



Britain and the World

Nigeria and the Death of Liberal England

Palm Nuts and Prime Ministers,
1914-1916

PETER J. YEARWOOD



Britain and the World

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Nigeria and the Death of Liberal England

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Exploitation of the tropics by the people of the temperate zone has been going on for centuries. In the early days it was treasure that was sought—"ivory, apes, and peacocks"—but now it has come to be the prosaic necessities of life—oils and fats, rubber, and the like. Nothing will be gained by attempting to stem the tide of this movement. All that can be done is to direct it in a just and humane spirit.

Katherine Snodgrass, *Copra and Coconut Oil*
(Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1928), p. 81.

... bad data sustain simple theories of a complex world, good data inhibit easy generalization.

Antony Hopkins "Big Business in African Studies", *Journal of African History* vol. 28 (1987), p. 130.

A quiet Parliamentary week is in prospect.
The Times, "Political Notes" 6 November 1916.

I can't help thinking that a good deal of claptrap jingoism has been talked on the subject of the Nigerian sales.

Sir Frederick Lugard to Lady Lugard 15 Nov. 1916, Lugard Papers,
MSS LUGARD s.93, Bodleian Library, Oxford University.

PREFACE

This is, above all, a serendipitous book. An early article of mine on Lloyd George's wartime government and the League of Nations attracted the attention of Cameron Hazlehurst. Noticing that I was based in Nigeria, he wrote—this was still the age of “snail mail”—asking whether I could add to his knowledge of the debate of 8 November 1916. I replied that I could not, but I was now myself aware that here was an unstudied topic that I might look at, and add a footnote to history. I assumed that the material would be in the Nigerian archives, and that I might search it out the next time my University was shut down. Arriving in England some months later for a leave which I expected to be mainly social, I decided to check in what was then still the Public Record Office in case there was an odd document which might not be available in Nigeria. I quickly discovered the very rich files which are the basis of this book, dropped my social plans, and got down to work. On my way back to Nigeria, I sent a brief summary to Professor Hazlehurst, explaining that I did not know when or if I might use the material and offering it to him or his students, provided I received credit for it. He replied proposing a joint article.

A historian at the start of his career is not going to pass up the chance of collaboration with a distinguished established scholar. Practical difficulties for two men working together from Nigeria and Australia in what was only beginning to be the age of the internet ensured that a decade passed before our article came out. Meanwhile, I had realized that the material on the purely Nigerian side, with the Schedule of German Property, Burrowes's list of the stations of the European firms, and the

entries in *The Red Book of West Africa*, provided the basis for an unusually comprehensive and detailed account of the development of the export/import economy during and just after the First World War. I felt that this might be a useful supplementary article. In fact, it came out first, and, rather to my surprise, attracted attention from some of the leading British historians of the international economy.

Returning to England, I gave priority to writing a book on a very different subject, the League of Nations in British policy, which took me far longer than I had expected. Nevertheless, I knew that my next book would be on the linkages between trade and politics in Nigeria and Great Britain in the Great War, especially as I discovered that non-academic friends who soon lost interest in how I intended to reshape the historiography of the League of Nations, would follow at length as I explained the rivalries between palm nuts and coconuts and between soap and margarine, a type of history far different from what had so much bored them at school. More and more I realized that, rather than adding footnotes to well-established historiographies this second book would open new fields and advance new interpretations. I did not expect historians of British politics to have mastered the intricacies of the palm nut, but I felt that those writing on the economics of West Africa should have had that knowledge, and that the British political historians might well be reproached for having in two generations added so little to Beaverbrook's account from 1932.

While the book centres on the relationship between Nigeria and Great Britain a century ago, it is also a product of my own more recent involvement with Nigeria. While the areas which I came to know—the Jos Plateau (through working with my colleagues), the Yoruba hinterland (through supervising students), and Borno (through my own research)—are not those which figure prominently here, the book would not have been written, or would not be what it is, without that experience. As I researched and began to write, Nigeria began to acquire an unfavourable image abroad. The age of the internet was also that of scams by Nigerian “419ers”—the reference is to the anti-fraud article in the criminal code—who achieved international notoriety. Nigeria has and had such people. It also had and has those like Peter Thomas, persons of drive, integrity, and deep pride of race. I benefitted greatly from working with such people for almost two decades. I hope that this book may repay them by presenting an accurate picture of their country at an important time in its history.

Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Peter J. Yearwood

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
2	1914, Nigeria and the World Economy	11
3	The Impact of War	53
4	Lugard, the Colonial Office and the Politics of Crushing	97
5	The Colonial Office, the Ministry of Munitions, and the Shippers	131
6	“An Agitation Has Been Got up”; the Sale of the German Properties	165
7	“Jingo Pot and Tariff Kettle”; the Nigeria Debate and the Sales	193
8	Conclusion: Epilogues and Consequences	229

Appendix	265
Bibliography	275
Index	285

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AHR</i>	<i>American Historical Review</i>
AWAM	Association of West African Merchants
Ag Gov.	Acting Governor
BAF	Board of Agriculture and Fisheries
BCGA	British Cotton Growing Association
C. of C.	Chamber of Commerce
CFAO	Compagnie française de l'Afrique occidentale
<i>CJAS</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of African Studies</i>
<i>CJH</i>	<i>Canadian Journal of History</i>
C.O.	Colonial Office
conf.	Confidential
Cttee	Committee
cwt	Hundredweight
Dept	Department
desp.	Despatch
ERDC	Empire Resources Development Committee
<i>ESR</i>	<i>European Studies Review</i>
F.O.	Foreign Office
fob	Free on board
FFA	Free fatty acid
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HC	House of Commons
<i>IHR</i>	<i>International History Review</i>
<i>JAH</i>	<i>Journal of African History</i>
<i>JHSN</i>	<i>Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria</i>
<i>JICH</i>	<i>Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History</i>

JHP	John Holt Papers
LHP	Lewis Harcourt Papers
memo	Memorandum
min	Minute
Min.	Ministry
NCBWA	National Congress of British West Africa
n.d.	No date
NAK	(Nigerian) National Archives Kaduna
NAS	National Archives of Scotland
NC	Niger Company
NEI	Netherlands East Indies
O.C.	Officer Commanding
POW	Prisoner of War
<i>PP</i>	<i>Past and Present</i>
PPS	Parliamentary Private Secretary
RMS	Royal Mail Ship
SCIAO	Société commerciale et industrielle de l'Afrique occidentale
s.d.	Same date
SMP	Steel-Maitland Papers
SP	Scarbrough Papers
<i>TCBH</i>	<i>Twentieth Century British History</i>
tel.	Telegram
TNA	The National Archives
UWC	Unionist War Committee
<i>WA</i>	<i>West Africa</i>
WTAC	War Trade Advisory Committee
WTD	War Trade Department
WTID	War Trade Intelligence Department
WC	War Cabinet



CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This book is necessarily complex. It tries to tell two big stories which unexpectedly became entangled in 1916. The better known one concerns British politics, specifically the upheaval which broke up the Asquith coalition and replaced it with one between Lloyd George and Bonar Law. This began with a stormy Commons debate on 8 November over who might be allowed to buy former German commercial properties in Nigeria. The lesser-known story concerns the readjustment in Nigeria's external economy after war with Germany cut off the main market for palm kernels, its most important single export, and eliminated a large part of its expatriate commercial community. I have tried to place this in the context of the emergence of modern nationalist politics in Nigeria. Previously, different sets of scholars dealt with these topics separately. Those examining the origins of nationalism in West Africa have paid some attention to the grievances of merchants in Lagos. For students of Nigeria's involvement in the world economy and the conglomerates which came to dominate its external trade, the issues which lay behind the Nigeria debate are part of the process which led eventually to the creation of Unilever. The debate itself is out of their range of vision. For students of British politics, the debate is an incident in the process which sidelined the Liberal Party and established the Conservatives as the main party of government. Most treat it as little more than a curiosity. Those who look at it more closely, link the debate with the politics of tariff reform, which had been so important before the war, depicting the Conservative leader, Andrew Bonar Law, as the

unwilling defender of policies imposed on him by doctrinaire Liberals who dominated the coalition government, and therefore made him vulnerable to attack from the protectionist majority in his own party. This interpretation is misleading. Law, as Colonial Secretary, was advancing the policy of the Nigerian government, not the British. It was a policy he fully supported and had endorsed over the hesitations and reservations of his senior officials. He chose to fight, and risk defeat, because he agreed with the Lagos administration, and with the Colonial Office, that a “Ring” of large British companies must not be allowed to “squeeze the natives over palm kernels and other things”,¹ and that only the entry of foreign capital might prevent that. The big British firms pressing for the exclusion of neutral bidders were not industrialists seeking protection, but merchants looking for markets. While they wanted to stop the colonial government from using the auction to lure competing buyers into Nigeria, they were also free traders who did not want the imperial government to force them to sell only in Great Britain. In November 1916, Sir Edward Carson, the politician who took over their agitation, was not championing tariff reform, but attacking alleged enemy influence on the British government. The connection between the Nigerian and British stories was an accident of history. There was no deep reason why Carson used a Nigerian issue to attack the government. He could have taken up something else. Nevertheless, the opportunity was available, and he took it. If he had chosen a different issue and argued a better case, a majority of Unionists might have voted with him. With Carson that much stronger, and Law repudiated by his followers, the dynamics of the political crisis would have been different, as might have been the outcome. Writing many years later, Lord Crewe, a senior minister close to Asquith, judged that the fall of the coalition was by then inevitable, and that “no compromise which was possible at that moment could have stood the strain of events and ... a renewed breach later on would have been more disastrous to the country than the one which actually occurred”.² I intend to look at the breach that did occur, and explain why a Nigerian question attracted the attention of British political leaders, and why, in the Debate, Bonar Law’s attack on the firms trumped Carson’s attack on the government.

Historians have to consider the interaction of deep causes and trivial events. Nigeria’s role in the world economy was shaped by global processes of concentration of trade and production, which eventually led to the creation of Unilever. Yet, the dispute over the former German

properties broke up the existing combinations and created, at least for a time, a different dynamic, in which small African and European firms would proliferate and flourish. Throughout Europe, the Great War tested and transformed political systems. The men who had begun it in 1914 were forced out by those who promised more vigour and more ruthlessness in its prosecution. What happened in Great Britain at the end of 1916 fitted into that pattern. Carson wanted to bring down Asquith, and thereby change the nature of British politics. However, Law's aim after winning the debate was not to displace the prime minister, but, rather, to get him to reassert his authority. History seldom follows the plans of those who think they are making it. Small things and minor actors may shape big processes. Readers who follow Pascal in measuring history by the length of Cleopatra's nose, may delight in learning that the Nigerian issue became available to Carson partly because Thomas Burrowes, the Receiver of the liquidated enemy property in the colony, was on bad terms with the big British firms. He convinced the Governor, Sir Frederick Lugard, that he should break their "Ring" by bringing neutral capital into Nigeria to restore the competition which Germany had previously provided. Lugard in turn persuaded the Colonial Office to use the sale of enemy property as part of this policy. But even at this next stage a key decision was taken by a relatively junior official (George Grindle) who did not refer it to his superiors. As Lugard, the Office, and Bonar Law himself, strongly believed that it was their duty to govern Nigeria for the benefit, as they saw it, of its inhabitants rather than of the metropolis, their decisions might well have been the same in the end. Nevertheless, Burrowes's feud with the firms and Grindle's ignorance of West Africa were parts of the process. While historians should not be puckishly bemused by accidents, or play games with counterfactuals, we do have to be aware of possible alternative outcomes and of the entanglement of powerful forces with apparently chance events. A professed historical materialist has recently suggested the kind of history which needs to be written. It sets out "plausible causal stories" which address "many diverse elements" with results that are "contingent, possibly serendipitous". Parts operate on different time scales with many points of change and unintended consequences.³ The stories in this book are like that. They involve many kinds of people: British politicians and bureaucrats, colonial administrators, large, mainly Liverpool, firms which dominated Nigeria's export economy, smaller British and African firms which challenged them, and

an emerging Nigerian, mainly Lagosian, political elite. Divisions within these groups were as important as collision and co-operation between them. As these intertwining narratives are complicated, an exposition of the main themes may be helpful.

This book is about the involvement of Nigeria in the world economy in the first age of globalization and its unexpected political consequences in the middle of the Great War. For almost all Nigerians, production for the external market supplemented local production and trade. This "subsistence economy" will not be considered here. Instead, while providing an overview of Nigeria's foreign trade, I concentrate on the two products of the oil palm which constituted some three quarters of the colony's exports. Despite coming from the same tree, these were remarkably different. Palm oil was manufactured in Nigeria by peasant families. It was consumed locally as well as exported. The bulk of exports came from the area to the east of the lower Niger, which had no other cash crops. Almost all went to Great Britain, mainly for soap making. This was a chemical process with glycerine as a by-product, which was of little concern until the war. Palm kernels, by contrast, had few local uses. Their collection was left to women and children. In the Lagos hinterland to the west of the Niger, men were moving away from palm oil production into other cash crops such as cocoa, but women still collected kernels for export. These went to Germany as raw material for the manufacture of hard palm kernel oil. The solid residue was used for cattle-cake. The oil went to the Netherlands for making margarine, the first industrially produced foodstuff. Since no major chemical change was involved, glycerine was not a by-product.

Large British and German firms dominated the Nigerian export economy. Lagos, the main port for kernels, was linked to Hamburg rather than Liverpool. Its main firms were German, with the British distinctly in second place. African merchants had largely moved out of produce export, but remained important in the city's commercial life. In addition to the businessmen, the Nigerian capital had an educated elite of lawyers, doctors, churchmen, and journalists. Many of these opposed the policies of Sir Frederick Lugard, the first governor-general of the newly amalgamated Nigeria. They saw him as authoritarian, racially prejudiced, and too eager to transform Yoruba societies which he did not understand and held in contempt. He linked progress with taxation. Spokesmen for the elite warned that imposing a rate for piped water, once works then under construction were completed, was likely to be strongly opposed.

The elimination of the German firms after the outbreak of the war was one of several factors that would destabilize Nigeria's export economy. The extension of the railway to the north had just opened up a fresh zone of exports, especially of the new crop of groundnuts. Another railway was beginning to push into the eastern interior, redirecting long-established trade routes from the rivers to the new Port Harcourt. The German Woermann Linie had provided almost half of the tonnage serving Nigeria. Now the British firm Elder Dempster had an effective monopoly. Shipping would be a major constraint throughout the war. On land, three of the largest British firms, the Niger Company, Miller Brothers, and the African Association had a pooling agreement. This also involved a territorial division. The Niger Company operated in the north and along the thin strip of the lower Niger. The other two concentrated on the coast of the former Oil Rivers in the east. Negotiations for amalgamation had broken down in the summer of 1914, but were likely to resume. John Holt, the fourth major British firm, was the only one to do business in all parts of Nigeria, competing with the German firms in Lagos, with the Niger Company in the north, and with the coastal firms in the east. In Lagos there were many other British firms, the most important being MacIver, which was controlled by the soap makers Lever Brothers, and was rapidly expanding.

At first the war brought the British companies together. They agreed to continue buying produce, but at agreed low prices. This arrangement came to be called the "Combine". In the capital it was known as the "Lagos Ring". It linked the coastal companies with John Holt and the Lagos firms, which were beginning to follow the railway into the north, where they would compete with the Niger Company. Despite this, the negotiations for an amalgamation of the pool firms restarted, and by the autumn of 1916 seemed about to succeed. As the big firms tried to settle their relations, the growing differential between low Lagos and high Liverpool prices drew many small companies and individuals, both European and African, into the produce trade. This threatened the large firms, which pressed Elder Dempster to deny them shipping.

The colonial government worried that a combination of British firms now controlled Nigerian trade. While Lugard despised the educated African elite of Lagos, he was a strong free-trader who wanted to restore the competition which the German companies had provided. While these had been closed down, and the German merchants had been deported in November 1914, their properties had not been disposed of. In 1916,

British policy changed. Throughout the empire, enemy commercial sites would now be sold. Lugard intended to use this opportunity to entice neutral (American and Dutch) capital into Nigeria. Although on bad terms with Lugard, whose administrative ability it questioned, the Colonial Office endorsed his policy. Especially in West Africa, which was not an area of European settlement, the C.O. saw itself as the protector of the interests of the colonized. In 1916, it engaged in several struggles with the firms and with other government departments, such as the newly formed Ministry of Munitions, which it considered overly deferential to the wishes of the Combine. It fought to ensure that small firms outside got a share of tonnage. After initial support, it quickly came to oppose the "glycerine conditions", which required firms shipping oils and seeds from the colonies to non-U.K. destinations to sell glycerine to the Ministry of Munitions at a fraction of the world market price. The C.O. believed that this would stop Nigerian kernels from going to the U.S.A. just as America was turning to vegetable oils for margarine production. While the Office eventually managed to secure modifications in the conditions, this was too late. The United States would be supplied with copra from the Pacific without the conditions, while Nigerian oil and kernels would go almost entirely to the U.K.

At first, Great Britain lacked the machinery to crush hard materials such as kernels and copra. Crushers wanted an assurance that steps would be taken to ensure that the trade would not revert to Germany after the war. In 1915, the C.O. set up a committee of officials, experts, and businessmen. This recommended an export duty which would be remitted if the kernels were crushed in the U.K. Traders were poorly represented on this committee. Lukewarm about the duty, they more or less persuaded the Office to put it on hold during the war. The Dutch margarine manufacturers, Jurgens and Van Den Bergh, who were favoured by the British government and were increasing their majority share of the British market, also opposed the duty. As it could be presented as a protectionist measure which would harm indigenous producers, it provoked a vigorous parliamentary debate in August 1916. This gave kernels, and Nigeria, a certain political profile in Great Britain.

A second controversy soon followed, when the big firms realized that neutrals would be allowed to bid for the German properties in Nigeria. This united them in opposition to the government's policy, but also created new divisions between them. Miller Bros. and the African Association wanted to form a new company to buy and run,

or close down, the sites. They assured the Niger Company that together the Pool firms would dominate this company. The Niger Company was not convinced. It feared that it would bring its eastern partners closer to John Holt and the other Lagos firms. It would not agree to joint action before the fusion of the Pool firms was completed. While direct evidence is lacking, the chronology strongly suggests that this disagreement scuppered the amalgamation, which was about to be announced. When the others proposed an all-British company to take over the sites, the Niger Company openly dissociated itself from the proposal. Unity was possible only on insisting on excluding neutrals from the auction, which would be held in London. Although the small firms also agreed with this, their support was overshadowed by their opposition to the Ring over the allocation of shipping. Some of the Lagos merchants had already issued a manifesto, and sent a representative, Samuel Duncan, to press their case in England. Working with the small British firms which were also trying to break into the produce trade, and developing connections with the press, especially with the *Daily Express*, Duncan and his allies successfully painted a picture of a colony whose trade was being throttled by the combination of the shipping company and a ring of seven firms.

The nature of the Combine's agitation changed when Sir Edward Carson took it over. He was looking for a cause over which he might attack the government not just for inefficiency but for susceptibility to enemy influence. The war had created the possibility of restructuring British politics. Peacetime issues and alignments lost relevance. The cohesion of the Conservative Party was threatened in the coalition which it had entered in May 1915. Asquith relegated Bonar Law to a secondary position, and dealt with his ministers individually. Therefore, Law had the title, but not the substance of party leadership. Ineffective in the War Committee, he was valued only for the control he might exercise over backbenchers. By the autumn of 1916 the overriding question was whether Great Britain would be defeated in the war. Lloyd George, the War Secretary, believed that his generals' strategy was wrong. He tried, but would soon fail, to impose his views on them. Carson, the one significant oppositional politician, attacked instead the civilian leadership. In barring aliens from the Nigerian sales he found an issue far from the Western Front. It also engaged Law's responsibility as the departmental minister. Carson intended to show that Unionist MPs looked to him rather than to Law for leadership. Law accepted the challenge and counterattacked. He was fully committed to the policy which Lugard had

proposed, and had, indeed, overridden some of the reservations of his senior officials. He recognized that, in contrast to the August debate, no protectionist issue was involved. He would show that Carson was not a patriotic defender of the national interest in wartime, but the mouth-piece of a ring of greedy capitalists out to restrict competition and exploit the inhabitants of a colony for their own selfish ends.

By winning the debate, Law re-established his leadership of the Conservative Party, but it had been a close run thing. To keep his position he had now to be seen to use it to ensure a more vigorous and effective conduct of the war. As Asquith was unresponsive, Law turned to Carson and to Lloyd George, who was coming to terms with the failure of his attack on the generals. While they still saw him as a danger at the War Office, they came to believe that he was the man who might galvanize the civilian war effort. As Asquith still considered Law and Carson incompetent, and had learned to ignore Lloyd George's threats of resignation, he did not take the "triumvirate" seriously until it was too late. However, this book will not go into the details of the political endgame in Great Britain.

Late 1916 was also a time of political crisis in Lagos. In retrospect this can be seen as an early stage of the nationalist movement which challenged and ultimately supplanted colonial rule in Nigeria. The merchants' grievances might have been part of this, but they were not. The concerns of a small cosmopolitan élite were not those of ordinary Lagosians, who were moved by questions of chieftaincy, land rights, and taxation. Moreover, the smaller firms did not complain that indigenous producers were suffering from low prices. Instead, they wanted for themselves a larger share of the profits which the gap between Lagos and Liverpool was generating. While Duncan lobbied in England, riots against the now imposed water rate briefly erupted in Lagos. After these were easily suppressed, the government withdrew its recognition of the Oba and most of the chiefs. Despite this, the "traditional" leaders retained the loyalty of most Lagosians, while the lawyers and doctors whose agitation had led to the riots were seen to have pulled back at the last minute, and were largely discredited.

