. African chiefs in the Cameroons, tired of waiting on the British, decided to sign their land over to us Germans instead. We also claim a slice of African land in the east, north of Lake Victoria. German explorers have recently claimed this land, and nobody wants the British to control the entire eastern seaboard.

France claims to Northwest Africa:

Germany, you are correct. Britain should not get to control the entire eastern half of Africa. For this reason alone, we support your claims, particularly to the Angolan land in the east. Between you and Portugal, hopefully we can keep that British Empire in check.

We French are interested in Madagascar and Northwest Africa. We have been trading with Senegal and the Gambia since the 1560s. In 1695 we took control of the Gambia from the British, breaking up her monopoly of the area. We've controlled 43 forts in West Africa since 1721, after Portugal, the Dutch, and England all abandoned the area. We conquered Algeria in 1830, and also claim Tunisia. French explorers have crossed the Sahara Desert, and we plan to build a Trans-Saharan railway from Tunisia to our lands on the Atlantic. We'll send French colonists and administrators to all our colonies, and set up schools, missions, churches, hospitals, and other civilizing improvements. We plan on teaching natives the French language and look forward to spreading the French culture abroad.

USA in support of a "free" Liberia:

We Americans are not interested in colonizing land in Africa, but we do support this European foray into Africa with one exception. The small country of Liberia must remain free. Many newly freed slaves in our southern states are eager to move back to Africa. The American Colonization Society has purchased Liberia and has arranged passage for the four thousand black colonists who wish to emigrate to Liberia.

Italy

We Italians have been exploring land in Africa since the 1870s. In 1882 we officially claimed area along the Red Sea and have plans to expand along the Red Sea coast. We will work with King Menelik II of Ethiopia to sign treaties that will place both Ethiopia and Eritrea in Italian control. We need the French to stay out of this business, and refrain from selling weapons to King Menelik.

Spain:

We claim Morocco. The land was given to Charles II of Britain when he married in 1662, but then the British abandoned the area. Lately, it has been us Spanish holding down the fort. We also claim the area of Rio d'Oro, as we have a factory there. We have a treaty of friendship with the Sheik of the country there, who is willing to work with us but certainly not the French.

King Leopold of Belgium's claims

King Leopold II, our most humanitarian king, has interest in only one colony: Congo. He has been fighting his whole adult life to improve Africa, end the slave trade, and opening up the "long-neglected Continent to science, industry, and civilization." Our King has donated money to numerous African expeditions and has hosted conferences for explorers and geographers of Africa. His noble and humanitarian motives are clear. Our king wants to build roads, hospitals and schools in Africa. He wants to establish peace among African chiefs. He wants to ensure the slave trade ends forever. He wants Africa to be a base for scientific study, where every trading post will feature laboratories. Therefore, we Belgians claim the entire land of Congo for our esteemed monarch, King Leopold II. It was our King Leopold who paid for Mr. Stanley's expedition into Congo, where he established Leopoldville, built roads, and began construction on Stanley Pool on the Lower Congo River. Stanley spoke with over 450 Congo basin chiefs and collected trade agreements and treaties from all of them.

French claims to Congo:

Well, we certainly appreciate the work for your King is doing, we French have been exploring Congo as well! Pierre De Brazza went to Africa at the same time Mr. Stanley did, exploring for France and the Paris Geographical Society. He explored the entire region of Congo, and also established friendly relationships with the African chiefs of the area. We to have treaties, that place Congo not in Belgium hands, but in French hands!

Portuguese claims to Congo

But we found that area first! We claimed Congo before Stanley was born! Portuguese claims to Congo have not been abandoned. We also possess current treaties. Britain, you agreed to this claim earlier this year when we signed the Congo Treaty on February 26th of this year, 1884. We have had held the area along the mouth of the Congo River since 1484 and we have never ONCE led it out of our sights. When British ships hover along the coasts, we Portuguese have always been steadfast in our rights to own Congo. You British have been cruel to native Africans in factories near Congo, and we Portuguese have stood up for the rights of Africans.

USA in support of Congo

Well, this Treaty was not signed by France, Germany, or Belgium, so it is invalid. Sorry Portugal. We support the work of King Leopold in the Congo and believe that the colony should go to him. After all, he was the one who started the International African Association. He was the one who send Mr. Stanley to map and improve the area. King Leopold's goals in Congo are purely philanthropic. He wants to spend his own money to make Congo great, and we support him.

Closing remarks:

Gentleman! It is decided! We have divided this Great African Cake amongst Europeans, and the world will surely be better for it. Because of our European brains, capital, and energy, Africa and Europe will both benefit from the work of this conference.