The processes whose entanglements in 1916 are the subject of this book had their particular outcomes. Lloyd George's coalition was very different from Asquith's. He recognized Law as a party leader and worked with him on that basis. The events of 1916 shattered the Liberals, but united the Conservative Party, which would dominate

British politics for the rest of the century and beyond. As long as the war continued, the C.O. struggled to defend Nigerian interests against the neglect of the now much more powerful ministries of Blockade, Food, and Shipping. Much of this was shadow-boxing. In the age of unrestricted Uboat warfare, tonnage determined everything, and everything now came to Great Britain. The U.K. price for palm kernels set in 1917 was found to be satisfactory. The Nigerian export economy revived after 1916, but increasingly the big firms became bitter rivals. Small firms, European and African, were quick to seize new opportunities. In 1920, the sudden collapse of prices destroyed most of them, and shook even the Niger Company. The rivalries between the large firms in Nigeria and the soap and margarine manufacturers in Europe were resolved by mergers which ended with the creation of Unilever just before the Great Depression hit in 1929. This remains one of the giants of the world economy, while its subsidiary, the United Africa Company dominated Nigeria's external economy for more than half a century. Politics in Lagos remained turbulent. Riven by conflicts of personalities, the National Conference of British West Africa had only a brief, inglorious existence there. The issues that moved Lagosians remained profoundly local. They were mastered by Herbert Macaulay, who for a generation would be Nigeria's first democratic politician, and is remembered as the grandfather of modern Nigerian nationalism.

Good historians engage with big impersonal processes, but history is lived by men and women, and has also to be studied at that level. Where possible I have tried to identify and describe individuals. For some this was easy, as they had wealth, power, and influence as political leaders, senior officials and administrators, captains of trade and industry. Much has been written about Lugard, and Leverhulme, Law, and Lloyd George. Harder to find out about, but also necessary for our understanding, were those at lower levels. Among these, this book includes a German sailor who died of medical neglect while interned in Ibadan, a British politician who believed he was on track for the premiership, but rose no higher than parliamentary under secretary at the Colonial Office, and Queen Victoria's Yoruba god-daughter, who was married to a leading Lagos politician and manoeuvred with some skill between her two worlds. I have found three merchants' stories especially illuminating. Charles Ungebauer, an elderly, long-established, but not very successful trader, was the only German businessman in Lagos to avoid deportation. Almost to the end of the war, he managed to keep his firm going, but he

was eventually destroyed by the xenophobia which had fuelled Carson's agitations and became so much more powerful under the Lloyd George–Bonar Law coalition. James Stuart-Young was one of the last “palm-oil ruffians”, a small trader who defied the combine and kept prices high in Onitsha throughout the war. Eventually he sold up to the Niger Company, but would return to gain recognition as a hero of the town and, as a public intellectual, be an important influence on early Nigerian nationalism. Peter Thomas was the most successful African merchant in Lagos. Expanding his business during the war, he kept apart from the small firms' agitation. While he was almost destroyed in the economic collapse of 1920, and was eclipsed politically by Herbert Macaulay, he became an internationally known spokesman of progressive pan-Africanism. Finally, although I tried to keep Herbert Macaulay out of the book, he forced his way in. The book ends with his having a last laugh in the presence of the British king.

NOTES

1. Lewis, Viscount Harcourt cabinet diary 6 Nov. 1916, uncatalogued, Lewis Harcourt Papers (LHP), Bodleian Library, Oxford.
2. Crewe to Viscount Grey of Fallodon 19 Feb. 1928, cited in Michael Fry, “Political Change in Britain August 1914 to December 1916: Lloyd George Replaces Asquith: The Issues Underlying the Drama”, *Historical Journal (HJ)* 31.3 (1988), p. 621.
3. Kenneth Lipartito, “Reassembling the Economic: New Departures in Historical Materialism”, *American Historical Review (AHR)* 121.1 (2016), p. 138.



1914, Nigeria and the World Economy

THE NIGERIAN EXPORT ECONOMY

When the First World War began, the oil palm linked Nigeria commercially to the rest of the world. Its fruit clusters in large bunches weighed up to fifty pounds.¹ From the outer part (the pericarp) villagers extracted a “soft” oil. Used locally for cooking, it was also exported to Europe, above all to Great Britain, for industrial uses in making candles and soap and as a flux in tin-plating. This trade had been developed from the early nineteenth century as a “legitimate” substitute for the Atlantic slave trade. Inside the pericarp there is a shell which women and children cracked to extract a kernel. This had few local uses, but an oil could be obtained from it which at European temperatures “is a white or pale yellow solid fat possessing a pleasant nutty taste”.² Its sodium compound had the optimum combination of solubility and hardness for a lathering soap, and was used in the superior brands, such as Lever Brothers’ “Sunlight”, which began to be developed towards the end of the nineteenth century.³ An export trade in kernels therefore emerged alongside that in oil. It was enhanced in the early twentieth century as margarine, the first industrially produced foodstuff, switched from an animal fat to a vegetable oil basis requiring hard oils which could naturally be obtained only from palm kernels or from dried coconut meat (copra).⁴ These raw materials went mainly to Germany, whose own farmers had switched from oil seeds to sugar beet in the previous generation, a trend which was accentuated by German tariff policy.⁵

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, the trade in palm oil and kernels had almost totally eclipsed other Nigerian exports such as those in ivory and rubber.⁶ Newer ones were only beginning to emerge. Cocoa planting was spreading from the Gold Coast to the forests of south-west Yorubaland.⁷ The extension of the western railway into the newly conquered north opened up a largely unexpected trade in groundnuts.⁸ In the “middle belt”, also very recently subdued, tin mining was starting up on a large scale on the high plateau north of the Benue River.⁹ But as yet these were little more than pointers towards the evolution of a more diversified export economy. In 1913, palm oil and kernels together accounted for almost three quarters of Nigerian exports: £4,964,202 out of a total of £6,779,205. Rapidly expanding tin exports had reached £568,428, but no other product accounted for more than two hundred thousand pounds.

Tin apart, Nigeria's exports—palm oil, kernels, hides, groundnuts, cotton, and cocoa—were “the product of native industry in the fullest sense of the term, the European merchant being merely the intermediary between the Nigerian producer and the European markets...”.¹⁰ For the vast majority of peasant families such production was “only a useful addition to a livelihood which is already obtainable from the country's rich resources”.¹¹ British West Africa was not an area of European settlement, and the colonial authorities discouraged the establishment of plantations. When the soapmakers Lever Bros. pressed again at the beginning of 1914, they were told by a senior official in the Colonial Office “that such monopolies were foreign to the spirit of the age, and, as experience had shown, led to suspicions both as to the ultimate intentions of Levers towards the natives and trade competitors and as to the Government's reasons for granting them such privileges”.¹² The guiding principle, repeatedly affirmed by the C.O., was that, once a colony no longer needed a grant-in-aid, “its territories are administered entirely for the benefit of the inhabitants of those territories”.¹³ The office was determined to protect “natives” from “exploitation”. Nevertheless, the establishment of plantations was blocked not just out of high-minded altruism. West African governors firmly believed “that mass-production by small proprietors is the cheapest form of agricultural production in the world”.¹⁴ Their view was shared by the humanitarian campaigner E.D. Morel, who knew the area well: “It is difficult to conceive of any conditions under which the general commercial development of British West Africa could have proceeded at a more rapid pace than has taken

place in recent years.”¹⁵ While some would later argue that the great expansion of palm oil production in the Netherlands East Indies after the war demonstrated the superiority of “scientifically managed plantations”, in fact this only showed that an infant industry expands more rapidly than an established one. While NEI production of palm oil rose from nothing in 1909–1913 to 172 thousand tons in 1936, Nigerian production doubled from 81.9 to 163.7 thousand tons. Nigeria remained ahead in kernels: 390.8 to 368 thousand tons.¹⁶ As late as 1969, an authoritative global survey noted, “plantations have not found it easy to compete with producers operating on a family scale”.¹⁷

In Nigeria palm nuts were gathered rather than harvested. Families had rights to particular trees and elders or village heads could exercise a degree of control, but many more trees grew than could be used. In the Aba District in the east only about 40% of the 3.5 million palms were regularly harvested. The details of production varied from place to place and over time, and are now difficult to recover.¹⁸ Gender differentiations were fundamental. From its use in cooking, palm oil had originally been a women’s concern using windfall fruits. Commercialization would later send men about sixty feet up the trees to get the fruits. Some days afterwards women would boil them until they were soft. Men would pound them into a mass of fibres and nuts from which the oil would begin to appear. Women would then return for the laborious final stages, which mainly involved squeezing. This would produce a “soft” oil of high quality which was owned by men. An alternative procedure by which the fruit was softened by fermentation rather than by boiling, pounded, and left for the oil to trickle out, was less labour-intensive and entirely a male affair. It produced an inferior oil with more free fatty acids, which “easily turns rancid and becomes solid in cool temperatures...”¹⁹ Many argued that these methods were inefficient, and should be superseded by mechanization, which might be linked to the establishment of plantations. The Colonial Office was unresponsive, feeling that such change should come about “by ordinary economic processes and under conditions which would not inflict injustice and unnecessary hardship...”²⁰

Whichever process was used to extract the oil, the shells were left for women and children to crack, the kernels remaining the women’s property. Using “a couple of stones, one a thin flat block about 9 inches square and the other a small piece held in the hand”, a skilled girl could produce a pound of clean kernels in fifteen minutes. For a hard worker this would mean a hundredweight in four days. While few could match

these figures, it was estimated that in 1910, 100,000 persons cracked about 200,000,000 nuts. A centrifugal machine operated by two men might crack a hundredweight in an hour, but it would then take four persons a day to separate the clean kernels from the bits of shell.²¹ The eastern part of Southern Nigeria, where in “certain parts the fruit is so plentiful it cannot be gathered...”,²² was highly dependent on the oil palm for its export economy. In the west there were alternatives which did not exist in the east. There was a long history of experimentation with new crops. The area had been at the forefront of the rubber boom in the 1890s which at its peak had had exports worth over two hundred thousand pounds.²³ The Yorubas were now planting the trees which would make them major cocoa producers after the war. While kernels remained a major source of revenue for women, oil production in the west had to compete with a variety of other men’s activities. The result had been a shift from “soft” oil to the less labour-intensive “hard” oil production and a bias in favour of exporting kernels. While 23 thousand of the 83 thousand tons of kernels exported through Lagos in 1911 had come from Ibadan and places to the north, the oil exported came almost entirely from the regions close to Lagos.²⁴ In the west and west-centre of Nigeria the ratio of kernels to oil production was roughly 80:20 in 1913, while in the east it was roughly 55:45. This meant that over two-thirds of Nigerian kernel exports came from west of the Niger Delta.²⁵

Nigerian trade involved at one end millions of peasant producers buying small amounts of such items as gin, salt, tobacco, soap, kerosene, stockfish, and cheap cottons in myriads of local markets, and, at the other end, a few dozen British and German firms exporting in bulk and importing shiploads of trade goods.²⁶ Chains of intermediaries bridged the gap between the two economies. While market women divided consumer items into saleable quantities:

The middleman goes in his small canoe up rivers which cannot otherwise be navigated, he penetrates off beaten tracks into the thick forest to small villages and farms to buy his few cwts of kernels or oil. There are no chiefs of any influence except those who have acquired influence by their wealth won by success as middlemen....²⁷

Reporting to his employers from the interior of eastern Nigeria in 1921, John Holt’s Sierra Leonean agent Africanus Coker stressed the need to

have 90-pound bags of salt for traders using canoes and 40–50 pound bags for foot-traders, who were mostly women carrying it on their heads. Soap had to come in 10, 20, and 40 bar cases as well as the standard 56 bar cases, “For it is sometimes stiff to make some of these traders believe that 4 cases each 56 bars contains more soap than 10 cases of each 20 bars; in fact, with some of these traders it is useless trying to explain as they will never believe”.²⁸ Trade could be done only if credit was extended for long periods, which was a chronic grievance of the firms. Outside of Lagos and Yorubaland in the west, and Calabar in the extreme south-east, trade was mainly by barter. The colonial authorities considered this to be very detrimental to the development of the colony, as “it has fostered the business of the native middleman at the expense of the producer...”, and confined European firms to the coast.²⁹ In the east the situation was further complicated by the persistence of local trade currencies, above all the manilla, a small, horseshoe-shaped metal bar. Despite government attempts to promote the use of officially minted coins, manillas remained the most important medium of exchange, especially in the Igbo interior, and would increase in value against sterling during our period.³⁰ The leading modern historian argues that this dual currency system favoured the African middleman, but a contemporary observer noted that European merchants encouraged the currency “by the efforts they make each oil season to make corners in manillas”. The German firm, G.L. Gaiser were reported to have stored half a million.³¹ How much of the firms’ purchase price reached the primary producers, and how much of the costs of price changes were met by middlemen is difficult to assess. Contemporary records and oral traditions alike have little to say on such questions. Writing in 1915, Burrowes acknowledged the difficulty of ascertaining producer prices.³² One may surmise that peasant producers had firm ideas of “fair” prices and little understanding of the international market fluctuations which would determine the prices set by the European firms. By 1914, the Niger Company had become convinced that because of overbuying and high prices “the natives have been spoilt and the trade has drifted too much into the hands of middlemen”.³³ As Susan Martin notes, “African middlemen had always been vulnerable to falling produce prices”.³⁴ They were likely to be squeezed when these fell after the outbreak of the war. Burrowes reported that the Itsekiri middlemen of the Western Delta then dropped out, leaving the Urhobo producers to go directly to the traders in the ports of Warri, Sapele, and Koko.³⁵ On the other hand, Martin herself

notes that in the newly opened Igbo interior, African middlemen competed vigorously with European traders stationed along the Eastern Railway.³⁶ Generalizations across products and geographical zones would clearly be unsafe after the passage of four generations.

ZONES OF NIGERIAN TRADE

The pattern of Nigeria's external trade followed certain geographical and historical divisions. European involvement with the area had begun with the coasts in the mid fifteenth century. It would remain there for centuries. Europeans might establish coastal forts and factories, but they lacked the knowledge, the resources, and the incentive to move into the interior. Long trade routes brought slaves, ivory, pepper and other products to the coast. The interior of what would become Northern Nigeria with its empires and great trading cities was reached first across the Sahara from the Mediterranean, not from the Atlantic. The lower course of the river Niger was not known until the 1830s. It and its eastern tributary the Benue did not begin to be exploited commercially until the 1860s. Even so, penetration remained limited. The interior would not really be opened up until a railway began to be pushed north from Lagos in the 1890s. Just before the outbreak of the First World War it reached the great northern city of Kano, though the bridge across the Niger would not be completed until January 1916.³⁷ This created a new coast along which many "beaches" were established for trade.³⁸

Geographically the most obvious division in Nigeria was between the open savannah lands of the north and the forests of the south. In the century before the imposition of colonial rule the north had been dominated by the great Islamic Caliphate of Sokoto, largely Hausa, but with a Fulani ruling elite. In the extreme northeast, next to Lake Chad, was the ancient state of Borno. To the south, the "middle belt" was largely controlled by emirates acknowledging the authority of Sokoto, but the ethnic and political composition of this area was and is highly complex, and beyond easy summary in a work like this. The colonial authorities had largely respected the claims of Sokoto and its sub-emirates in establishing very extensive boundaries for Northern Nigeria, which was a separate protectorate until 1914. For Lugard and for most in the Colonial Office this was "the largest, most populous and most important part of Nigeria, peopled by the finer types of natives...".³⁹

LAGOS AND THE WEST

Southern Nigeria can conveniently be divided into western and eastern zones divided by the River Niger. For the western zone the major port was Lagos, a Portuguese name for the Awori town of Eko. By intervening in a dynastic conflict the British had gained control in 1851, and established a formal colony in 1861. By 1914, it had about 70,000 inhabitants, of whom half were Muslims.⁴⁰ As a colony, Lagos island, and a relatively small mainland area, was administratively separate from Southern Nigeria, which was legally a protectorate. This distinction was maintained when Northern and Southern Nigeria were amalgamated on 1 January 1914. Although a poor harbour with a bar subject to silting, Lagos commanded the entrance to the lagoon which received the major rivers of the Yoruba hinterland and was linked by creeks to the Niger Delta to the east. Large canoes, seventy feet long and twelve feet wide, capable of carrying twenty tons, brought in fifty thousand tons of produce in 1914.⁴¹ Therefore Lagos was the major centre of Nigeria's external trade, with more than thirty European firms established by the start of the First World War.⁴² Dredging by 1913 had significantly deepened the channel to a maximum depth of nineteen feet, and reduced the need for transshipment at Forcados at the eastern end of the lagoon.⁴³ In that year, about 379 steamers of 530,737 tons docked at Lagos, almost two-thirds of the total Nigerian tonnage of 881,896.

For the Yorubas Lagos had been a peripheral town. Their history had centred on the big monarchical but now militarized city states of the interior. The wars between these *poleis* had in the nineteenth century been as bitter, as bloody, and as well recorded, as those of classical Greece.⁴⁴ The extension of British rule in the 1890s had received a degree of acceptance as bringing an end to decades of internecine strife. To a significant extent the British respected and manipulated indigenous institutions. Obas in most of Yorubaland remained on their thrones. British backing increased their authority over other chiefs and outlying towns. Most strikingly, but eventually anomalously, Abeokuta, the city state of the Egbas, and an early centre of Christian missionary activity, remained autonomous until August 1914. By contrast, in Lagos the Obas were marginalized. Eshugbayi, who succeeded in 1900, took the title Eleko (Owner of Lagos).⁴⁵ While he still had his palace, Ida Igangan, the government made it clear that he was just the "chief of the Docemo-Oyekan house", and had "no ruling function".⁴⁶ It paid

him only a compassionate allowance of about £300, and held him in low esteem. His floundering before the Assistant Commissioner looking into land tenure for the West Africa Lands Commission showed painfully how justified this was. Claiming no longer to have what appeared to be the draft of a statement of his position, he said first that, finding no use for it he had given it back to the writer, then “I do not know who wrote the paper”.⁴⁷ Both the Lagos authorities and the Colonial Office took it for granted that he could be only “a tool in the hands of one person or another...”.⁴⁸ Nevertheless his position and authority were recognized by almost all the ordinary people of the city.

Commercially Lagos was linked primarily with Hamburg. The export trade in palm kernels was largely in the hands of the German firms G.L. Gaiser, and Witt und Büsch.⁴⁹ In 1913, Nigeria exported 174,718 tons of kernels worth £3,109,818, of which Germany took 131,885 tons worth £2,405,625. There was a comparable position in regard to cocoa which was beginning to emerge as a significant export for western Nigeria. It was worth £157,480 in 1913, with approximately two-thirds going to Germany. However, for cocoa there were many other sources of supply, above all the Gold Coast, which exported over two million pounds worth. In palm kernels no other country seriously competed with Nigeria.⁵⁰ The big German firms went back to the middle of the nineteenth century. In December 1854, the Oba Docemo (Dosunmu) had given land to William O'Swald & Co. who had pioneered the import of Indian Ocean cowries into West Africa. They were the forerunners of G.L. Gaiser, whose “establishment was on a larger scale than that of any other firm in Lagos” by 1914.⁵¹ Large British houses were more recent arrivals. John Holt, the only company with branches in all parts of Nigeria had come in 1899. Miller Brothers of Liverpool, which was mainly based in the east, arrived five years later. Their motto was “Forward” and their local trademark showed a cock defiantly strutting on Lagos island and crowing “I fear no foe” in English, Hausa, and Yoruba. Two other, lesser, British houses also maintained an aggressive stance and were rapidly expanding. W.B. MacIver, a derelict firm dealing mainly in timber, had been taken over by Lever Brothers in 1910 as part of their attempt to control sources of supply. It would eventually become “probably the largest exporter of Nigerian palm oil...”.⁵² G.B. Ollivant in Lagos seems to have concentrated on importing items to meet the needs of Europeans, but it had the backing of the shipping company Elder Dempster in a push north along the railway. The other main

British firms in Lagos were distinctly of the second rank: Lagos Stores; Paterson Zochonis; and H.B.W. Russell. The Compagnie française de l'Afrique occidentale was the one expatriate firm significantly established in Nigeria which was neither British nor German.⁵³

While German and British firms dominated the export trade, especially in palm oil and kernels, Lagos had a large "native" bourgeoisie, some from families of Yoruba returned slaves, especially from Sierra Leone and Brazil, some from other kingdoms of the Yoruba hinterland, many from other parts of Nigeria and West Africa. No longer exporters, they were now brokers and retailers.⁵⁴ Details of many of them are provided by the *Red Book of West Africa* published in 1920. The most prominent was probably the Hon. Samuel Pearse. Born in Lagos in 1866 he had begun his career with MacIver. He established himself independently at the end of the 1880s. Although he had an office in London as well as Lagos, this first venture failed at the time of the British conquest of Yorubaland in 1894. After working for a time for the African and Gold Coast Trade Corporation, he resumed in the ivory trade in Calabar in 1907, returning triumphantly to Lagos in 1913 to live in "Elephant House", a "handsome and palatial" residence in Broad Street commanding a panoramic view with a large ballroom where "The music of a full orchestra is supplied by a large orchestrion operated by electric power". In 1913, he was mainly a moneylender. The Lagos authorities considered him distinctly able, and "for a native broad minded", especially as he was not associated with those they considered anti-government agitators.⁵⁵

S. Thomas and Co. was the other African firm given pride of place in the *Red Book*. This had originally been founded in a small way in Calabar by two Yoruba creoles from Sierra Leone, Stephen and Peter Thomas. Stephen had died at sea in 1903, while Peter had entered the civil service, first in the Calabar Customs, and then in the Southern Nigeria Treasury. He rose to earn a salary of £300 a year, substantial, but as high as he could go as an African in the Civil Service. An eye complaint led to his retirement on pension in 1912. The eye problem proved transitory. Going into business, Thomas rapidly built up the largest indigenous firm in Nigeria, concentrating very largely in the relatively new exports of leather and cocoa. By 1920, it employed nearly fifty clerks in Lagos and a "small army of other employees throughout Nigeria". He also had eight Europeans working for him. With five stores in Lagos and around twenty branches elsewhere, Thomas was overshadowed only by the very

largest of the European firms. He was “keenly interested” in agriculture, having established a model farm under the supervision of an American couple, and dealt “in imported merchandise of every description with the exception of spirits”, which as a staunch Methodist he would not touch. Part of his motivation was to become an exemplar of African success and a model for those who would follow him.⁵⁶

Other African traders concentrated on imports and particularly cotton textiles.⁵⁷ The most substantial was J.H. Doherty. Born in Lagos in 1866 like Pearse, he began with “extremely limited assets”. While he did not work for European firms he would eventually receive £4000 a month credit from one of them. He had started in produce, and had a farm at Agege to the north of Lagos which had played a significant role in the early dissemination of cocoa.⁵⁸ At the end of the 1890s, he established himself as a general merchant and developed “on an extensive scale as a direct importer”. His Lagos stores were noted for their stocks of cotton and silk goods and hardware. He also had branches at Oshogbo, Zaria, Lokoja, and Kano.⁵⁹

The members of the Lagos élite were British subjects who had grown up within the British Empire and proclaimed their acceptance of what they understood to be its values. In the *Red Book*, they gave prominence to education in and trips to Great Britain and the recognition which they received there. Pearse, for instance, in 1913 “led the Nigerian Land Deputation to London under the auspices of the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines [Protection] Society, in connection with which he was instrumental in bringing about a better understanding between the Delegates and Commissioners in Downing Street, and received the thanks of Lord Denbigh, the President”. He would be back in Great Britain in 1915 when he became a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society. In Lagos he had “long been a prominent and capable leader in political, religious and social circles...”, as a member of the Legislative Council, Town Council, Licensing Commission, Assessments Board, Parochial Board of Christ Church, and the Diocesan Board; representative of the Synod; and trustee of the Town Hall and of the Racecourse Board of Management. Peter Thomas was less flamboyantly a joiner, but he was a philanthropist who even in his later years of adversity and indebtedness continued to donate 7% of his income to charity.⁶⁰ The *Red Book* would stress his enlightened and progressive business methods and his “altruistic principles and ethical ideals” reflected in his principled refusal to sell spirits. Hopkins depicts him as “un idéaliste de modèle victorien, un homme

qui prône les principes de fraternité chrétienne, de coopération raciale, de développement par le négoce avec autant de conviction qu'un colon éloigné de la mère patrie".⁶¹

This identification with the British Empire and its proclaimed Christian values co-existed with deep local attachments. Thomas was a member of the Ekitiparapo, the council of Ekiti and Ilesha leaders which had emerged from the Yoruba wars of the 1870s and 1880s. He would eventually take an Ilesha title. Attachment to the *polis* was itself increasingly combined with a growing sense of Yoruba identity, which was reflected and promoted in *The History of the Yorubas* composed in the 1890s by the Reverend Samuel Johnson. He wrote from a "purely patriotic motive, that the history of our fatherland might not be lost in oblivion...", and in opposition to "the spirit of tribal feelings and petty jealousies now rife among us".⁶² While acknowledging the obvious difference in "degree of civilization", Johnson judged the Yorubas to be "characteristically like" the English. Each race had: "Love of independence, a feeling of superiority over all others, a keen commercial spirit, and of indefatigable enterprise, that quality of never being able to admit or consent to a defeat as finally settling a question on which their mind is bent...".⁶³ Johnson forwarded his manuscript to an English publisher through a missionary society, but it was misplaced, perhaps deliberately. As the historian died shortly afterwards, it had to be rewritten by his brother Dr. Obadiah Johnson, a task which was not completed until 1915.⁶⁴ Dr. Obadiah was much favoured by the colonial administration in Lagos, serving as a member of the Legislative Council from 1901 to 1913,⁶⁵ but in one of the very few places where he spoke avowedly in his own voice he expressed the same fervent Yoruba patriotism as his brother. To the patronising and condescending letter of then Acting Governor Fred Evans to the Yoruba rulers on the British supervised breaking-up of the main war camps in 1886 he appended an eloquent footnote:

Men who can control such huge masses of humanity, capacities which can guide, control, and direct all the intricacies of municipal and political machineries of a government, and can wage honourable wars for years without external aid or a national debt bequeathed to posterity might at least be considered as possessing some serious qualities beyond those of children, as they appear to be regarded, and to be deserving some honourable consideration due to men although they are Negroes.⁶⁶

Evans's silly letter fully deserved Dr. Johnson's rebuke, but this was equally a protest against the diminished role of the western educated or orientated élite within British West Africa. In the nineteenth century, the British had to a large degree worked through and honoured such people. From the 1890s, this rapidly changed. Educated Africans now had, as a later historian eloquently put it, "a community sense of long-standing outrage at having to bow and scrape, to smile and endure, in face of the interminable condescension and hostility of the official and unofficial resident Europeans".⁶⁷ Writing from the interior of eastern Nigeria, Africanus Coker explained how his own thinking had developed between 1902 and 1921:

Because I had and do have the English language as vernacular, and the treatment I received from the members of the old or Victorian school of thought, I had been thinking and calling myself an Englishman; but thanks to the members of the new or Georgian school of thought who have expressed it in plain English that a blackman is not to think himself the equal of a whiteman and therefore not entitled to just and equal treatment, they have so put this idea into practice that today I feel and do assert that I am not an Englishman.⁶⁸

Racism had become more systematic and allegedly scientific. The discovery of the means of transmission of malaria appeared to justify programmes of residential segregation.⁶⁹ Sir Frederick Lugard, who returned in 1912 to push through the amalgamation of Northern and Southern Nigeria, promoted these policies, as "the disappearance of the noise, dirt, and flies, and other concomitants of native life adds to the amenities of existence of Europeans".⁷⁰ Not only did the rulers seek physical separation from "more or less naked and ignorant natives...", they also blocked the progress of what Lugard's brother (and secretary) Edward called "the black gentleman of Lagos who sends his laundry to London every week".⁷¹ From the 1890s Africans could no longer expect to reach the highest positions in administration or in the church, as had been cruelly revealed in the effective casting aside of Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther, and the refusal to appoint an African to succeed him.⁷² Advancement in medicine or in the law became more difficult. Africans were no longer appointed to the government's medical service. Those already there, like Charles Lumpkin, complained of decisions "manifestly done of the purpose of lowering our prestige and perhaps disgusting us

to the extent of throwing up our appointments...".⁷³ Some of the large expatriate firms, particularly the largest, the Niger Company, moved to replace Africans with Europeans in their senior positions in Nigeria.⁷⁴ Lugard's policy of indirect rule allied him with supposedly traditional chiefs and set him against the Western-educated Lagos élite and even more against the "small coterie of S. Leone and Gold Coast 'Native Foreigners' who have come here to exploit the Lagos people and make fortunes at their expense and who pose as their Saviours...". The outlook in the Colonial Office was similar; the "Coast Clerk" was just a crude version of "the educated Indian agitator".⁷⁵

Nevertheless, Lugard had to recognize that some Lagosians were different: "Its locally born inhabitants enjoy the status of British subjects, and many of them are educated gentlemen of great ability, able and willing to take their part in the advancement of a progressive community."⁷⁶ Two stood out: the Inspector of Education, Henry Carr, and the Honourable Kitoyi Ajasa, the city's leading lawyer. Lugard consulted them frequently as spokesmen of opinion in the town. Both were clearly men of exceptional ability and strong ideas, but their origins were obscure, and they were to a large degree de-tribalized.⁷⁷ As Lugard's admiring biographer readily admitted, he had little understanding of the extraordinarily complex Yoruba societies of Lagos and its hinterland which he was set on remoulding. He saw the introduction of direct taxation as the key to modernization.⁷⁸ Decisions already taken provided him with the opportunity in Lagos. The government was committed to the provision of piped water paid for by a local rate. It saw this as desirable on hygienic grounds and a benefit to the whole population. Works were begun at Iju which a visitor from the Colonial Office would liken to "the work of the ancient Romans".⁷⁹ It would be paid for partly by a rate charged on the users. This was strongly resisted as unwanted and intrusive. Modern politics in Lagos and in Nigeria began with the opposition to the water rate. The movement was led by Dr. J.K. Randle, whose political career went back to 1892 when he had opposed the British expedition against the coastal state of Ijebu, a campaign which otherwise had considerable support in Lagos. He now set up a People's Union, which would meet monthly for the next eight years. Ten thousand people attended a protest meeting in March 1909, where another doctor, Ọrişadipe Ọbasa of Ikija, called it evidence of "the slight regard the Europeans have for the native and if we all combine together we will be able to do something to prevent the adoption of this Water Rate",

and the wealthy merchant Alli Balogun prayed to God for strength and means “to be able to withstand these Europeans whose only aims are to get rid of us and to exterminate our race”.⁸⁰ A crisis loomed for 1915, when the works would be completed and the rate imposed.

Obasa and Randle continued to lead the opposition, but also prominent were Eleko Eshugbayi and the traditional “white cap” chiefs, who had authority over the allocation of land. This was another explosive issue. Apprehensions were aroused by the establishment of the West African Lands Committee in London and preliminary hearings in Lagos. These were exacerbated by Lugard, who gave the impression that taxation lay at the end of it. Even those to whom the governor usually looked, warned him of the likely consequences. Assistant Bishop Isaac Oluwole recalled a women’s song some years back when a tax had been proposed in connection with electric lights: “Awa ko sanwo ile *awa*.” “We will not pay tax upon *our own* houses.” Dr. Johnson stressed that changes took place from within, “any such thing from without will be resented as—not reformation, but revolution and outrage”. Ajasa said much the same: “The native of Yorubaland has always viewed with the greatest suspicion any interferences in the free control of his land. He is ready to die in its defence.” Indigenous apprehensions were perhaps best expressed by Alli Balogun:

The hardship is that I think the white man would not carried [*sic*] out their promises. They have not carried out their promises to Docemo. They said that they would give no trouble in the town. Now there are hundreds of troubles in the town, as for instance goats are not allowed to wander about, and there are difficulties with the mosquito ordinance, and others about building houses. One can not now build where one wishes. So I think that in the same way troubles would arise under the new system and old promises will be forgotten by a new generation of white men.⁸¹

The role of the white cap chiefs in land allocation had been minimized by the British, who claimed that the “root title” to land in Lagos had passed to the Crown by the treaty of cession in 1861. While pre-existing indigenous property rights would be respected, when land was appropriated by crown grants the white cap chiefs were entitled to compensation only for the nominal rents from their “seigneurial” control. The Supreme Court of Southern Nigeria endorsed this view in 1910. It was vigorously contested by Amodu Tijani, the chief of the Oluwa family,

which had rights over land in Apapa to the west of Lagos, which Lugard planned to develop as the new port area.⁸²

Chief Oluwa was closely linked to Eleko's secretary Herbert Macaulay, who would later emerge as the leading figure in the first generation of Nigerian nationalism, and whose face, with his flamboyant moustache, would for decades adorn the currency of independent Nigeria until inflation abolished the one naira note. The grandson of Bishop Crowther, noted as a pianist, violinist, and chess player, he was very much a product of Victorian Lagos. At a concert in the year of the Diamond Jubilee he would accompany the wife of the Colonial Secretary on the violin, while Kitoyi Ajasa played a Chopin waltz.⁸³ Nevertheless, as the Lagos historian Patrick Cole points out, he "was the sort of African whites have never been able to tolerate—gay, flashy, aggressive, tremendously popular, equipped by whites to play their games when the games were to his advantage, but uncommitted to many of their ideas of propriety". By profession a surveyor, he had been forced to resign from government service over allegations of financial misconduct. The Lagos authorities considered him an "extremely capable person but entirely unscrupulous and not to be trusted in any way". They regretted that he "enjoys amongst a certain undesirable class the reputation of being the champion of the people".⁸⁴ A subsequent historian would note that over his long political career, "His ruthless abandon in vilifying his opponents... left deep and unhealed scars which decidedly influenced later developments within the nationalist movement".⁸⁵ In 1913, he was successfully charged with perjury in a case concerning a trust fund. The prosecuting counsel was the British lawyer Robert Irving, who was also a tenant whom Macaulay was trying to evict. Many Lagosians believed that the case had been got up to prevent his going with Pearse to appear before the West African Lands Committee in London. There was some public disorder, and Eleko, who it was felt had not backed Macaulay sufficiently, had to flee half-naked from his palace to Government House.⁸⁶ With Macaulay in jail it was Oḃasa who played the most prominent role and who witnessed the marks of the white cap chiefs on their petition against the water rate. The Lagos authorities believed that he was acting out of resentment that Samuel Pearse had been preferred to him as a member of the Legislative Council, while Randle was "an agitator pure and simple".⁸⁷ The protests over the water rate were linked with divisions in the Moslem community. The government was backed by the authoritarian Lemomu (Imam) Braimah. Although born in Lagos, he

was a Beri-Beri from Borno. His authority was contested by the Giwas (a title taken from the Hausa for “elephant”), who were “the chiefs of the Mahomedan clubs”, and linked to the People’s Union. Lemomu’s most important follower was Alli Balogun. In 1914, the community split over the appointment of officers in the principal mosque. The opposition, which was by far the larger party, eventually would break away to base itself at the originally Ottoman-sponsored Shitta Bey mosque.⁸⁸ The links between the opposition to the water rate and the emergent divisions in the Muslim community ensured that Lagos politics would soon be stormy.

The European firms of Lagos were also found along the railway in the Yoruba hinterland, especially at Ibadan and round Abeokuta, though the still autonomous Egba government had largely blocked the establishment of expatriate businesses inside their city.⁸⁹ The area to the east of Lagos had traditionally been dominated by the great city of Benin. This was no longer of much commercial significance, but there were some important centres in the western part of the Delta at towns such as Warri and Siluko. There a somewhat different pattern existed, with the African Association, Miller Bros., and John Holt challenged by German firms of the second rank: Bey und Zimmer, Behrens und Wehner, L. Pagenstecher, and the Niger Benue Transport Company.

THE EAST

To the east of the Niger was the zone which produced some 53% of Nigeria’s palm oil. Coastal trading cities such as Bonny, Nembe (known to Europeans as Brass), and Calabar had long histories of commercial interaction with European firms. Opobo was a newer town, established by secession from Bonny in the late 1860s. By 1913, it exported 20,783 tons of oil, almost half of the total from eastern Nigeria.⁹⁰ Its oil and kernels were brought by canoe down the creeks from the interior, which was populated by various groups of Igbo. In contrast to the highly urbanized and monarchical Yoruba, the Igbo lived in small dispersed settlements governed by elders and by secret societies whose membership was determined largely by wealth. Whereas in the west, British rule had been seen as bringing an end to generations of warfare, in the east it had to be forcefully imposed village by village, a process which was still being completed in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁹¹ In Igboland no export alternatives to the oil palm had emerged. The “Benin Sands”

of the area were unsuitable for cocoa production.⁹² Palm oil remained of central importance, especially as eastern palms were particularly rich in oil, which comprised 26% of the fruit compared to 19% in the west, while the kernel was 11% compared to the western 19%. In the east kernels and oil did not become independent crops.⁹³ Also unlike the west, there was no shift from “soft” oil produced by women to “hard” oil produced by men.

Trade in what until recently had been the Oil Rivers Protectorate, was dominated by large, long-established British firms on the coast, especially the African Association and Miller Bros., as well as MacIver. Although Gaiser had a major station at Opobo, the German presence was much less important than in the west. In the extreme east, at Calabar, the situation was somewhat different. There the Cross River could be plied by small steamers for up to two hundred miles in the rainy season. Calabar was second only to Opobo in the export of oil, and was clearly in first place in respect of kernels, exporting 23,954 tons in 1914.⁹⁴ In this area two German firms, the German West African Trading Company, and the Deutsche Kamerun Gesellschaft had significant shares of the trade along with the big British firms and some smaller ones such as African Traders, Holt Bros. (soon to be taken over by John Holt), and Paterson Zochonis. While kernels went to Germany, oil went to Great Britain, which took 69,832 tons out of the Nigerian total of 83,090. Most of the remainder went to Hamburg, but there was also a small trade to Marseilles.⁹⁵ Much of the oil was used in England for the manufacture of soap and candles, but more than half was re-exported: 49,000 tons out of total imports of 80,000 tons.⁹⁶ In 1913, 18,500 tons went to the United States, and 9500 to the Netherlands.⁹⁷

The western and eastern areas of Nigeria were divided by the narrow strip of land surrounding the Niger south from its confluence with the Benue at Lokoja. This was dominated by the Niger Company, which had been the first, and for a long time, the only, firm to operate in the interior of Nigeria. It had its own port at Burutu, and ran steamers up the big rivers as far as Garua on the Benue in German Kamerun. By agreement the African Association and Miller Bros. did not operate on the Niger while the Niger Company did not operate on the coast. Like the coast, and to some degree in competition with it, the river attracted oil and kernels from the Igbo interior. A key point was Onitsha, one of the few well-established Igbo cities. In a brilliantly evocative short essay, the writer Chinua Achebe portrays it as attracting “the exceptional, the

colourful and the bizarre, because it was itself colourful and bizarre". It would be "the nursery of a burgeoning Igbo capitalism...".⁹⁸ There the Niger Company faced competition not just from John Holt but from two smaller British firms, Thomas Welsh, which was noted for its principled opposition to the spirits trade, and G.W. Christian, as well as one of the very few independent European traders, J.M. Stuart-Young, a prolific writer who was hailed as the Kipling of West Africa, a title he declined, rightly considering himself as far below Robert Service, the bard of the Klondike gold rush, as Service was below Kipling.⁹⁹

Stuart-Young will play a significant role in this history as a vociferous champion of the independent trader and a staunch opponent of the emerging oligopsonies which would eventually dominate Nigeria's export trade. In Onitsha he was known as *onye-ndozi-aku*, one who arranges the prosperity of the town, a name which he simplified to Odeziaku, and also to Jack O'Dazi, palm oil ruffian and iniquitous coaster. Chance has preserved an invoice for him from 1915. It had forty-four lines for a total of £60/-/7, the largest item being six dozen G.109 shirts at 24/11 for a total of £7/9/6. Three hundred yards of embroidery came to £3/2/6, and a gross of cricket belts to £2/3/6. No other item was more than two pounds. Most were clothing or embroidery, but there was also a grindstone, rugs, and a second-hand table.¹⁰⁰ By the time he died in May 1939 in his "Little House of No Regrets" in New Market Road, he had become Dr. John Moray Stuart-Young, recognized as one of West Africa's leading public intellectuals influencing the emergent generation of nationalists such as Nnamdi Azikiwe, who valued him as "friend, counsellor, and guide".¹⁰¹ He had begun as John Young in a Manchester slum. As an eighteen year old he had been convicted of theft by forgery.¹⁰² His life was dominated by a probably not entirely innocent passion for young boys. In the memoirs which he wrote as Jack O'Dazi during the war he stated that it was a photograph by Corvo of a naked youth in Cairo that first attracted him to Africa.¹⁰³ Once established in Onitsha he tried to arrange a pool between the English firms, as he believed that unrestrained and unscrupulous competition would eventually destroy the city's trade. Agents were supposed to pay standard rates for produce, but few honoured this understanding. Big firms sent "semi-educated" African clerks up to four miles into the countryside to tap the trade. They sought "to beg, borrow or steal a few measures, so that they also may join in the fun, and start a little Company of their own...".¹⁰⁴ Competition between European firms on

the Niger provided opportunities for African entrepreneurs, especially the women traders of Onitsha. The most famous of these was Omu Okwe, the “merchant queen of Ossomari”, who began her career as a Niger Company agent in 1904.¹⁰⁵ Now an independent trader she had a particular advantage in that she could acquire girls from her debtors and give them out to European and African traders alike. By 1916, she could begin construction of a house which would eventually cost her £834/15/8.

Stuart-Young feared that agents reaching into the countryside would undermine Onitsha’s middleman role. Instead the reverse happened. Interior producers came directly to the waterside and Onitsha flourished at the expense of smaller local markets. Stuart-Young’s failure to arrange a division of the market was the unlikely subject of one of his poems. He gives the various shares claimed by himself and the four British firms. There was no German competition. Writing in 1913, he said that there were only four Germans in the town and perhaps twenty in the whole Division.¹⁰⁶ That was about to change. Pagenstecher, which was probably the most vigorous challenger to the Niger Company in the Niger-Benue valleys, took over a site on the waterside. It intended to develop this as the headquarters of a division including Omerun, Ogrugru, and Adakpu. In 1916, it would be one of the most valuable properties outside of Lagos, selling for more than £10,000.¹⁰⁷

THE NORTH

On the map Northern Nigeria loomed large. It had great cities with long commercial traditions. Its trade links had been to the north by camel caravan across the Sahara to the Mediterranean. The famous “Morocco” leather had come from this area.¹⁰⁸ As late as 1906, Mohammad ibn Saleh took four loads mainly of cloth from Tripoli to Kano returning with thirty-two loads of goat hides which he sold for sixteen thousand francs.¹⁰⁹ British policy was to break these links and reorient the area towards the Atlantic. By 1914, the Saharan routes had been entirely abandoned, but about some eighty “Arab” traders, almost all Libyans, still operated in Kano, mainly in hides and skins and ostrich feathers. This last trade had been largely controlled by Jews originally from Livorno. The reorientation of trade led most of these to leave Tripoli, but one, the young Saul Raccah, moved to Kano where he began to work for R. Hassan & Co., a Syrian firm based in Manchester.

Eventually, in the late 1930s, he would become the leading independent trader in the North.¹¹⁰ The turnover of the Tripolitanians was estimated at around £100,000, but this was now relatively unimportant compared to the trade in European hands.¹¹¹ Before 1900, British sovereignty had been asserted, but hardly exercised, by a chartered company, the Royal Niger Company. The “crowned company” lost its charter to become simply the Niger Company. With a capital of £1,400,000 it was in the top third of British overseas trading companies.¹¹² The surrender of its political rights to the new colonial government was compensated by the grant of half of the mining royalties in the area north of the Niger-Benue and a line between Zinder and Yola. This excluded Borno, still internationally disputed in 1900, but did include the soon to be opened up tinfields of the Bauchi Plateau. The Niger Company played a major role in the early development of the mines, but eventually sold most of its holdings and switched to providing leases, finance, and arranging transport and brokerage. As a trader, the Niger Company stuck closely to the big rivers and made little attempt to penetrate further inland.¹¹³ Lugard, as the first British High Commissioner of Northern Nigeria at the turn of the century, had tried to create competition by encouraging the London and Kano Trading Company to open inside the walls of Kano in 1904.¹¹⁴ This company survived but did not thrive as by “slow and laborious journeys” of up to six weeks it transported hides to the then railheads at Zungeru and Baro on the Niger.¹¹⁵

The extension of the railway would open up the northern interior. The British authorities hoped and expected that it would become, like the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, a major imperial asset as a cotton producing area. Despite vigorous efforts by the British Cotton Growing Association, the results were disappointing.¹¹⁶ Cotton exports would fluctuate sharply between 1911 and 1918, but never surpassed a quarter of a million pounds worth. By contrast, the trade in hides, though also subject to fluctuations, would increase from almost forty thousand pounds worth in 1911 to almost nine hundred thousand pounds at its peak in 1917. London and Kano would remain important in this trade along with G.B. Ollivant, and the American L. Ambrosini, who moved from East Africa to Kano in 1913 and would rapidly become the largest dealer. Peter Thomas followed the same route, as did Michael Elias, the leading “Syrian” merchant in Lagos. Less predictable than this expansion of an established trade was the spectacular growth of groundnut exports, from an average of about a thousand five hundred tons in 1906–1911 to

over nineteen thousand tons in 1913 and figures over fifty thousand tons in 1916–1918, with a peak value of over nine hundred thousand pounds in 1918. As Lugard noted in 1913, “*No-one* had the remotest idea of this enormous influx of groundnuts. It took everyone including the Niger Company wholly by surprise”.¹¹⁷ Very quickly Germany overtook Great Britain as the leading market for Nigerian groundnuts.¹¹⁸ With some eighteen expatriate firms, Kano at the outbreak of the war was second only to Lagos as a commercial centre in Nigeria. Most of these were British houses, including the Niger Company, John Holt, Paterson Zochonis, Lagos Stores, and MacIver. The C.F.A.O. also moved north as did Pagenstecher. Of the big Lagos based German firms, Witt und Büsch stayed in Yorubaland, but G.L. Gaiser was quick to establish itself at Kano and Zaria and along the railway, positioning itself to challenge the Niger Company as the leading firm in the north. Other expatriate firms with a northern rather than Lagosian focus were the “Syrian” Ferris George, and Tin Areas of Nigeria, which had begun in 1910 to supply machinery to the mining companies, but which was rapidly expanding as a more general commercial undertaking.¹¹⁹

THE BIG BRITISH FIRMS

In an oligopolistic/oligopsonistic economy such as that of Nigeria, relations between the firms become complicated. Uneasy co-operation alternates with sharp competition. Alliances form, break down, and new ones are established. As the Colonial Office noted on an abortive proposal to privatize government shipping services in Calabar and the East: “the merchants are all jealous of one another, ... some are jealous of Elder Dempster [the shipping company], and... Elder Dempster are jealous of the merchants”.¹²⁰ From 1900, there had been an agreement between three of the big British firms, the Niger Company, the African Association, and Miller Bros., which also included a much smaller one, the Company of African Merchants. This reserved the Niger strip and the whole of the north to the Niger Company, which in turn did not operate in the east or in the west. Complementing this division of Nigeria into spheres of interest was a pooling arrangement. Under this between 1900 and 1912 the Niger Company had received £153,870/4/7 (in 1900–1903, 1907) but had paid out £303,378/3/8 (in 1904–1906, 1908–1912), for a net outpayment of £149,507/19/1, of which the African Association had received £64,304/10/7, Miller Bros.

£71,926/3/6, and the Company of African Merchants £13,907/5/-.¹²¹ As the niggling precision of these figures suggests, this was no informal understanding, but a legally binding agreement running to the end of 1929, with a Committee of Control and provisions for arbitration. As we have already seen, it strongly influenced the pattern of Nigerian trade.

Nevertheless, by 1914 there were signs that established relationships might not be much longer sustained. The years just before the outbreak of the war were a boom period for primary produce in all parts of the world. Vigorous competition in Nigeria was pushing prices to levels which the European firms felt were unsustainable.¹²² Figures can always be disputed in detail, and rather more than detail, but it seems pretty clear that the terms of trade were better for Nigerian producers than they ever had been or ever would be again.¹²³ The extension of the western railway to the north threatened the Niger Company, as its dominant position was largely based on its control of the river route. On the other hand, the construction of an eastern railway to the newly created Port Harcourt, would open up the Igbo hinterland and threaten the coastal positions of the African Association and Miller Bros. Construction was curtailed during the war, but the railway reached the Udi coalfield in May 1916.¹²⁴ While the Association appeared content to stick to the mouths of the Oil Rivers, Millers wanted to move into the lower Niger, which was reserved to the Niger Company.¹²⁵ All the firms were confronted with the rapid growth of MacIver as part of Lever Brothers' expansion, which also included attempts to set up plantations, which the Colonial Office had blocked, and to build kernel crushing plants in West Africa itself, which had been allowed, though these proved uneconomic, largely because there was no local market for kernel cake. While the established companies were as interested in imports as in exports, and therefore had no strong interest in forcing down producer prices in Nigeria, Sir William Lever was trying to bypass them and control his own sources of supply, which he would want as cheaply as possible.

Confronted with these challenges, the Niger Company, the African Association, Miller Bros., and the Company of African Merchants considered amalgamation. As Robert Miller told Lord Scarbrough, the chairman of the Niger Company, if the existing agreement "were continued in its present form it will do more to hinder the development of the contracting parties than to advance their interests".¹²⁶ However, the negotiations did not progress smoothly. The underlying problem was that, however it might be disguised, an effective amalgamation would be

very like a take-over of the smaller firms by the Niger Company. Personal rivalries which are now hard to reconstruct also clearly mattered. An amalgamated company would have fourteen directors reflecting the size of the component firms, seven from the Niger Company, three from the African Association, three from Millers Bros., and one from the Company of African Merchants.¹²⁷ This potentially put a decisive vote in the hands of the chairman of the smallest company, G.A. Moore. As the chairman of the West Africa section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce he was already rather too ready to project himself as the spokesman of the West Africa trade, even though, as the semi-official historian of the companies which would eventually merge into the United Africa Company contemptuously remarked: "He was only a small fish!"¹²⁸

Beyond the clash of personalities there were incompatibilities between the Niger Company and its potential partners. The three firms in the south competed against each other to a certain extent. In the streamlining which would necessarily accompany amalgamation they would probably have to close stations and reduce staff. No such problem confronted the Niger Company in its own zones. While the other companies were general merchants and produce buyers, the Niger Company had wider interests and wider ambitions. By purchasing a controlling interest in the large Belgian seed crushing firm Usines J.E. de Bruyn in 1912, it was beginning to establish vertical links overseas. In Nigeria, mining was an increasingly important part of the Company's profits: £22,000 on a rough estimate in 1913 out of £200,000 before pooling and £130,000 after.¹²⁹ This gave its shares a healthy premium which it wanted reflected in the terms of the merger. The African Association demurred, stating that it was not willing in effect to invest £214,000 "in Mining ventures in West Africa, which is so apart from our ordinary business...".¹³⁰ Miller Bros. pursued the negotiations for another month, but could not agree on the value to be placed on the Niger Company's mining royalties. In mid July the negotiations were suspended.¹³¹ At several times the parties had appeared close to agreement. They knew each other well, and had had a long history of conflict and adjustment. They would try again in 1915–1916.

The oligopsony of the produce buying firms was more than matched by the duopoly of the steamship companies, the British Elder Dempster and the German Woermann Linie.¹³² Of the exporting firms, John Holt had three ships of its own, but the others depended on the two

big lines.¹³³ As the British Colonial Office later noted: “The shipping trade was a very close corporation.”¹³⁴ In 1913, 563 ships had entered Nigerian ports. There had been 310 British steamers of 530,876 tons, and 191 German of 341,516 tons. The remaining sixty-one vessels, which were evidently sailing ships, accounted for only 10,504 tons.¹³⁵ While Nigeria had ports, these were not real harbours, of which there were none in West Africa, “as all the work of loading & unloading has to be done by lighters”.¹³⁶ The Colonial Office felt that, before the war, Elder Dempster had been “able by agreement with the German lines, by its influence with the local Bank, by its lightering facilities, and by a deferred rebate system to establish a partial monopoly which enabled them to maintain a tariff for goods and passengers at rates which if not exorbitant, appear high by comparison with those elsewhere”, as they were 50% above the rate to Singapore for only one third of the distance.¹³⁷ An agreement set the same rates for each to Hamburg and Rotterdam,¹³⁸ while giving Elder Dempster a monopoly on shipments to Liverpool, though at an additional rate of 2/6 a ton for kernels.¹³⁹ Its position was further enhanced by its domination of the Bank of British West Africa, the only bank in Nigeria in 1913. Junior officials in the Colonial Office felt that the Bank used “its position to squeeze its customers and the Govt. One could not expect it to do otherwise”.¹⁴⁰

GERMANY AND GREAT BRITAIN

In international trade palm oil was only one of many soft oils.¹⁴¹ Because of its low quality the West African product was not highly regarded. Flood in the Colonial Office noted that it “isn’t a very good article, but it does command a commercial value—and a high one.”¹⁴² A high free fatty acid content (up to 50%) rendered it unsuitable for edible purposes.¹⁴³ Its main use was as a relatively cheap industrial raw material. It was shipped in large wooden casks each holding about 5/8 of a ton. Although stoutly made by skilled coopers, they had short lives.¹⁴⁴ As hard oils are naturally much less common than soft ones, palm kernels were more highly esteemed. In Nigeria they were placed in gin cases containing from 25 to 35 pounds.¹⁴⁵ Extraction of the oil, whether by crushing or by chemical means, took place in Germany. The solid residue was easily marketable there as cattle feed, which profoundly affected the economics of the trade. The oil then went to the Netherlands to become a major component of the margarine produced by the two great firms,

Anton Jurgens and Van Den Bergh. These had had a long and complicated relationship. Commercially they still called themselves “friends”.¹⁴⁶ In practice they were bitter rivals. The only natural competitor of palm kernel oil was coconut oil extracted from Far Eastern and Pacific copra. Kernels had several advantages. They came from a much nearer source and they were easy to bag and ship.¹⁴⁷ Copra is a notoriously difficult cargo. Its pungent, nauseating smell had an unforgettable impact on those unused to it. It was also considered dangerously flammable. Shippers often refused “to carry copra as it tends to damage ordinary cargo when stored in proximity to it”.¹⁴⁸ By 1913, chemistry had somewhat modified the natural balance between the oils. Hydrogenation, by saturating unsaturated fatty acid chains, could harden soft oils. The manufacture of margarine would therefore largely depend on the relative prices of a wide range of fish, whale, and vegetable oils, and animal fats. Dutch margarine was sold in Germany and Great Britain, where it had about half the market, and Denmark, which, of course, in turn produced butter for Great Britain. The British margarine producers, of which the Maypole Dairy was the most important, had no links with Nigeria.¹⁴⁹ These commodity chains would be severely disrupted and reconfigured by the outbreak of the war.

The Nigerian import trade was generally recognized as having been more lucrative than exporting, but is more difficult to categorize. Whereas the export trade was relatively evenly divided between Great Britain and Germany, with tin tipping the balance to the British side, about two-thirds of Nigerian imports, which amounted to some £5,701,599 in 1913, came from Great Britain. Germany provided 15%, the Netherlands about 9%, and the United States of America a little over 5%.¹⁵⁰ Unlike the export trade, which was dominated by oil and kernels, imports were diverse. The most important items were cotton textiles, which came to over one and a half million pounds, practically 30% of the total.¹⁵¹ A snapshot of this trade is provided by the inventories of three Elder Dempster ships with goods consigned to Gaiser in Opobo. The *Onitsha* had 23 cases of cottons, one of singlets, two of Epsom salts, two of woollens, and three of hardware. The *Shonga* had 28 cases of cottons. The *Elele* had thirty cases of provisions, one case of caps, one of drugs, five of sugar, one of shirts and singlets, nine of cottons, and one bale of woollens.¹⁵² Most of the cottons came from Manchester, where the most important suppliers of the German firms were S. Albrecht & Co., M. Hertz & Co., and Highams Ltd.¹⁵³ This last was owned by John

Higham, a Liberal MP who stated in the House of Commons debate on 8 November 1916, that he had “sold my goods to British houses for Nigeria, to French houses for Nigeria, and to German houses [specifically Gaiser] for Nigeria ...”. He went out of his way to stress that Gaiser had always behaved fairly and honourably and had never repudiated a contract in forty years, though, like the other Manchester firms, he had to send his cottons to Grimsby or Hull for shipment by Woermann from Hamburg. That the rate for this was the same as for shipments from Liverpool gave rise to suspicions that the German shipper favoured German firms. However, Miller Bros. told Lugard that Elder Dempster could take up to eleven weeks to ship to Bonny, causing deterioration in goods such as tobacco and rice, while Woermann Linie could ship in three weeks. Lugard felt that, “It can hardly be argued that Messrs Elder Dempster are supporting British interests, and that the Merchants are favouring German interests in such circumstances as these”.¹⁵⁴

Other imports included hardware such as tools and that ubiquitous mark of status in West Africa, metal roofs. Salt came from Lancashire, tobacco and cigarettes from America. Kola nuts, the most visible sign of Nigerian hospitality, came mainly from the Gold Coast, which exported £144,705 worth in 1913.¹⁵⁵ This trade was almost entirely in African hands, and the Niger Company made special arrangements for it at Burutu. It was rapidly expanding; imports rose from 774 long tons in 1910 to 4069 long tons in 1912.¹⁵⁶ Kerosene, grain and flour, earthenware and glassware were also significant imports. Long-barrelled flintlock “Dane guns”, still fired at ceremonies in Nigeria, continued to be imported along with black powder, but this was a declining trade. Motor cars and bicycles from America and Great Britain was obviously a much newer commerce. At the Lagos end it was largely handled by the indigenous firm W.A. Dawodu. In some goods German firms were felt to have an advantage.¹⁵⁷ The most important were “trade spirits”, the evil effects of which on allegedly susceptible native population humanitarians loudly and frequently deplored, while the C.O. judged that “the natives of Nigeria are an exceptionally sober race”.¹⁵⁸ In 1913, about £368,968 worth of German and Dutch gin went to Nigeria, compared with £9570 from Great Britain. Germany also exported about £16,640 worth of “rum” which was really tinted and flavoured gin. The British figure was £928. The Germans had a “great pull ... in their production of cheap bottles and cases”.¹⁵⁹ While spirits constituted a bit more than 5% of Nigerian imports, duties of over 300% meant that they provided

about two thirds of customs revenue.¹⁶⁰ Fish was another major import from Germany, amounting to £111,360, but this came ultimately from Norway. Germany itself was a nett importer of fish.¹⁶¹

During the war the Germans would be accused of “unfair” competition and of pandering to recently prosperous West Africans’ taste for “cheap and nasty” gaudy articles such as mirrors, beads, “jimcrack jewellery”, variegated cloths, and cheap perfumes.¹⁶² Of these, only the trade in beads was of any significance. It was worth £43,687. Some of these came from Saxony and Bavaria, others from Italy and Austria. It was recognized that the “bead business is a very complicated one, and ... there is little prospect of the trade, which is of infinite variety, being taken up in the United Kingdom”.¹⁶³ German firms may indeed have been more responsive to changing African demand, as, on the produce-buying side they were more cognizant of the need to grant long-term credits.¹⁶⁴ During the war African traders would recall that they “generally received better treatment at the hands of the German merchants than from English merchants”.¹⁶⁵ This attitude on the part of the Lagos traders would reduce Lugard to near apoplexy in his imprecations against “these pestilential seditious people”,¹⁶⁶ but, as the Colonial Office acknowledged, talk about the German firms “having ‘abused’ their privileges is meaningless. They did just what the British firms did: bought as cheap as they could, and sold in the best market, and nobody dreamt of finding fault with them for it”.¹⁶⁷ Writing from the viewpoint of Onitsha, Stuart Young saw Germany in terms of markets for produce rather than of competition for trade.¹⁶⁸ Even wartime critics had to accept that the case for confiscation of German property in West Africa would have to be based “on the general ground that the behaviour of the Germans in this war has put them outside the pale to such an extent that no treatment is too bad for them”, rather than on any misconduct by their firms in Nigeria.¹⁶⁹

NOTES

1. K.E. Hunt, “Raw Materials”, in J.H. van Stuyvenberg, *Margarine, An Economic, Social and Scientific History 1869–1969*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1969, p. 44.
2. Paper read by R.E. Dennett, Nigerian Forests Department, at the Royal Colonial Institute 27 Oct. 1914, CO554/29/37110, Colonial Office archives, The National Archives (TNA), Kew, England.

3. Katherine Snodgrass, *Copra and Coconut Oil*, Fats and Oils Studies no. 2, Food Research Institute, Stanford University, April 1928; Susan Martin, "Slaves, Igbo Women and Palm Oil in the Nineteenth Century", in Robin Law, ed., *From Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce: The Commercial Transition in Nineteenth Century West Africa*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995. The composition of Sunlight soap was 41.9% coconut or kernel oil, 24.8% tallow, 23.8% cottonseed oil, and 9.5% resin. Charles Wilson, *The History of Unilever, A Study in Economic Growth and Social Change*, London, Cassell, 1954, vol. 2, p. 31.
4. The chemistry of oils and fats is explained in Appendix A.
5. German peacetime home production of seeds and nuts was 40,000 tons, while 1,572,000 tons were imported. 43 War Trade Advisory Committee (W.T.A.C.) 27 July 1916, CO323/731/46819; Alan Kramer, "Blockade and Economic Warfare", in Jay Winter, ed., *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 2, *The State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 473–74. Germany and Austria-Hungary supplied about 80% of British sugar. Sir Arthur Salter, *Allied Shipping Control, An Experiment in International Administration*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921, p. 90.
6. The account of the Nigerian export trade is mainly based on Allister Macmillan, ed., *The Red Book of West Africa: Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial Facts, Figures, & Resources*, London, Frank Cass, 1968 (1920); Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, Longman, 1979; R.J. Gavin & Wale Oyemakinde, "Economic Development in Nigeria since 1900", in Obaro Ikeme, ed., *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria), 1980, pp. 484–517; A.G. Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, London, Longman, 1975; Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa: A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company 1707–1931*, London, Heinemann, 1974; Colin Newbury, "Trade and Technology in West Africa: The Case of the Niger Company 1900–1920", *Journal of African History (JAH)* 19 (1978), pp. 551–75; and Martin Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Change in West Africa: The Palm Oil Trade in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997. *The Red Book* is a particularly convenient source of statistical information. Unless otherwise stated, figures in the rest of this book are taken from or derived from it.
7. This is well covered in Sara Berry, *Cocoa, Custom and Socio-economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975.
8. Jan Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports, Origins and Early Development*, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1978.

9. Bill Freund, *Capital and Labour in the Nigerian Tin Mines*, London, Longman, 1981. As the plateau was in Bauchi Province, it was initially known as the Bauchi Plateau. It is now known from its major town as the Jos Plateau.
10. E.D. Morel memo, "Draft Report of the West African Lands Committee, Appendix D", pp. 156–65, printed copy in CO879/117/9.
11. Department of Overseas Trade to C.O. 16 March 1925 covering report on West Africa. CO554/67/12302.
12. A.J. Harding (Niger Department, Colonial Office) minute of interview between G.V. Fiddes (Assistant Under Secretary, Crown Colonies Division, C.O.) and Greenhalgh of Lever Bros. 29 Jan. 1914. This provoked a flurry of congratulatory minutes culminating in that of Lewis Harcourt, the Colonial Secretary (2. Feb.): "Yes. Sir G. Fiddes was at his best". CO583/27/3447.
13. F.G. Butler (East Africa Department) min. 12 Jan. 1917, CO323/726/61941. The only conspicuous dissenter from this consensus was W.D. Ellis, the head of the West Africa and Mediterranean Department. He considered it a mistake to have allowed "the natives to assert [?] an unqualified title to the land on which they squat...", as this "perpetuates the wasteful and dangerous methods of native agriculture", and "prevents the native raising himself in the scale of civilization by the discipline of steady & continuous labour". Min. 5 Jan. 1917, *ibid.*
14. Extract from speech by Sir Hugh Clifford (Governor-General, Nigeria) to the Legislative Council, 6 Feb. 1925, CO554/67/51200. Clifford had previously been Governor of the Gold Coast and was summarizing his experience over the past decade.
15. Morel memo in W.A. Lands Cttee draft report, April 1917, p. 164, CO879/117/9.
16. W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 2, *Problems of Economic Policy 1918–1939*, part 2, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1942, pp. 194–95, quotation at p. 194.
17. Hunt "Raw materials", p. 52. West Africa's maintenance of its market share was particularly impressive given the enormous expansion of American soya bean exports after the Second World War, Fig. 2.1, *ibid.*, p. 42. The argument set out in this paragraph largely follows that in Hopkins, *Economic History*, pp. 211–16.
18. The account of palm oil and palm kernel production is largely based on Susan M. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest; and Economic History of the Ngwa Region, South-Eastern Nigeria 1800–1980*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988 (statistic at p. 32); and on Eno J. Usoro, *The Nigerian Oil Palm Industry, Government Policy and Export production, 1906–1965*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1974. Both of

these focus on the Eastern Nigerian “palm belt”, and Usoro is more valuable for the later period of his study. While there are many studies of the palm oil trade in the nineteenth century, the early twentieth century has been less thoroughly researched, and the west is seldom considered in detail.

19. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, p. 33. This inferior oil is often called “hard”. More usually “hard” oils are those such as palm kernel oil or coconut oil which are solid in temperate climates. These are also called vegetable fats. By this standard all palm oil is “soft” regardless of the process used in its production. When grading was introduced in 1940, soft oil had a free fatty acid percentage between 6 and 10% and was suitable for household soaps; the better grades of semi-hard oil (19–40% FFA) might be mixed with soft oil for kitchen soap, while the inferior grades, along with hard oil (>40% FFA) were used for wagon greases and tin-plating. Hancock, *Problems of Economic Policy 1918–1939*, part 2, p. 244.
20. Harding memorandum 20 Sept. 1924, citing the conclusion of a 1913 committee, CO554/63/13504.
21. Thomas Burrowes, Nigerian Comptroller of Customs, Report on Edible and Oil Nuts 31 July 1915, CO554/24/40238.
22. Ibid.
23. Berry, *Cocoa*, p. 29.
24. C.A. Birtwistle, Nigerian Commercial Intelligence Officer, report on apparent shortage of kernels in the Opobo District 18 Jan. 1913, CO554/24/40238. In 1914, the “lagoon” trade of produce brought by canoe provided 25,000 of the 63,000 tons of kernels, but 9000 tons of the 13,000 tons of oil. Sir Frederick Lugard (Governor-General of Nigeria) despatch 853, 24 Sept. 1915, with report by Burrowes, CO554/24/44266.
25. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, Table 6, p. 150.
26. Information on Nigerian imports is patchy compared to that on exports. For the list of items in local markets I have relied on a 1905 report by Birtwistle on the Cross River area of eastern Nigeria summarized in Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, p. 29, and on the report of Africanus Coker at Imo River, also in eastern Nigeria, to the major British firm John Holt, 28 March 1921, printed in P.N. Davies, *Trading in West Africa 1840–1920*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1976, p. 159. Basing herself on reports of 1911, 1915, and 1916, Martin (*Palm Oil & Protest*, p. 50) gives a wider range of items, but the major ones in local markets were clearly those listed.
27. A.G. Boyle (Acting Governor) desp. conf. 20 Dec. 1918, CO554/37/5409.
28. Coker to Holt 28 March 1921, in Davies, *Trading in West Africa*, p. 159.

29. Burrowes, "Trade and Barter" in "Trade Index" prepared for the Board of Trade, extracted by Harding 2 Dec. 1918, CO583/70/57262.
30. For a brief summary of a complicated topic, Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, pp. 49–50, 97–98. Other local currencies included brass rods in Calabar and Cross River, Maria Theresa dollars in Borno, cowries for small transactions in Lagos, and Cheethams and wires in some parts of the Igbo interior. Burrowes "Trade & Barter", CO583/70/57262.
31. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, p. 138; Burrowes, Report on Edible Nuts 31 July 1915 (quotation), Lugard desp. 853, 24 Sept. 1915 with further report by Burrowes, CO554/24/40238,44256.
32. Burrowes memo 31 July 1915, CO554/24/40238.
33. Quoted in Newbury, "Trade and Technology", p. 571.
34. *Palm Oil and Protest*, p. 97.
35. Lugard desp. 853, 24 Sept. 1915 with report by Burrowes, CO554/24/44256.
36. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, p. 92.
37. Lugard desp. 231, 25 March 1916, CO583/45/18317.
38. I owe this image to Gavin & Oyemakinde, "Economic Development in Nigeria", p. 500: "Each major station became a sort of inland port like Lagos in miniature." "Beach" is still the term for the area round a railway station even in the inland areas of Nigeria.
39. Harding min. 27 Jan. 1920, CO583/80/73600.
40. Lugard desp. Conf. A 25 Sept. 1917, CO583/59/56467.
41. Lugard desp. 853, 24 Sept. 1915 with Burrowes report, CO554/24/44256.
42. For the location of European firms in Nigeria, I have relied on a memorandum "Local Stations of European Firms" drawn up by T.F. Burrowes in early November 1916 (CO583/48/41329). This does not include the German firms, for which I have used the "First Schedule, Immovable Property vested in the Receiver under section 3(2)", copy in CO583/48/41329. As this is concerned only with real property it does not list all the German firms doing business in Nigeria. For a fuller list there is a memorandum by the Governor-General, Sir F.D. Lugard of May 1915 summarized in Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 57, n. 4. Burrowes's list is defective in regard to non-railway sites in towns such as Maiduguri, the capital of Borno in the extreme northeast. Indian firms such as Chanrai (already in Nigeria, CO583/18/22646) are not included, and some European firms, such as British-American Tobacco, which *The Red Book* says were established before 1916, also do not appear. Nevertheless, when combined with the material in *The Red Book*, these lists give us a remarkably detailed and precise picture of business in Nigeria between 1913 and 1920.

43. In 1907, the minimum draught had been 9' and the maximum 11'. By 1914, this had been improved to 13'6" and 19'0", Lagos Harbour Works half yearly report to 31 Dec. 1914, CO583/40/14379; Newbury, "Trade and Technology", p. 571.
44. The Yorubas have a very keen sense of their history, which has been studied with great depth and sophistication. The classic text is Rev. Samuel Johnson, *The History of the Yorubas from the Earliest Times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate*, Lagos, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976 (1921). More modern treatments include Robert S. Smith, *Kingdoms of the Yoruba*, London, James Currey, 1988 (1969); and S.A. Akintoye, *Revolution and Power Politics in Yorubaland 1840-1893*, London, Longman, 1971.
45. The title may have been personal to him. P.D. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, p. 123.
46. Raymond Leslie Buell, *The Native Problem in Africa*, London, Frank Cass, 1965 (Harvard, 1928), vol. 1, p. 662.
47. Lugard desp. 120, 6 March 1913, covering copy of Buchanan Smith (Assistant Commissioner of Lands) report 5 Dec. 1912 (testimony of 9 Nov. 1912), CO520/123/9943.
48. Harding min. 11 Jan. 1921, CO583/94/63713.
49. In March 1916, Gaiser as an enemy estate had a balance of almost £82,000 while Witt und Büsch had over £46,000. The only other German firms with balances over ten thousand pounds were Bey & Zimmer at over £39,000, the Deutsche Kamerun Gesellschaft at over £37,000, and the German West Africa Trading Company at almost £13,500. In the first six months of 1914 Gaiser had exported 32% of Lagos kernels, 42% of Lagos oil, and 21% of Lagos cocoa. Ayodeji Olukoju, *The "Liverpool" of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900-1950*, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, 2004, p. 50.
50. Gold Coast kernel exports were in the order of £100,000 to Germany, £50,000 to Great Britain, and £10,000 to France. A.R. Slater (Acting Governor, Gold Coast) desp. 702, 27 Aug. 1915, CO554/24/42662. The volume was about 10,000 tons. Sierra Leone exported almost 50,000 tons in 1913. J.E.W. Flood (West Africa and Mediterranean Department) memo. 30 Nov. 1915, CO554/29/60068.
51. Bradley D. Naranch, "Between Cosmopolitanism and German Colonialism: Nineteenth-Century Hanseatic Networks in Emerging Tropical Markets", in Andreas Gestrich & Magrit Schulte Beerbühl, eds., *Cosmopolitan Networks in Commerce and Society 1660-1914*, London, German Historical Institute, 2011, pp. 121-22. Burrowes report on Edible Nuts 31 July 1915 (quotation), CO554/24/40238.
52. *Red Book*, p. 73.

53. Details of these firms come from Pedler, *Lion and Unicorn in Africa*, and from *The Red Book*. Miller's Lagos trademark is shown in Pedler, plate 21(xii).
54. For the Lagos élite, P.D. Cole, "Lagos Society in the Nineteenth Century", in A.B. Aderibigbe, ed., *Lagos: The Development of an African City*, London, Longman Nigeria, 1975, pp. 27-57; Kristin Mann, "Owners, Slaves and the Struggle for Labour at Lagos", in Law, ed., *Slave Trade to 'Legitimate' Commerce*, pp. 144-71; and Lynn, *Commerce and Economic Trade*, p. 143, 156.
55. Boyle to Lugard, 12 May 1913, CO520/130/19439.
56. In addition to the *Red Book*, fuller details of Thomas's career are to be found in Anthony G. Hopkins, "Peter Thomas (1873-1947) un commerçant nigérian à l'épreuve d'une économie coloniale en crise", Charles-André Julien, et al., eds., *Les Africains*, Paris, Editions J.A., 1977, vol. 9, pp. 297-329. A somewhat different English version of this is A.G. Hopkins, "Peter Thomas, 1873-1947: A Nigerian Merchant in a Colonial Economy", unpublished, n.d. I am grateful to Professor Hopkins for providing me with a copy of this paper.
57. Olukaju, "*Liverpool*" of West Africa, pp. 14, 61.
58. Berry, *Cocoa, Custom, and Socio-economic Change*, p. 214.
59. In addition to the account of Doherty in the *Red Book*, Hopkins, *Economic History*, p. 240.
60. Hopkins, "Peter Thomas", p. 323.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 320.
62. Johnson, *History of the Yorubas*, p. vii. Johnson was not in fact able to transcend ethnic differences. His history is written from a strongly Oyo/Ibadan point of view.
63. *Ibid.*, pp. 641, xxi-xxii.
64. This account is taken from Dr. Johnson's Preface. The manuscript was forwarded to England in the *Appam*, which was captured by the German raider *Moewe* in January 1916 and taken to America. It was not finally delivered to the printers until 1918, and not published until 1921. *Ibid.*, pp. ix-x. A good scholarly edition is badly needed of a work which may justly be compared with those of Herodotos, Ssu-ma Ch'ien, and Bede.
65. *Red Book of West Africa*, p. 133. In October 1913, Johnson's name headed the signatories of a petition against the conviction of a Customs clerk for stealing eight bottles of gin. The petition claimed that the Commissioner of Police had tampered with a witness. Boyle considered this and other statements scandalous, libellous, and unproved. Boyle min. 28 Oct. 1913, CO520/128/40435. Johnson claimed that he had not read the petition carefully, and expressed contrition, but was made to resign from the Legislative Council. Lugard desp. conf. 31 Dec. 1913, CO583/7/2247.

66. *History of the Yorubas*, pp. 539–40.
67. Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought, Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London, Faber & Faber, 1968, p. 382.
68. Coker to John Holt 28 March 1921, in Davies, *Trading in West Africa*, pp. 171–72.
69. Philip Curtin, “Medical Knowledge and Urban Planning in Tropical Africa”, *AHR* 90 (1985), pp. 594–613; John W. Cell, “Anglo-Indian Medical Theory and the Origins of Segregation in West Africa”, *AHR* 91 (1986), pp. 307–35.
70. Lugard desp. 21 April 1916, CO583/46/22346. The extension of residential segregation was resisted by the merchants who “insisted on their white employees living over their business premises and ... nothing would alter this attitude on their part”. Flood memo n.d., [Aug. 1920], CO583/87/29824.
71. D.M. Cameron Blair, Senior Sanitary Officer, memo 1 Feb. 1916 (1st quotation) *ibid.*; Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 66 (2nd quotation).
72. J.F.A. Ajayi, *Christian Missions in Nigeria 1841–1891: The Making of a New Elite*, Harlow, Essex, Longman, 1981 (1965), pp. 233–73; E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842–1914*, London, Longman, 1966, pp. 207–36.
73. Anti-slavery and Aborigines Protection Society to C.O. 8 July 1913 (CO583/8/23740), Lugard desp. 224, 7 May 1913 covering memorial by Lumpkin (quotation). The C.O. sympathized with some of Lumpkin’s complaints, but did not intervene. A. Fiddian (C.O, dealing with tropical medical matters) min. 5 June 1913, CO520/124/17941, 18832.
74. Newbury, “Trade and Technology”, pp. 555–56.
75. Lugard to Lady (Flora) Lugard (wife) (carbon of typed transcript) 19 April 1916 (1st quotation), MSS Lugard 4/5, Lugard papers (LP), Rhodes House (Bodleian Library), Oxford; Harding min. 15 Jan. 1920 (2nd quotation), CO583/96/2064.
76. Lugard desp. Conf. 9 May 1913, CO583/3/16460.
77. G.O. Olusanya, “Henry Carr and Herbert Macaulay: A Study in Conflict of Principles and Personalities”, in Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri, & Jide Osuntokun, eds., *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja, Lagos State, Lantern Books, 1987, p. 287. For Carr’s origins, Cole, *Traditional & Modern Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975, pp. 105–6, for Ajasa’s, *ibid.*, p. 250, no. 37.
78. Margery Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority 1898–1945*, London, Collins, 1960, pp. 438, 442–44.

79. Charles Strachey (head, Nigeria Department) min. 10 Aug. 1915, CO583/34/35792.
80. Material on the Water Rate agitation including the police report on the 1909 meeting is in Lugard's despatch of 17 Aug. 1914 forwarding the petition to the Colonial Office, CO583/17/31603, and in Boyle's desp. Conf. A, 21 July covering Detective Superintendent Shyllon's report of the meeting of 17 July 1915, CO583/34/38069. For Randle's roles in 1908 and in 1892, P.D. Cole, "Lagos Society", p. 52. For the cultural nationalist aspect of the agitation, Ayandele, *Missionary Impact*, pp. 278–79. See also the discussion in Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, pp. 98–101. Cole terms Balogun as "easily the wealthiest indigene of Lagos" (p. 101), but it is not clear whether he had achieved that position by 1908. He does not appear in the *Red Book*. "Balogun" (War Chief) is in fact a title, but in Alli's case is usually treated as if it were a personal name.
81. Buchanan Smith report 5 Dec. 1912, CO520/123. Oluwòle (spelled "Oluwale" in the transcripts) was much criticized in Lagos for his subservience to the British. Ayandele *Missionary Impact*, pp. 230–35.
82. For the land question, T.O. Elias, *Nigerian Land Law*, London, Sweet & Maxwell, 1971, pp. 7–12; Cole, *Modern & Traditional Elites*, pp. 84–97.
83. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, p. 205.
84. *Ibid.*, p. 111 (1st quotation), Boyle to Lugard 12 May 1915, CO520/130/19439 (2nd and 3rd quotations).
85. James S. Coleman, *Nigeria, Background to Nationalism*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1965, p. 197.
86. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, pp. 112–13. Cole has used Macaulay's papers and talked with his son Oged. His account favours Macaulay and accuses Irving of "pursuing a private vendetta..." (p. 112). In connection with a case in 1929, he describes him as "obsessed with the idea of persecuting the black intelligentsia of Lagos" (p. 230, n. 117). Irving is a person of some importance in this book. He was a partner in Ajasa's law firm and involved in editing the *Nigerian Pioneer*, Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 66). He had close links with Pearse and with the German merchant Charles Ungebauer (below, p. 212). He would defend the editor James Bright Davies in his first trial for seditious libel in February 1916 (*ibid.*, p. 82 and below, pp. 121–22). Unfortunately Cole does not give the date of Eleko's humiliation. There is nothing on it in the C.O. files.
87. Boyle desp., conf. 10 Aug. 1915, CO583/25/40131.
88. H.O. Danmole, "The Crisis of the Lagos Muslim Community 1915–1947", in Adefuyi, Agiri, & Osuntokun, eds., *Peoples of Lagos State*, pp. 290–305. For the Shitta Bey mosque, G.O. Gbadamosi,

- "Patterns and Developments in Lagos Religious History", in Aderibigbe, ed., *Lagos*, 180–81. Accounts of the split in the Lagos Muslim community are vague about chronology. Most, including this one, are based on Buell, *Native Problem in Africa*, vol. 1, pp. 665–66. For the Giwas, statement by Giwa Sule Osisa in Buchanan Smith report 5 Dec. 1912, CO520/123/9943.
89. Gavin & Oyemakinde, "Economic Development in Nigeria", p. 500.
 90. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, Table 7, p. 152.
 91. A.E. Afigbo, "Igbo Land Under Colonial Rule", in Id., *Ropes of Sand (Studies in Igbo History and Culture)*, Nsukka, University of Nigeria Nsukka Press, 1981, pp. 283–353.
 92. O.T. Faulkner (Director of Agriculture, Ibadan) memo, "Co-operation in Nigeria: Palm Oil Factories", 22 Sept. 1925, CO583/136/48391.
 93. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, p. 47.
 94. Strachey memo. 14 Dec. 1915, CO554/29/58144.
 95. According to the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, West Africa as a whole exported 109 thousand tons of palm oil in 1913, of which 72 thousand went to Liverpool, 17 thousand to Marseilles, and 20 thousand to Hamburg. To C.O. 27 Nov. 1916, CO554/30/57169. These figures cannot be exactly correlated with those in *The Red Book*, which show almost ten thousand tons going to Germany, and almost seventy thousand to Great Britain, from Nigeria, leaving only slightly over two thousand tons for exports to other countries such as France.
 96. CO memo, misc. 339, 18 June (revised 11 Nov.) 1918, "Control of Oleaginous Produce After the War", CO554/40/60715.
 97. Arthur Steel-Maitland (Parliamentary Under Secretary, C.O.) to Alfred Bigland (Ministry of Munitions) 1 March 1916, CO323/727/6672.
 98. Chinua Achebe, "Onitsha, Gift of the Niger", in Id., *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, London, 1975, pp. 90–92, quotations at pp. 91–92.
 99. Stuart-Young published two lightly fictionalized volumes covering this period of his life, *The Coaster at Home, Being the Autobiography of Jack O'Dazi, Palm Oil Ruffian and Trader Man of the River Niger*, London, Arthur H. Stockwell, 1916; and *The Iniquitous Coaster*, London, Arthur H. Stockwell, 1917. There is a recent biography, Stephanie Newell, *The Forger's Tale: The Search for Odeziaku*, Athens, OH, Ohio University Press, 2006, which says little about his trading activities. For his own evaluation of his literary merit, *Coaster at Home*, p. 84.
 100. This dated from 7 Nov. 1915 and was from F.T.H. Behn, a Liverpool firm which sent goods to Burutu by Elder Dempster for forwarding by the Niger Company. Customs at Burutu wanted freight and insurance charges specified for each line, which Behn felt unable to do. It sent this one to the C.O. as representative of the 21 invoices which it had for Stuart-Young. Behn to C.O. 7 Jan. 1916, CO583/54/1526.

101. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey, An Autobiography*, London, C. Hurst, 1970, p. 235.
102. Newell, *Forger's Tale*, pp. 21–32.
103. *Coaster at Home*, pp. 168–69.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
105. There is an account of her career in Felicia Ekejiuba, “Omu Okwe, The Merchant Queen of Ossamari, A Biographical Sketch”, *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria (J.H.S.N.)* 3/4 (1967), pp. 633–46. This is partially dependent on Stuart-Young, and occasionally careless on points of detail.
106. According to Stuart-Young, the Niger Company as first comer claimed a two-thirds share. John Holt came in and claimed a half. After ten years “Matan” (Stuart-Young’s name for G.W. Christian) came in claiming a share. O’Dazi entered threatening to fight them all. After a war lasting two years he was allowed to stay. However the Niger Company still claimed two-thirds, and Thomas Welsh also came in. O’Dazi tried to get an agreement on three-eighths for the Niger Company, one quarter for John Holt, and the rest to be divided between the small firms. As Holt still claimed a half and Welsh a fifth, no agreement was possible. *Coaster at Home*, pp. 91–92. Ekejiuba (“Omu Okwe” p. 638) lists the Niger Company, John Holt, the African Association, Miller Brothers, G.W. Matter (her name for Christian), and Jack Odoziaku as the firms in Onitsha, but Stuart-Young’s list is confirmed by Burrowes. For the lack of Germans in Onitsha, *Coaster at Home*, p. 191, from an article originally written in 1913.
107. Burrowes min. 7 Jan. 1919 (flimsy), CO583/73/3284. Pagenstecher’s agent, Herr Rahm, was Swiss. He would remain in Nigeria after the Germans were deported (see below, p. 75, n. 72).
108. Hancock, *Problems of Economic Policy 1918–1939*, part 2, p. 255.
109. Ralph A. Austen & Dennis D. Cordell, “Trade, Transportation, and Expanding Economic Networks: Saharan Caravan Commerce in the Era of European Expansion, 1500–1900”, in Alusine Jalloh & Toyin Falola, eds., *Black Business and Economic Power*, Rochester, NY, University of Rochester Press, 2002, Table 7, p. 100.
110. Sarah A. Stein, *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2010. I am grateful to Professor Gervase Clarence Smith for having drawn my attention to this work. Hancock, *Problems of Economic Policy*, part 2, pp. 216–17. See also below, p. 65.
111. Report by W.F. Gowers (Resident, Kano) 19 June 1914, CO583/16/28165.
112. Geoffrey Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals, British Trading Companies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, Table 3.1, p. 54. Jones has figures for eighteen companies, the largest was Jardine Matheson with capital of £2,500,000.

113. Newbury, "Trade and Technology", pp. 570, 575.
114. Ken Swindell, "The Commercial Development of the North: Company and Government Relations, 1900–1906", paper delivered at the International Conference on the Sokoto Caliphate and Europeans 1890–1906, Usuman Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, February 1993.
115. *Red Book*, p. 90.
116. The failure of cotton in the North is a major theme in Hogendorn, *Ground Nut Exports*.
117. Min. 9 April 1913, CO583/2/1020.
118. In 1913, Great Britain had taken 9338 tons valued at £77,693; Germany 9432, at £93,668. France took 522 tons worth £3305. D.L.H. Baynes (Niger Dep't, C.O.) memo, 9 Oct. 1914, CO583/27/38893.
119. Additional details from Hogerndorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports*, pp. 59–60, 79–80.
120. Mächtig (Niger Dep't) min. 27 Dec. 1913, CO583/6/44565. As it is often claimed that Elder Dempster would "naturally play into the hands of the big firms..." (Flood min. 12 Feb. 1917, CO554/30/35413) it is worth noting that in this case the small firms agreed with Elder Dempster that it should have complete control, while the big firms wanted an arrangement whereby they would share control with the shipper.
121. Earl of Scarbrough (Chairman, Niger Company) papers (SP), MSS Afr s. 93, Rhodes House, Oxford.
122. Niger Co. to Agent, Upper Igarra (flimsy) 18 Jan. 1915: "unquestionably, competition notwithstanding, altogether unnecessarily high prices were paid for produce for at least two years prior to the War", SP, MSS Afr s. 99.
123. Gerald K. Helleiner tried to develop an Index of Real Producer Incomes for both palm oil and palm kernels for the period 1911–1964. These peak for each in 1913 at 262.9 for oil and 276.0 for kernels. The highest subsequent figures are 242.4 for oil in 1953 and 189.1 for kernels in 1954. *Peasant Agriculture and Economic Growth in Nigeria*, Homewood, Illinois, Richard D. Irwin, 1966, Table II—B2, B3. His base year is 1948. It is not clear how far he may have taken into account shifts in the importance of items for such a long period. For the period to 1939 his producer prices are in fact the average of monthly averages of Lagos prices, with no attempt to ascertain what might actually have been paid to village producers. Martin, with a 1913 index at 100, has kernels only twice going over 30 between 1921–1948, and oil never reaching 40 over the same period. However, her figures may not be independent of Helleiner's. *Palm Oil and Protest*, Table 4, p. 147.
124. Blue Book Report for 1915, CO583/55/6195.

125. SP, MSS Afr s. 93.
126. To Scarbrough 29 June 1914, *ibid.*
127. Draft scheme of 14 May 1914, SP, MSS Afr s. 93.
128. Pedler, *Lion and Unicorn*, p. 171.
129. SP, MSS Afr s. 93.
130. Harry Cotterell (Chairman, African Association) to Scarbrough 15 June 1914, *ibid.*
131. Scarbrough to Miller 6 July, Miller to Scarbrough 7 and 9 July: "We now appear to have come to a dead block"; Control Committee decision 16 July 1914, *ibid.*
132. Published accounts of the shipping question include: P.N. Davies, *The Trade Makers, Elder Dempster and West Africa 1852-1972*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1973; Ayodeji Olukoju, "Elder Dempster and the Shipping Trade of Nigeria", *JAH* 33 (1992), pp. 255-71; and Pedler, *Lion and Unicorn*, pp. 258-61.
133. Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports*, p. 49
134. Flood memo, "Shipping Lines" 11 Aug. 1916, CO323/725/40053.
135. These figures are derived from Flood's memo of 11 Aug. 1916, from an anonymous undated memo on "Nigeria" in the same file CO323/725/40053, and from *Red Book*, p. 47. All of the British and German ships were steamers.
136. Flood min. 21 Jan. 1917, CO554/36/3635.
137. Draft circular despatch to West African Governors n.d. [ca. 15 Aug. 1916] (quotation), CO323/725/40053. The rate to West Africa was 50/- a ton, to Bombay it was 20/6, and to Singapore it was 32/6 or 40/-. In all cases there was a deferred rebate of 10%. J.A. Hutton (British Cotton Growing Association) to C.O. 11 Aug., Ellis min. 18 Aug. 1915, CO554/29/37683.
138. The Dutch had an important entrepôt trade. Before the outbreak of hostilities in 1914 nine German and five Elder Dempster steamers had called at Rotterdam for a West Africa trade estimated at about 56,000 tons a month. Much of the spirit exported to West Africa went through Rotterdam. Ernest B. Maxse (Consul General, Rotterdam) to F.O. 12 Dec. 1915, In 1914, the Netherlands exported 31,653 hectolitres of 50% spirits of which 15,949 went to West Africa (two thirds to British West Africa). Elder Dempster and Woermann Linie had roughly equal shares. Contrary to the general belief, the spirits were made in the Netherlands from imported grain or molasses. No German or Austrian ingredients were used. Maxse to F.O. no. 448 (copy) 20 April 1915, CO554/26/3038,20720.
139. Report of the British Government Committee on Edible Nuts and Seeds, April 1916, Command 8247, copy in CO554/131/20957.

140. Baynes min. 16 Nov. 1914. His superiors broadly agreed, but felt that shortly after the outbreak of the war was not the time to try to break the monopoly. Fiddes min. 21 Nov., CO583/19/44171.
141. The best account of the international trade in vegetable oils is Wilson, *History of Unilever*. The report of the Edible Nuts Committee is also valuable. For copra, Snodgrass, *Copra and Coconut Oil*, is indispensable.
142. Flood min. 14 June 1916, CO554/32/14885.
143. Sydney B. Redecker (U.S. Vice Consul, Medan, Sumatra) 8 Aug. 1924 (copy), CO554/67/24079.
144. Flood min. 29 Nov. 1916, CO554/30/57169.
145. Burrowes memo. 31 July 1915, CO554/24/40238.
146. Van Den Bergh to Herbert Samuel (President, Local Government Board) 23 Dec. 1914, CO583/29/52079.
147. The advantages of shipping kernels rather than processing the oil and shipping it from West Africa are forcefully set out by Pedler, *Lion and Unicorn*, p. 178.
148. Sir Alban Young (Governor, Straits Settlements) desp. 306, 15 Aug. covering report from Penang, 14 July 1916, CO/273/442/44045.
149. For the margarine trade, see below, pp. 100–1, 148–52.
150. Memo, “Nigeria” n.d. (Aug. 1916), CO323/725/40053. As these figures suggest, there was little commercial contact between Nigeria and the United States. There was no direct trade and no American consular representation. This would cause problems when Nigeria began to export hides and skins to the United States during the war. Lugard tel. 14 Jan., Harding min. 17 Jan. 1916, CO583/44/2242.
151. Birtwistle min. 13 June 1914, CO583/17/29573.
152. Lugard desp. 470. 10 June 1916 enclosing copies of correspondence between Burrowes and Elder Dempster, CO583/47/31087. This direct evidence is difficult to reconcile with Birtwistle’s assertion that the populations back of Opobo had few wants other than gin and tobacco, and did not buy cottons and European goods to the same extent as those in the west. Birtwistle memo. 18 Jan. 1913, CO554/24/4038. Martin also notes the much wider range of imports to be found in local markets by 1911–1916, *Palm Oil and Protest*, p. 50.
153. Higham to Harcourt 1 Mar. 1915, CO583/43/10149.
154. *House of Commons (HC) Debates*, 5 series, vol. 87, cols. 298 (quotation), 302; Burrowes Report on Edible Nuts 31 July 1915, CO554/24/40238; Lugard desp. 19 June 1913. Miller Bros. were not disinterested, as they were competing with Elder Dempster for coastal shipping services which Lugard intended to privatize. CO583/3/21939.

155. *Red Book*, p. 161; Newbury "Trade and Technology", p. 568; Slater desp. 853, 27 Aug. 1915, CO554/24/44256.
156. Paul Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola: The Hausa Kola Trade 1700-1900*, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980, Appendix, Table 1, p. 151.
157. The information in this section comes mainly from a letter of 11 Sept. 1914 from the Liverpool firm of Taylor and Co. to R.E. Dennett which he passed on to the Colonial Office (CO583/26/34701), and from a report by Birtwistle of 25 Sept. forwarded in Lugard's despatch no. 971 of 20 Oct. 1914, CO583/19/44174. For a different account of German trade largely based on an earlier report by Birtwistle, Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 21-25. This gravely overstates the extent of the German challenge. While the British share of Nigerian imports did drop from about 3/4 to about 2/3 between 1904 and 1913, there was no significant change in the German share in those years. By 1913, countries other than Great Britain and Germany accounted for almost 20% of Nigerian imports. Memo. "Nigeria" n.d. [Aug. 1916], CO323/725/40053.
158. Strachey min. 9 June 1915, CO583/43/27303.
159. Flood memo, "Enemy Property", 11 Aug. 1916, CO323/725/40053.
160. In 1914, the declared value of imported spirits was £353,637, which paid £923,065 in duties. Total Customs revenues were £1,493,220. Olukaju, "*Liverpool*" of West Africa, p. 61.
161. German home production of fish was 215,000 tons, imports were 361,000 tons. War Trade Advisory Committee (WTAC) 43 meeting, 27 July 1916, CO323/731/37640.
162. J. Pickering Jones (Association of West African Merchants) "The Sale of Enemy Property in Nigeria", 10 Oct. 1916 (unfair competition), CO583/53/47412; Flood memo. "Enemy Property", 18 Aug. 1916 (pandering to West African taste), CO323/725/40053.
163. Birtwistle report 25 Sept. 1914, CO583/19/44174.
164. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 22, Burrowes Report on Edible Nuts 31 July 1915, CO554/24/40288.
165. J. Arthur Hutton (Chairman, British Cotton Growing Association) to H.J. Read (Assistant Under Secretary, Crown Colonies Division) 12 Sept. 1916, CO583/53/43832.
166. Lugard to Flora Lugard 7 Nov. 1916 (typewritten flimsy copy), MSS Lugard 4, LP.
167. Strachey min. 9 March 1917, CO583/55/10736.
168. *Iniquitous Coaster*, p. 68.
169. Flood memo, "Enemy Property", 11 Aug. 1916, CO323/725/40053.



CHAPTER 3

The Impact of War

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

The war came unexpectedly to those concerned with West Africa. Earlier in 1914, the German Colonial Secretary, Wilhelm Solf, had made a highly successful tour of Nigeria, where he was received with “utmost civility”. As a “token of gratitude” Wilhelm II donated a cup for the polo championship.¹ Lugard reported its arrival in Lagos towards the end of May, but the Colonial Office declined to take up his suggestion of preparing annual reports of results which “cannot possibly interest the Kaiser...”.² It was rumoured that Sir Frederick’s leave might take him to Berlin. Fiddes noted: “A curious position will arise if he claims to govern Nigeria from the German capital & to have desps sent there.”³ At the beginning of July, the German government formally endorsed the delimitation of the southern sector of the Nigeria-Kamerun (Cameroon) border which had been carried out in 1913. Strachey hoped that this was “the last stage of negotiations extending over many years. The boundaries of Nigeria are now all delimited”.⁴ The British Colonial Secretary Lewis (Loulou) Harcourt, the head of the oldest noble lineage in England, liked to project himself as a leader of radicalism. A dogged opponent of excessive military expenditure, and of the policy of the ententes, he sought to achieve Anglo-German rapprochement by giving Berlin a greater “place in the sun”. Despite the reluctance of the Foreign Office he had negotiated with the German embassy a partition of the Portuguese empire in Africa.⁵ In the crisis which followed

the Austrian ultimatum to Serbia in July he was ready to resign if Great Britain made any commitment to France, but stayed in the Cabinet once Germany invaded Belgium.⁶ Profoundly depressed the day war was declared, the next morning he pulled out a world map and began carving up the German Empire. He would be “a very ardent war minister”.⁷ Meanwhile, letters prepared for two candidates for the Nigerian Department of Forestry informing them that they would have to do several months practical training in Germany were held up “as the time was hardly suitable...”.⁸ On a despatch from Lugard in London proposing an increase of staff in the Department of Mines, Baynes minuted on 3 August: “? Wait, not more than a month, till the crisis is over.”⁹

In Nigeria preparations for war had begun on 1 August, as two dredgers and an old Elder Dempster branch boat were positioned in the channel to Lagos to be sunk at short notice. Censorship was imposed the next day. On 3 August, the Inspector General of Police “was warned that a strict watch should be kept on the doings of German residents”. The Colonial Office cabled “Be on your guard against possible attack”. Prices of goods consumed by Europeans doubled on 4 August, and bomb-proof shelters were erected especially at government headquarters.¹⁰ Meanwhile, the nine Woermann Linie ships at Lagos quickly left for Douala without bothering with customs formalities. The Acting Comptroller “immediately called upon the Company to explain this irregular procedure ...”. Its agent, Fritz Gloede, blandly replied that “Had we known there was no danger of the ships being detained by the Government we should, of course, have complied with the regulations”.¹¹

The telegram announcing the outbreak of war was received at 2:15 a.m. on 5 August. In Lagos a proclamation gave the Executive “certain powers to provide against the export of necessities, the prices of food and the supervision of the town”. Special constables were enrolled. The German Consul in Lagos, Ferdinand Gloye, and the Vice-Consul in Warri, Albert Fritsch, were told that they would have to leave. German naval and army reservists, most of them merchant seamen on branch boats and on the German ships on the Niger and Benue, were arrested. Those in Lagos were interned in a special part of the prison while a camp was prepared for them at Moor Plantation in Ibadan. This would be run by the Superintendent of Prisons “who had experience in connexion with Concentration Camps in South Africa”. The heads of firms and their senior clerks were quickly released.¹² The official attitude was best set out in

The Nigerian Pioneer, the newspaper run by Kitoyi Ajasa, who had been asked by Lugard to set it up as an alternative to the highly critical local press.¹³ This noted the misfortune of the Germans “who cannot be in their country when war has descended upon it”, who “for many years have been among us as our good friends...” and who should be treated with “studied politeness and courtesy”.¹⁴ One of the released men was Willy Brünger, the managing director of Woermann Linie and also the Niger-Benue Transport Company. He described conditions in Lagos in a letter to his family at the end of August:

The English are already a little bit ashamed of their way of locking us up in criminals’ cells once. We tease them on every occasion. We do not go out often, but our English friends call on us fairly often and always assure us that the war ought not to make any difference to our personal relations.¹⁵

This mood did not last. As officials would note, Brünger’s public attitude was very different from that depicted in this letter. He quickly gained a reputation as a truculent troublemaker.¹⁶ He either hid or destroyed the company’s books, and got his hands on £3512/12/6 from the Bank of British West Africa, which was never traced and which the Receiver eventually concluded could not have been spent legitimately.¹⁷ Particularly inconvenient was his claim that the German boats and personnel on the Niger and Benue were protected by the Berlin Act of 1885, which guaranteed the freedom of navigation on those rivers in war and peace.¹⁸ In German Garua, Taggart, the Niger Company agent, made a similar claim. Initially this was accepted by the local commander von Crailsheim, who released him. This decision was reversed by Ebermaier, the Governor at Jaunde (Yaoundé) where the capital had moved after the outbreak of the war: “he considered the signatories were not thereby deprived of the right to take what steps they deemed necessary for the protection of their respective Colonies.”¹⁹ The British Law Officers would eventually adopt the same principle when the Foreign Office, which doubted the legality of the seizure of the German ships and crews on the Niger and Benue, submitted the question to them.²⁰ Meanwhile, Brünger was allowed to go to Warri on parole, but his behaviour there was found so “suspicious” and “unsatisfactory” that in September he was recalled to Lagos and sent to Zungeru, the capital in the north, where he would have lunch with the Lieutenant Governor.²¹

ENDING GERMAN TRADE

British policy initially was to cut off trade with enemy countries, but otherwise to allow German companies to operate in Great Britain and in British territories. The Lagos Chamber of Commerce complained that the German firms were selling off their stocks at low prices. With Lugard in England, his deputy, A.G. Boyle, had to make decisions in Nigeria. Lugard considered him a “nice fellow” who “lacks brains”.²² On 15 August, he suspended German trading pending instructions.²³ However, he was soon overruled. The Colonial Office did “not see why the Govt. should dislike the sale of goods ‘at low prices’. It ought to help to ease the situation. We were informed that prices were very high”.²⁴ Manchester firms were particularly concerned that “instructions should be wired out to the Coast to permit the German factories to be re-opened”. As Higham would later explain, the suppression of German trade was against the interests both of the colonies and of British manufacturers. Whereas Liverpool and London wanted to reduce the price paid for produce, Manchester wanted the colonies to get a good price “because *that* means more British goods mainly Lancashire manufactures sent in return”.²⁵ Above all, the suspension was contrary to the British policy of having the war interfere as little as possible with “business as usual”. This was set out in the Trading with the Enemy proclamation of 5 August and the further royal proclamation of 9 September. These made it clear that “enemy” meant “any person or body of persons of whatever nationality resident or carrying on business in the enemy country, but does not include persons of enemy nationality who are neither resident nor carrying on business in the enemy country”. An authoritative Treasury statement of late August “issued in order to promote confidence in British commercial transactions ...”, explained that there was “no objection to British firms trading with German or Austrian firms established in neutral or British territory”. If their head office was in Germany, as was the case with the West African companies, trade might continue “as long as the trade is *bona fide* with the branch, and no transaction with the head office is involved”.²⁶ Accordingly, Lagos was told on 21 September, to allow the German companies to resume trading. The merchants could neither remit to nor trade with Germany, they might not have arms, ammunitions, or explosives, had to report daily to a British officer, and were subject to a 9:00 p.m. curfew.²⁷

Momentarily, Lugard envisaged a system whereby enemy firms would be allowed to ship only to British and Allied destinations, while British firms might ship also to the U.S. to “create a new market in America to replace the German demand...”²⁸ However the policy of controlled trade did not last long. The Liverpool firms strongly opposed it. They could soon point to German practice both at Garua and at Douala, where their operations were closed down, their staff imprisoned, and their premises often looted or vandalized. R. & W. King, the major British firm at Douala, urged the Colonial Office to “treat the Germans in the same manner as they have treated the English, and prevent their trading until the war is over”.²⁹ According to Miller Bros. “the principle of allowing the enemy to trade at all in a British Colony is in our opinion unsound and there can be little doubt that it has already led to serious misconception on the part of both European and native members of the Community in West Africa”.³⁰ The firms pressed a delegation on a reluctant Colonial Office. Meeting Fiddes on 15 October, they claimed that German policy had not reciprocated; that Niger Company goods in Kamerun had been confiscated; that, as the firms in West Africa were merely agencies, their profits were likely to find their way to Germany; that they might store kernels for sale to Germany after the war; that the policy was inconsistent with that applied by British prize courts; and that it had a bad effect on the natives. Fiddes appears to have been particularly struck by the argument that it would be impossible to prevent West African branches remitting to Germany through neutral exchanges. Although only a couple of weeks before he had minuted that “It is possible to overdo this restriction of the enemy’s trade”, he now felt that the German houses should “be shut down forthwith”. The Permanent Under Secretary, Sir John Anderson entirely agreed: “as the war is to be one of exhaustion, the more we can put the screw on the better. I would shut them all down as they have done ours.” Harcourt concurred.³¹ As another high official noted, “‘German’=‘enemy’ & the plain man has no use for refinements as to enemy character depending upon commercial domicil etc.”.³² The Board of Trade endorsed the Colonial Office recommendation. German trade in Nigeria was finally suspended on 6 November 1914. The firms would be placed under a receiver. In Nigeria this was the Comptroller of Customs, T.F. Burrowes, a man whom the Colonial Office would come to consider impetuous.³³ The receivers were expected to sell off, particularly, perishable stock to meet the debts of non-enemy creditors. Payments to enemy creditors would wait until the

end of the war. Land was not to be sold. Lugard told Burrowes, "The Germans are temporarily deported but may perhaps resume by and bye".³⁴ In Lagos, Burrowes sold the stock openly, against the opposition of the European merchants, who had wanted the sales confined to themselves. He probably used A.W.U. Thomas, "the well-known Lagos auctioneer", who also travelled widely in the Eastern and Western Provinces in connection with the sales.³⁵

Lugard now wanted the German firms closed down, because he felt that the resumption of trade had created a bad impression in native minds. It appeared to show that Great Britain "had been beaten in Europe and that the Government was at an end".³⁶ Many both in Africa and in London were similarly apprehensive about the impact of the war on the thinking of indigenous populations. Those in the metropole who were interested in empire, had sought to maintain peace, as they feared that war might impede the progress of civilisation "and the negroes may be encouraged to rise on seeing the white races fighting among themselves".³⁷ In August 1914, and at all subsequent occasions throughout the war, such arguments were trumped by appeals to strategic considerations, such as the elimination of German wireless communication through Kamina in Togo and Douala in Kamerun,³⁸ the desire "to harm Germany as much as possible everywhere we can", and the advantage of taking "as many German colonies as we can get to use as pawns when negotiating peace terms".³⁹

Nevertheless, African reactions towards the war would remain a source of acute anxiety. The educated elite of Lagos loudly professed loyalty. Drs. Randle and Obase led a delegation of the People's League including leading members of the native community, white cap chiefs, and Muslims to "show their loyalty and devotion to the Crown by guaranteeing the quietness and orderliness of the Town...".⁴⁰ Attitudes elsewhere were harder to gauge. The Resident at Muri, a part of the Benue subject to German raids, found that the indigenes "were rather puzzled to know why we were fighting when we were always preaching against fighting and putting a stop to it: it is indeed a question rather difficult to answer to their satisfaction".⁴¹ Calabar traders would long remember that the Germans in their area were placed behind barbed wire in the Resident's compound and that Africans asked "which day you go kill am?"⁴² Lugard tried "to procure evidence that they [Germans] have prompted the various risings of natives".⁴³ The most serious of these had begun at Kwale and spread south into the western Delta. British

officials were convinced that traders from Bey und Zimmer and Behrens und Wehner were involved.⁴⁴ As a result the Germans in the Delta were again suspended from trading.⁴⁵ More serious were the disturbances which led to government intervention and the ending of Egba autonomy in August 1914.⁴⁶ Lugard would later try to lump these together with those elsewhere in Nigeria which were “aided very possibly by the German traders on parole...”.⁴⁷ He provided no evidence, and the larger firms in Lagos claimed that they had been quick to “dissociate ourselves from any persons of our nationality who may have sought to trouble or inconvenience the government in any way whatever and we have frequently ... remonstrated with such persons on their attitude”.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Burrowes remained convinced that “both Herr Brunger and Herr Gloede probably endeavoured to create a disturbance among the natives”, while, just before the end of trading, G.L. Gaiser gave out thousands of pounds of goods and credits to African traders.⁴⁹ German scheming was also suspected among the Bassa Nge in the Benue valley. It was claimed that their chief, Taru Shidi, had urged his people to oppose the government as it was “being defeated by the Germans who would shortly take over the country”. The Pagenstecher agent was believed to have been involved in spreading this rumour.⁵⁰ While Lugard endorsed such reports, the Colonial Office was noticeably sceptical: “As regards ‘evidence’ of intrigues, Sir F. Lugard will no doubt report if he gets any. The Bassas may have made up the statement as an excuse for not paying tribute, & the Germans in Nigeria are supposed to be under supervision.”⁵¹

Nigerians had good reasons of their own for resisting many aspects of recently imposed British colonial rule in the early twentieth century. The withdrawal of personnel as a consequence of the war and of the campaign in Kamerun, may have shaken confidence in the permanence of British control, and some Germans may have tried to exploit this. One item was a report from the Medical Officer at Ibadan that an Arab talking of Muslims fighting against England and of a rising by Turks and Egyptians had been speaking to one of the Germans on parole. The M.O. felt it “quite evident that trouble, and false news are being disseminated by these Germans here. And I have had many examples of this brought to my immediate notice”. In December, this reached England with Lugard’s endorsement and went up to Harcourt.⁵² The diplomat and litterateur Harold Nicolson thought that “like many timid men [Harcourt] was inclined to become strident when he wished to appear

courageous”.⁵³ Now he asked, “Is there any reason why the German prisoners who break their parole should not be shot?” His officials decided to ignore his question, as the evidence of incitement was “of the most shadowy nature”.⁵⁴

THE EXPULSION OF THE GERMANS

By that time the Germans were no longer in Nigeria. One of those interned at Ibadan, Johan Schönfeld, a sailor from Elder Dempster’s *Tenerife*, died during the night of 27–28 September. Medical Officers had been withdrawn to Lagos from stations seen as less important on the outbreak of war. At the Moor Plantation the responsible doctor was a young and inexperienced Nigerian still on probation who had been appointed as a bacteriologist partly because this would keep him out of clinical work.⁵⁵ He was on very bad terms with his British superior. Schönfeld had not been seen on the 27th and had not been transferred to hospital. While the case provoked bitter recriminations and a large file, only a bare notification of death was sent to Berlin, as “If the Germans get hold of it, there will be the devil to pay”, because “it will lead to charges on their part which we shall not be able (as in all other cases we can) nail down as misrepresentations and calumnies”. Harcourt considered it “Very bad indeed....” Lagos was censured.⁵⁶ The other internees were deported on *SS Obuassi* in October along with 427 prisoners of war from Douala. With more than 600 in the holds of a small cargo steamer of 4415 tons, this was, as a C.O. clerk noted with excessive understatement, “a rather uncomfortable voyage”.⁵⁷ The heat was “great and very trying to those on board”. Gustav Achtert, a seventeen year-old ship’s boy from *SS Arnfried*, collapsed and died four days later in Freetown “from sun traumatism”.⁵⁸ More care was taken with the 263 deported on *SS Akassa* in November, as “it was to be borne in mind that, the Prisoners will consist mostly of better class people...”. Nevertheless, like the *Obuassi*, the *Akassa* was “ill adapted to the particular purpose”, provisions ran low before it reached Great Britain, the water supply was limited and of bad colour, and the latrines, which were over the side of the ship “were no doubt rough and in a bad place...”. Physical discomfort was matched by psychological humiliation. The prisoners complained that they had received “rough treatment” from guards, as “we were Europeans of most good social standing and now under them the Riff Raff of the Coastal-towns and of course all Negroes”.⁵⁹ Even apart from

the conditions on the voyage to England, the imprisonment and deportation of civilians was almost unprecedented. In the Colonial Office, Harding noted that Napoleon had seized the English in France when war resumed in 1803, and France had expelled German residents from the Department of the Seine in 1870, but “even then they were not made prisoners of war & were allowed to retire south of the Loire”.⁶⁰

After the middle of November all that was left of the large and vigorous pre-war German community in Nigeria were some thirty seven Alsatians of the Roman Catholic Mission who were vouched for by the bishop, Msgr Terrien, and a nun who had been in the colony for over thirty years.⁶¹ Only one merchant remained. Charles Guillaume Lucien Ungebauer, came from Hamburg, was fifty-six years old, and, by his own statement had been “on and off resident of Lagos since 1877...”.⁶² Although probably the longest established European trader, he had been “rather unsuccessful in business...”.⁶³ He was the agent for Sachse and Company, a firm with its head office in Gablonz in Bohemia, which specialized mainly in beads. Ungebauer was also the Sachse agent in Porto Novo in Dahomey, where he represented the Woermann Linie as well and was the German consular agent. He visited Porto Novo for three or four days each month, and was there when war broke out between France and Germany. He was deported to Lagos, but, as he was well above military age, he was not even briefly interned.⁶⁴

Ungebauer was widely regarded in West Africa as a “famous character” and an “amiable eccentric”.⁶⁵ In addition to his agency for Sachse, he had a long-standing business connection with J.A. Hutton, the chairman of the British Cotton Growing Association, who “always found him a thoroughly honourable man...”. One of Hutton’s associates with a closer connection with West Africa stressed that “he was a very decent fellow, he was a great free Mason and was liked and respected by everyone in Lagos...”.⁶⁶ He frequently did business with Samuel Pearse, who was a fellow mason, as was Kitoyi Ajasa.⁶⁷ Soon after his arrival he applied for local naturalization, which was granted at the end of September. It was not noticed that he had not been continuously resident for the previous year as the law now required.⁶⁸ He was allowed to set up a new business in Lagos, and first to sell off Sachse’s stocks, and later to collect its debts. This contrasted sharply with the treatment of the German firms which were placed under a receiver after their staff was deported. Ungebauer was also involved in providing money for the prisoners of war deported from Dahomey. Despite his naturalization, the

Lagos authorities had little “doubt as to Mr. Ungebauer’s real nationality. He always will be a very loyal German, and he is equally loyal to his firm”. Although in November 1914, he pledged to break his links with Sachse, he entered into relations with Curt Schleevogt, who took over their business in Venice, moving to Zurich after Italy entered the war in May 1915, and then with Frank Clements, who took over the business in London.⁶⁹ He made little attempt to conceal his intention to restore his links with Sachse in the bead trade after the war.⁷⁰

Despite all this, Ungebauer was allowed to continue his business in Lagos. His naturalization may have been a mistake, but it could not easily be revoked. As long as it remained in force, he could not be barred from trading. He was not seen as dangerous;⁷¹ indeed he was consulted over the liquidation of the German firms.⁷² He claimed that “if he has done wrong, it was done unintentionally and unconsciously...”. He would have little money once the Sachse estate was paid off, and very little chance of earning any outside of Lagos. He was clearly “in a very excited and nervous condition”. In his letters to Schleevogt he insisted “nothing short of Death will take me away from Here...”. Burrowes, who investigated the case, did not think that Ungebauer was “quite sane”, and feared that he might commit suicide if an attempt were made to deport him.⁷³ Whenever his status came up, the Lagos authorities made the sensible and humane decision, which was endorsed by the officials in London.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, he still had enemies both in Lagos and in England. Eventually, much later, it would end in tragedy.⁷⁵

The worries of the Lagos authorities were increased by the entry of the Ottoman Empire into the war on 5 November.⁷⁶ Not only might this strain the loyalty of the Moslem population, it also turned the “Syrian” traders into enemy aliens. London’s initial response was to order the detention of all Ottoman subjects, partly in response to similar actions by Constantinople.⁷⁷ It was a Christian rather than a Moslem whose case led to a reconsideration. Basil John Canaris was a Smyrniote working for Paterson Zochonis in Calabar. The District Commissioner interned him as a prisoner of war and sent him to Lagos as one suspected of pro-German sympathies. He had certainly criticized British commercial policies, and before the war he had been on good terms with the German community, but Lugard felt that the Commissioner had over-reacted. He believed that Canaris’s sympathies were with the Allies and allowed him to return to Calabar.⁷⁸ His case was also taken up in London by the Greek Consul General, who had already secured “more

lenient treatment for Ottoman subjects who are of Greek descent and parentage..." in Great Britain, and asked that this should be extended to the colonies. The Colonial Office doubted that the Foreign Office "really want us to molest harmless petty traders in Nigeria simply as a reprisal against the actions of the Turkish Govt.", and feared that this might have a "bad effect ... on Mohammedans in Nigeria ...". The decision was reversed.⁷⁹ Canaris would go on to found, with another former Paterson Zochonis employee, Canaris and Tangelakis, one of the many new firms which would flourish in wartime Nigeria.⁸⁰ Meanwhile the Syrian traders of Lagos and the Moslem community had proclaimed loyalty as had the Arabs in Kano: "We have nothing to do with the enemies of England, nor do we agree to the thing which the Turkish Government has done."⁸¹

GERMAN PROPERTIES IN NIGERIA

The suspension of enemy trading and the deportation of the Germans and Austrians were justified on grounds of military necessity. This imposed limits on how the firms' properties might be treated. Lugard foresaw that the real estate of at least one company might have to be sold to meet liabilities to British creditors. The Colonial Office refused this. As Charles Tennyson, the legal assistant, explained:

The defence for our winding up policy is that it was necessary for purposes of public safety to put the enemy subjects under restraint. For this purpose it was necessary to take charge of their businesses & to realize stocks & dispose of current contracts, so as to prevent waste & loss to those having commercial relations with the firms concerned. Having realized in this way it was obviously right to pay off creditors (who could lawfully be paid) out of the proceeds.

Such a policy could not overtly aim at the extirpation of the German trader, which might provoke retaliation on the continent, as Fiddes pointed out. Nevertheless, it was accepted that the war would divert trade, and, if the British firms used their opportunity, the German companies would have great difficulty re-establishing themselves.⁸²

To meet the problem which Lugard raised, the C.O. came round to the idea that the assets of the enemy firms in the West African colonies might be pooled. Its first reaction had been to re-affirm the free-trade

position, telling the Manchester Chamber of Commerce that contracts with firms in Germany had been suspended or cancelled by the war and that British firms could have no claim against them until the war was over. As the liquidations in West Africa were determined by military necessity, "It would ... not be equitable to make firms which, through causes entirely outside their own control, are debarred from carrying out their contracts during the war, compensate the other parties to the contract out of their assets..."⁸³ The Office quickly retreated from this position, claiming that it had not realized that the houses in West Africa were essentially agencies of firms based in Germany. British exporters, especially those in Manchester, had made contracts with head offices in Hamburg, and "therefore do not know to which branches or even to which territories in W. Africa the goods they sell are sent".⁸⁴ They wanted reimbursement now from the sale of German assets in Nigeria rather than waiting for what might come from Germany after the end of the war, and they did "not like being left to the tender mercies of ... [Burrowes], who has become almost notorious in his animosity against the commerc[ial] community..."⁸⁵ Under pressure from Manchester, the Colonial Office referred this question to the Law Officers, Sir John Simon (Attorney General) and Lord Buckmaster (Solicitor General), at the end of April.⁸⁶ Their opinion, delivered on 25 May, was that the only broad distinction that might be made between creditors was that between those who had dealt directly with the branch and those who had dealt with the head office. The first class of debts would be easily provable and would be paid in due course, but there could be no pooling, "the assets of each branch should be dealt with separately, and should be applied in settlement of debts incurred directly by that branch to creditors wherever resident...". Balances would be held by the Treasurer until the end of the war. The C.O. recognized that this ruling "would save the liquidators & ourselves a lot of trouble..." and fell "in better than any other with the principle which we have adopted that these liquidations have been rendered necessary by purely military considerations". Nevertheless, it was "A thoroughly unsatisfactory report from the point of view of our desire to assist Br. merchants".⁸⁷

The British firms also worried about Burrowes's attempts to collect debts from African traders, which they considered "detrimental to the interests of British firms and of the colony". Collection of German firms' debts by colonial officials would prejudice British firms in recovering their own debts.⁸⁸ Even more than the British, the German firms

had advanced large credits to middlemen, not expecting anything like full repayment, as they “regarded themselves as purchasing the goodwill of the traders”. Moreover, in their last days of operation the firms, especially Gaisers, had given out large quantities of goods, for instance £5216/2/6 to Alli Balogun in Lagos. Vigorous collection of the German debts would force the British companies to insist on recovering their own credits and on refusing to grant new ones. This might have forced the middlemen into bankruptcy. Here again the interests of Manchester were more acutely involved than those of Liverpool. The Colonial Office would not “do anything to paralyse the local trade, which means far more to the life of the country than Liverpool & Manchester claims which can afford to wait”. The governors would be instructed “to prevent the screw being turned too tight & thereby eventually damaging our traders”.⁸⁹ Meanwhile the Law Officers’ opinion would be reconsidered. It had been issued on the very last day of Asquith’s Liberal government. In the coalition announced on 26 May, the Colonial Office would be run by Conservatives: Bonar Law as Colonial Secretary and Arthur Steel-Maitland, who as Parliamentary Under Secretary would take over the routine work. He believed that there had been little law in the original opinion.⁹⁰ At the beginning of August the question was resubmitted with a note from Steel-Maitland to Sir Edward Carson, the new Attorney General, that “... I would like to help our men if I possibly could, and I should be very grateful if you could bear their interests in mind when the Law Officers give in their answer”. The Law Officers had to be reminded of the question in September, but still did nothing. When F.E. Smith replaced Carson in November, Law asked him to expedite the decision.⁹¹ It came on 6 December. As the relevant ordinances and orders made no distinction between debts locally contracted and others, “the proper course would appear to be to discharge the firm[’]s debts out of its assets wherever they may be found”. For this purpose pooling would be allowed. The interests of British companies were now allowed to trump property rights and the legal principles of the open international economy, but the question by then had lost its urgency. It was clear that almost all the firms had sufficient assets in Nigeria to meet the claims of British and allied creditors. Neutral claims were likely to be small. If pressed they might be ranked equally, as “Such consideration will help us if later on we have to interfere more with neutral trade in other respects”.⁹²

THE QUESTION OF KERNELS

Whatever was decided about the enemy firms' property, the war would have a severe impact on the kernels trade. Controlled by Germany before 1914, it was now diverted from Hamburg and Rotterdam to Liverpool. There, at first, as the Niger Company noted, "... Kernels remain practically unsaleable".⁹³ Merchants who had bought them at pre-war prices lost heavily.⁹⁴ Low prices brought Dutch firms into the market, with the obvious intention of shipping to Germany through the Netherlands and Denmark. Harding in the Colonial Office noted: "From the purely British WAfr point of view, it would be highly advantageous for kernels to be shipped to Holland and gin exported. The National interest may be the other way, but it is surely for the customs [rather than the Colonial Office] to give voice to it".⁹⁵ German demand raised the price on the Coast from a low of eleven pounds a ton in September to almost thirteen in October.⁹⁶ Like Harding, Harcourt debated whether kernels should continue to go to Rotterdam for the benefit of Germany or whether this should be stopped to the possible ruin of the West African colonies. He felt that "the balance of advantage is a very fine one".⁹⁷ The decision at the beginning of November to stop the German firms from trading was part of a more general shift of policy to restrict imports into the Netherlands and to control Dutch trade through the establishment of the Netherlands Overseas Trust on 1 January 1915. Ostensibly this was a private company which took over imports on behalf of Dutch traders and vouched for their consumption in the Netherlands or its colonies. This allowed the Dutch government to maintain its official neutrality and avoid German reprisals for violation of the Rhine navigation treaty.⁹⁸

London hoped that alternative markets for kernels might be found in France, if it could be persuaded to remove the protectionist *surtaxe d'entrepôt*.⁹⁹ Lugard believed that the United States had been a substantial buyer of kernels from Germany, and would now probably require the raw material from West Africa.¹⁰⁰ So far that market had been small, as palm oil went through Liverpool rather than directly from West Africa. Although some palm oil and kernels did go in sailing ships to the United States as a return cargo for barrel staves, this may have been more important for Sierra Leone than for Nigeria.¹⁰¹ In 1915, only three American sailing ships of a total of 2297 tons went to Lagos. There were no American steamers.¹⁰² While Nigeria would eventually become a major exporter of hides and skins to the United States, there was little demand

for palm produce. The slaughterhouses of Chicago and the cotton fields of the South provided America with abundant fat, tallow, and cottonseed. There was a need for palm oil in metallurgy,¹⁰³ but not for making soap or margarine. The Niger Company “went to much trouble and expense in endeavouring to obtain outlets [in America] for Oilseeds from Nigeria...,” shipping from Burutu 13,000 tons of its 1915 purchase of oilseeds.¹⁰⁴ Miller Bros. were much more sceptical as to the prospects of the American market.¹⁰⁵ Until 1916, their pessimism appeared to be justified. While Lugard looked to America for the longer term, he also believed that, even with the elimination of the Germans, competition between the British firms would maintain produce prices in Nigeria. The Colonial Office was less optimistic on these points, but felt that a slump in prices would not lead to a permanent crippling of production:

If during the war the price offered for oil or kernels falls greatly, those natives who are hard up will probably work harder & collect more nuts, those who are not hard up may cease collecting. But as soon as prices become more normal, collecting will probably become more normal too. It is not as if the palms were a cultivated annual.¹⁰⁶

The British firms asked for various forms of government help. At a meeting between the companies and the officials of the Colonial Office and the Nigerian administration on 19 August, Burrowes had suggested that there might be a one year export duty on kernels to Germany “which might induce enterprise among those who may think that the war will only last a few months”. There was also a suggestion that the government might itself purchase and store the crop if the trade would otherwise be crippled.¹⁰⁷ Stressing that it was continuing to buy kernels even though the principal market in Germany had been lost, the Niger Company urged that Lagos should “give to traders in Nigeria with stations on the river and railway over an extensive area, the option of payment of duties and railway charges by three months acceptances payable in London”. Such proposals found little favour in a Colonial Office fully committed to *laissez-faire*. As Baynes of the Niger Department minuted: “Such a scheme would no doubt benefit the large companies & would help them to crush out of existence the smaller traders”, while the Permanent Under Secretary considered it “a bit of a dodge to get government remittances free of cost of exchange as well as free of interest.”¹⁰⁸ London hoped instead that British merchants would act

vigorously to capture an important German trade. The key to this would be an expansion of crushing facilities in Great Britain. Harcourt urged Sir William Lever, "If you increase your crushing mills in England now, I am sure you would capture a trade of which noone [*sic*] would be able to take from you at the end of the War".¹⁰⁹

There was some question as to just how many British plants could crush palm kernels and copra, but no doubt that they were few and quite unable to cope with the new demands.¹¹⁰ British crushers had focussed on the solid residue, which was used as cattle cake, while regarding oil as a sideline.¹¹¹ Their machinery was adapted to softer materials such as cottonseed, linseed, and, more recently, soya beans. It was claimed that tariff policy had led heavy crushing to move to Germany from about the middle of the nineteenth century.¹¹² What kept it there was the acceptability of palm kernel and copra feeding cakes for pigs and cattle on the continent. As a by-product this added a fifth to the selling price, giving German crushers an advantage which the British could not match.¹¹³ British firms would hardly invest in new plant if they were likely to lose their market with the resumption of normal commerce at the end of the war. Some, such as the Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Colonial Office, Lord Islington, accused British farmers of "prejudice & lack of initiative" for not taking up kernel cake, but it rapidly became clear that there were real problems which would not easily be overcome.¹¹⁴ A chemist testing British-prepared cake found that from a chemical point of view it was "good almost very good", but was "the hardest most unsuitable cake for stock from a physical point of view, that I ever saw". He compared it to a slab of slate. Charles Strachey of the Colonial Office took it "for a new patent roofing material for WAfr".¹¹⁵ Harcourt decided to experiment with it on his dairy herd. He had to grind it almost to a meal, but "Even then I cannot get my cows or pigs to eat it at all!" Perhaps it might be flavoured with molasses or mixed with soya meal, but "we have yet to discover what the Germans mix with it to make it so successful—possibly the pulp of sugar beets?" In any case the carbohydrates in which the cake was rich were fattening rather than milk-producing and could be more cheaply supplied within Great Britain.¹¹⁶ Enquiries would be made on the continent, particularly in Denmark and the Netherlands,¹¹⁷ to find out what the German ingredients were. The Board of Agriculture thought that price was the main obstacle to the take-up of kernel cake in Great Britain and hoped that experiments promoted by Sir Owen Philipps would give results by the spring.¹¹⁸ Examinations of the cake would lead to "considerable

variation" in opinion, though German results did show that it "definitely increases the amount of milk fat" from 0.16 to 0.34%.¹¹⁹ The Board did try to popularize its use, but as late as July 1916, it would still find that "in view of its hard character, this was not easy".¹²⁰

Meanwhile, steps were taken to develop kernel crushing in England. R.E. Dennett of the Nigerian Forests Department was particularly active in bringing palm kernels to the attention of the British public and in encouraging the development of a crushing industry in Hull, which was already the largest crushing centre in the U.K. and had pioneered the crushing of soya beans. As a North Sea port it had been badly hit by the outbreak of war. Its merchants were "quite likely to jump at the chance of developing in a new direction". London was also interested. The Colonial Office encouraged what it saw as "a stimulant to Liverpool". It was expected that by early 1915 there would be three mills in Liverpool, two in Hull, and possibly two near London, which combined would be able to crush some 350,000 tons a year, roughly equal to the whole West African crop, though the machines at first were in large part adaptations from existing ones rather than specially constructed for the new materials.¹²¹ These might not have sufficient pressure to extract all the oil. This affected the economics of production.¹²² British Oil and Cake Mills reported, "We have made a considerable number of experiments in handling Palm Kernels, Ground Nuts and Copra in our ordinary machinery and have finally come to the conclusion that it was quite unsuitable...".¹²³ Sir William Lever thought British capacity was adequate and offered to place his knowledge at the government's disposal, but the merchants were "very suspicious" of him and of "the other crushers as it was thought that they had advised the Govt to impose prohibitions in order to lower the prices of the raw materials". In fact prices began to rise, and "no one quite knew where the demand was coming from".¹²⁴ By mid January the Niger Company was rejoicing in "wonderful markets".¹²⁵ Kernels were now saleable, and indeed attractive in Great Britain. Between July 1914 and March 1915, 239,091 tons of copra and kernels worth £4,926,047 were imported, of which 177,092 tons (£3,462,890) were retained in the U.K.¹²⁶ As there was no collapse in price, the London Chamber of Commerce noted, this "rather knocked the bottom out of our case for Government intervention", and the C.O. "were content to leave the matter to look after itself, no doubt rightly...", even though Owen Philipps thought that the price "was rather artificially maintained."¹²⁷ It did indeed subsequently fall for several months, reaching £14/6/3 in September.¹²⁸

THE EMERGENCE OF THE COMBINE

In Nigeria itself trade virtually stopped for three months after the outbreak of the war,¹²⁹ partly because the Bank of British West Africa had immediately “terminated all their contracts for supplying coin, and had announced that all banking facilities would have to be a matter of special arrangement”. This provoked a threat of government intervention from the Colonial Office, and an assurance from Philipps “that the Bank should do nothing to cripple the trade of West Africa”.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, as early as October, Lugard learned confidentially that “the purchase of kernels is being energetically resumed...”.¹³¹ With the shutting down of the German firms in November the future began to become clearer. At the end of December the main expatriate companies entered into agreements whereby they would continue to buy produce, but at very much reduced prices and with agreed divisions of the share.¹³² In Lagos eight companies were involved: John Holt, Miller Bros., MacIver, Lagos Stores, H.B.W. Russell, G.B. Ollivant, Paterson Zochonis, and the French C.F.A.O. In the east it also included the African Association, the Company of African Traders, the Company of African Merchants, Holt Bros., McNeill Scott, and Thomas Welsh.¹³³

As an emergency measure something like this was clearly necessary. Peasant producers need to be assured of markets. Suspending purchases because of the glut caused by the collapse of overseas markets and the loss of German shipping might well have permanently crippled the trade. The British firms “decided that it was in the best interests of all concerned that steady buying at steady prices should prevail”.¹³⁴ In keeping these low they were reacting to real uncertainties at the European end. Shipping was difficult, initially because Elder Dempster’s steamers were out of position at the beginning of the war.¹³⁵ There were now “frightful charges not only for war insurance and extra freights but port and quay charges...”.¹³⁶ Despite the emergence of Hull, Liverpool would remain the main British port for West Africa, taking over three quarters of kernel imports, but it was seriously congested and notoriously inefficient compared to Hamburg.¹³⁷ Sometimes seventy to eighty steamers had to wait three to eight weeks instead of five to ten days. The situation was made worse because most West African cargoes were in transit and faced both inward and outward delays.¹³⁸ New regulations would reduce the general congestion in 1915, but allocated only 500 feet of East Queens Dock to the West African trade in addition to the Elder Dempster dock.

John Holt steamers had to wait for more than a fortnight, even though other berths were vacant.¹³⁹ The Colonial Office eventually had to complain to the authorities in charge that their arrangements were “very detrimental both to the Colony concerned and to this country”.¹⁴⁰ Forward sales were particularly risky. The Niger Company’s Agent General in Nigeria was informed of oil sold for a good price in Rotterdam in the expectation of a freight charge of 6/3 a ton from Liverpool which was eventually carried at £2/-/-/. He was also told of oil which left Burutu in the last week of November 1914, but which was shipped from Hull to Rotterdam only on 16 February 1915.¹⁴¹ Agents in Nigeria, some of whom were clearly sceptical of the policy of agreed low prices, were repeatedly told: “It is not a question of estimating profits but rather of ascertaining how we can keep our business going without continually facing heavy losses.”¹⁴²

Nevertheless, under the new arrangements the parties expected to be “making very fair profits”.¹⁴³ Although the Niger Company did indeed have a loss in 1914, it estimated a profit of some £160,000 for 1915, which would compare with pre-war profits in the order of £60,000.¹⁴⁴ The African Association had held its dividend on ordinary shares to 12½% for eight years, increased it to 15% in 1915 and 20% in 1916 and 1917.¹⁴⁵ The firms were determined to maintain the obvious advantages of the new system. The Niger Company agent at Nassarawa to the north of the Benue was told to “impress upon the pagans the fact that the reduced prices have come to stay”.¹⁴⁶ From the firms’ viewpoint pre-war prices for produce had been sustainable because of the profits made on imports. With the outbreak of the war, oil and kernel exports could “no longer be considered as a mere remittance, but must bear a fair share of the establishment expenses”.¹⁴⁷ The larger companies had therefore “decided to put down prices drastically, feeling certain that the smaller merchants will all follow suit”.¹⁴⁸

In that respect the Niger Company’s confidence would be misplaced. Its Agent General was told that “if we watch the small people at Onitsha and do not allow them to run up prices there, we ought to be able to obtain a normal trade, even if not a larger volume of trade than previously, at much lower prices”. As partners in the combine, Thomas Welsh and John Holt would purchase only at the set price, while Christian and Stuart-Young had no money “and if these two small firms can force us to pay ridiculous prices it does not say much for our trading capabilities”.¹⁴⁹ In fact prices at Onitsha would remain significantly higher than elsewhere. Writing

in November 1916, to illustrate the power of the combine, Burrowes compared the price of some 13 lb at Onitsha with that of £8/10/- at Abeokuta, which was controlled by the ring.¹⁵⁰ On the ground, Stuart-Young had already faced browbeating from the Agent General “of a mighty firm in Nigeria...”. According to Stuart-Young:

All his talk was of exports and imports, rates of exchange, keeping the producer of raw materials in his place, ensuring margins of profit, faithfully adhering to pre-arranged barter-tariffs, and working unanimously for a successful financial year. He threatened aggression from the combined ‘millions’ of huge new companies – he talked of throttling competition, bullying free-will – in fact ‘make a good thing out of this war’, he cried – you will never get the chance again: and if you show opposition to the big firms, we will jolly well smash you to pulp!¹⁵¹

Nevertheless “the small people at Onitsha” would remain “exceedingly troublesome” for the Niger Company throughout the war.¹⁵²

By the time this was written crisis loomed in Nigerian trade. The situation in 1915, to which we must return, was not yet so extreme. Kernel prices in Lagos remained about half their pre-war level, while at Liverpool they recovered to about three-quarters. Whereas the gap between Nigerian and British prices had been roughly four pounds before the war, in 1915, it was now about six pounds.¹⁵³ Shipping was clearly at the root of the problem. Forty percent of pre-war tonnage, which had been provided by Woermann Linie, was no longer available. Elder Dempster now had effectively a monopoly. Importers like Ungebauer found them “very independent just now”, and unfriendly to Clements, which he could not make “out at all, as for so many years the Firm [Sachse] has been on such good terms with them”.¹⁵⁴ It raised rates on regular services, probably not by an excessive amount, but they had been very high before the war.¹⁵⁵ Much later Harding would recall that Elder Dempster “did their best for West African trade during the first part of the war...”.¹⁵⁶ However, it struggled to provide the ships. Ungebauer complained that trade “is very dull with me, the great Difficulty is that one cannot get the Goods in Time from Home...”.¹⁵⁷ The problem was not so much with sinkings, of which there were none in 1916, as with Admiralty requisition.¹⁵⁸ Charters were difficult and expensive, as few captains wished to ship bulky goods from West Africa, and certainly not from Lagos, which was again a difficult port.¹⁵⁹

The cessation of dredging because of the war had significantly lowered the clearance as the channel had shifted and a new one had to be opened. Three ships ran aground, and mail steamers had again to discharge at Forcados and use branch boats to Lagos.¹⁶⁰ There was simply not enough wharf space to deal with all the traffic. A new harbour would eventually be constructed at Apapa, but this would require further dredging.¹⁶¹ As early as January 1915, Lugard complained of a backlog of 4000 tons at Lagos, and foresaw that the railway would have to refuse to take produce.¹⁶² By the end of 1915, it was estimated that at Lagos, along the railway, and in Kano there were some 28,600 tons of produce visibly awaiting export.¹⁶³ Sir Owen Philipps said he did not know what to do. John Trigge, the Managing Director of the Niger Company gloomily noted: "To press him for tonnage means to urge him to put up rates".¹⁶⁴

The new situation created new problems and new tensions. Partly these derived from new opportunities. Previously overwhelmingly dependent on palm produce, the Nigerian export economy would greatly diversify during the war. By 1917, oil and kernels together constituted only 53% of Nigeria's exports by value. The biggest expansion was in tin, which at £1,485,887 now constituted about 18%. Despite great encouragement, cotton exports grew only modestly. Cocoa did better, to reach 6%. However, the new crops of the North, hides and groundnuts, rapidly increased from roughly 2% each to 11% and 8% respectively. Leather remained very much a specialist trade. Recognizing that it lacked the necessary expertise, the Niger Company took over a 40% share in the established Manchester firm of R. Hassan & Co. after it fell into difficulties in 1914.¹⁶⁵ They especially wanted to enter the particularly lucrative trade in ostrich feathers, for which working with the Livorno Jewish diaspora, people like Saul Raccah, "is our only way to get our right share".¹⁶⁶ Opening in Kano and Zaria in 1915,¹⁶⁷ Hassan sent out the Swiss Ernest Barth, an experienced coaster who in the late nineties had established John Holt as "the first competitor with the great and powerful Niger Company". Despite this, Ambrosini, with his American connections, remained "the largest dealer in these valuable products [hides and skins] in the colony", while ostrich feathers became "practically unsaleable" after the outbreak of the war.¹⁶⁸ After the initial boom with the opening of the railway in 1913/1914 groundnut exports slumped badly in 1915, but grew by leaps and bounds in each of the three subsequent years.¹⁶⁹ Miller Bros. felt that the Niger Company, tied as it was to its established river routes, was no longer able effectively to defend the Pool's position

in the North. The pooling agreement provided that the spheres of operation of the parties might be changed by the Committee of Control. However, Millers' offer to "help" at Kano and Zaria was firmly rebuffed. Nevertheless, and against Trigge's advice, the Company turned a blind eye as Millers established African Ranches Ltd. in the North and supplied it through Lagos.¹⁷⁰

Similar problems emerged in the East. The expansion of the railway north from Port Harcourt opened up a new hinterland, threatening the positions both of the Niger Company on the Niger and of its Pool partners on the Coast. As a result of this, and of the establishment of the combine, "all these [non-Pool] merchants have made money and are in a much stronger position than they were at the outbreak of War...".¹⁷¹ Towards the end of 1915 kernel prices rose sharply in England, reaching a peak of £26/-/- a ton in March 1916.¹⁷² This seems mainly to have been due to the policies of the crushers and manufacturers in England itself, and will therefore be considered in a later chapter.¹⁷³ There was no comparable rise in Nigeria. The Lagos price was only £10/7/-. This enormous gap tempted many into the trade.¹⁷⁴ Mr. Sewell, an agent of the Company of African Merchants, broke with that firm to set himself up independently at Yenagoa in the Niger Company's part of the Delta. He threatened to tap four of its stations. In response, the Company "entered into an agreement with him to buy up his station at any time during a period of four years for a sum of £4000, and in the meantime arranged that the venture should be worked on joint account". The new firm, called the Nigeria Delta Palm Nut Cracking Co. and formally established on 1 July 1916, was expected "to become one of the most important in the Niger Delta". The other firms in the Pool protested strongly that this violated an earlier resolution "that no party to the Agreement shall without the previous consent of the other parties, embark upon any new venture which would become part of the joint undertaking". They eventually forced the Niger Company to absorb the new concern.¹⁷⁵

MOVING TO AMALGAMATION

Such tensions made fusion of the four firms in the Working Agreement again an urgent matter. New proposals for amalgamation were presented on 21 September 1915. These eliminated the provision for other parties' contributions to the existing reserves of the Niger Company, which would then be available to meet possible losses from "doubtful assets"

such as the De Bruyn crushing plant in German-occupied Belgium, in which the Company had invested £90,000. Priority payments for mining rights would be based on estimates of the income which the Niger Company would be receiving if there were no war. Very quickly an agreement was drawn up to come into effect at the end of 1915. This would exclude debts owed to the Niger Company by the tin miners, mineral rights, and the Niger Company shares in De Bruyn. The other parties would transfer their assets and receive in return shares in the Niger Company: £578,600 for the African Association, £482,200 for Miller Bros. and £91,800 for the Company of African Merchants. Two of the nine Niger Company Directors would resign, while three would come in from the Association, three from Millers, and one from the African Merchants.¹⁷⁶ The Niger Company was initially hopeful, but soon became pessimistic, Scarbrough feeling that “each concession that we have made has simply become the starting point for further demands”.¹⁷⁷ At this point De Bruyn appeared to be the main problem. If this proved to be a loss, the Niger Company could cover it with its existing reserve of £278,000, but wanted the other parties to share the risk, as they would undoubtedly share the benefit of a successful outcome. The Association in particular wanted detailed confidential information about De Bruyn which Scarbrough would not give so long as the success of fusion was not assured.¹⁷⁸ Cotterell of the Association noted that some of his colleagues were “opposed to organic union entirely”, and questioned whether “we are prudent in pressing matters at the present time to a final issue”.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, the negotiations quickly went ahead. Cotterell had disavowed any intention of pushing an investigation of De Bruyn. Strong buying of Niger Company shares in Liverpool suggested that the other parties believed that “an agreement was in sight”. Goldie was of the same opinion.¹⁸⁰ A new draft was drawn up to come into effect on 30 June 1916. Almost immediately Robert Miller pointed out that it would mean “practically two classes of Shares for probably two years or more, and also two classes of Directors, that is to say two parties with divergent interests”. He preferred the transfer of Nigerian businesses for payment in Niger Company shares at between 20/6 and 21/-. The Niger Company jumped at this. Goldie was delighted that Liverpool “has, of its own accord, gone back to the only fully practicable solution of the problem...”, which the Niger Company itself had put forward in April 1914 but which the other parties had “rejected time after time”. He was sure

that “fusion was safe—barring unforeseen accidents”, and “The more firmly we stand the more keen they will become”.¹⁸¹ Trigge, however, preferred “an up-to-date Niger Company” to taking in “old businesses worked on old ideas...”, and felt that “The closer our relations with the other parties become the more one sees how difficult it will be to work on their lines”.¹⁸²

Despite Trigge’s reservations, progress continued to be made. By mid February Scarbrough thought that the negotiations were within measurable distance of a final agreement.¹⁸³ The new draft was dated to the end of 1916. From disputes over figures the parties now approached the questions of organization and administration which Goldie considered always to have been the chief obstacle. He wanted to “fairly satisfy the aspirations of obstinate individuals who, if they do not get their way, will again wreck the scheme—not openly on this ground but on some other issue”.¹⁸⁴ Whatever the composition of the board, the day-to-day running of the new company would have to be in the hands of a smaller number of men. Trigge wanted only two managing directors, if only because the African Association wanted eventually to bring in John Holt. They were the Niger Company’s most direct competitor. Trigge disliked the idea, but if they were to come in, then they would have to have a third directorship. Even if they did not, the allocation of directors would be difficult. Trigge wanted to separate working directors from the others. He envisaged a managing directorship for someone from the Niger Company and the other for either the African Association or Miller Bros. The firm which did not get the second managing directorship might have either a vice-chairmanship or the most important of two or three other directorships. Together the managing and non-managing directors would form a daily committee and run the various departments. Trigge’s personal position was clearly uncertain. He told Scarbrough that the two most obvious candidates might be men whom Scarbrough “would scarcely care to appoint”. Trigge was “willing to be sacrificed” if this were in the Niger Company’s interest, but “under no circumstances whatever will I serve in a subordinate position to newcomers”. Clifford Edgar, the Niger Company director most involved in the negotiations, persuaded Trigge that passages in his letter were injudicious and needed revision. Edgar’s own view was that after re-organization Trigge and John Tunnicliffe of the African Association would be managing directors. Robert Miller would have to choose between becoming a third managing director or a vice-chairman, as a mere advisership would not satisfy

him. This would leave only one advisership for Moore of the Company of African Merchants, and he would be dissatisfied unless the fees were very substantial.¹⁸⁵

Writing from Nigeria to his wife, Lugard was apprehensive about the prospect of amalgamation. A combine was wrong in principle. He particularly mistrusted Trigge, whom he considered to be a very astute businessman, and “the real fly-wheel” of the Niger Company. Nevertheless, with Scarbrough and Cowan in England and himself in Lagos, Lugard thought that it might possibly go well.¹⁸⁶ Meanwhile, the *pourparlers* again entered a sticky patch. While Trigge favoured sweeping re-organizations, Miller Bros. were concerned to protect existing staff and stations. In May they proposed alterations to the agreement which the Niger Company’s solicitor thought “imported a great deal of new matter”.¹⁸⁷ In July, Robert Miller complained that a copy of the agreement had been leaked to Zochonis.¹⁸⁸ At the same time the Yenagoa question and the growing desire of the African Association to open in Lagos exacerbated tensions between the parties and called their good faith into question.¹⁸⁹ Another issue, to be considered in a later chapter, was the possible purchase of the German properties in Nigeria. While Miller Bros. wanted a quick decision, the Niger Company preferred to defer this until fusion was completed.¹⁹⁰ None of this stopped the negotiations from proceeding through July and August. Eventually only one point was ostensibly in dispute. The draft provided that the board should be rotated in accordance with the 7:3:3:1 formula. Millers wanted to revert to an earlier draft that if a director died or vacated office within three years, “his place shall be filled by the appointment of a successor to be made in like manner as the appointment of the Director so dying or vacating office”.¹⁹¹ Writing on 1 September a memorandum for use in connection with the Niger Company’s shareholders’ meeting on the 27th, Trigge felt sufficiently confident to state: “In regard to the fusion of Nigerian interests much progress has been made, and it is hoped that complete agreement will actually be reached this month.”¹⁹² A British cartel appeared to be about to take control of Nigerian exports.

LUGARD’S RESPONSE

This prospect greatly alarmed the Lagos authorities. The optimism with which Lugard faced the war had faded in 1915. Produce prices remained low. Instead of competing vigorously, the British firms had entered into

combines and rings. Foreign markets did not develop to anything like the extent which the governor expected. The rapid growth of the northern economy was certainly a bright spot, but it brought its own problems. Groundnut production had virtually ceased in 1914–1915, at first as a consequence of a devastating drought and famine, then as part of a boycott against the low prices which the buying firms tried to impose.¹⁹³ The resumption of purchasing towards the end of 1915 soon threatened to overwhelm the ability of the railway and of the port to export or store.¹⁹⁴ In an earlier crisis, hides had simply to be dumped into Lagos harbour.¹⁹⁵ At the beginning of December Lugard wrote a long despatch complaining of the lack of shipping from Elder Dempster and of the high freight rates. He claimed that this had led to the emergence of the combine, and that the shipping company was in effect colluding with the large firms by recognizing “their claim as old and reliable customers to be first considered when ships are available and their right to ship the same proportions of produce as they shipped prior to the war”. As the firms purchased enough to fill the available ships, competition from native traders and newcomers was effectively eliminated, and the low prices fixed by the combine prevailed. In this the governor was following Burrowes, who was already on bad terms with the merchants, and convinced that they were colluding with the shipping company, and “extert[ing] every means to prevent the introduction of new capital while their own is totally inadequate”.¹⁹⁶

London took such assertions very seriously. The Niger Department was deeply suspicious of the Liverpool firms. Although Fiddes did not share this “hatred”, he thought that they bore “watching”.¹⁹⁷ Steel-Maitland believed that they were “making unduly big profits”.¹⁹⁸ Minuting on Lugard’s despatch, Harding acknowledged the danger of Nigerian trade “falling into the hands of a ring of firms powerful enough to crush out opposition and to exploit Nigeria for their personal profit”. On the other hand, it was surprising that Elder Dempster had not made more use of their monopoly. Their freight rates had gone up by 50% shortly after the outbreak of the war, but this had been rapidly reduced in stages to 10% by mid December 1914. An increase of 5/– per ton had been introduced on 1 June 1915, and there had been increases on the rates for specific commodities. These latter had not been particularly high for palm oil, kernels, or groundnuts. By the end of 1915, the rate for oil was 58/3 per gross ton compared to 46/9 pre-war. For kernels it was 46/2 compared to 33/0. By contrast, for hides the rate rose

from 63/3 to 165/0. The tonnage problem was real. Elder Dempster did not have the ships and could not get them, though it did manage by the end of 1915, to add two extra “express” sailings in addition to its fortnightly service.¹⁹⁹ The C.O. appealed both to the Board of Trade and to the Admiralty. The former replied that because of problems of congestion in British ports, “it is not possible to take any action which will assist the Colony in shipping its produce to the United Kingdom at present”.²⁰⁰ The Admiralty presented even more of a problem. It had requisitioned some seventeen ships. When Elder Dempster chartered a vessel for the West Africa trade, the Admiralty “requisitioned a sister ship: net result, as you were; and a loss of some £30,000 to E.D.”²⁰¹ A deputation from the Colonial Office went with Sir Owen Philipps to the Admiralty, even though he appreciated that “we cannot hope for great results in the present circumstances”. He was right. The response was that the Admiralty had taken eighteen of the ninety Elder Dempster vessels, which was less than the average loss for British shipowners, and that it would not release any. The best that Bonar Law could do was to back personally his Department’s case in a covering letter to A.J. Balfour, the First Lord of the Admiralty. He pleaded that “the vessels now engaged in the W. Afr. trade might be left undisturbed...”. As the delegation had pointed out, “the produce awaiting shipment from the Coast is specially important to this country as it is the raw material from which glycerine is extracted and that there was a possibility of a shortage of this commodity for military purposes”. In the end, Lugard had to be told that, given the enormous increase in the general level in all parts of the world, nothing could be done about freight rates to West Africa. Over requisition, Law would “continue to do what I can to prevent the position from becoming worse, but I am afraid that there is not much prospect of any material improvement at present”.²⁰²

Unable to secure any amelioration over shipping, Lugard turned to other solutions for the problems confronting Nigeria. To a large degree these were financial. Customs revenues were falling sharply, despite an increase in the duty on spirits from 6/3 per gallon to 7/6 at the beginning of 1915. Reserves were being run down.²⁰³ The war in Kamerun, which lasted until late February 1916, placed a strain on Nigerian resources. Once it was over, Nigerian forces would be used in other campaigns, especially in East Africa. Contributions were also urged for the imperial war effort. Expensive pre-war commitments such as the development of the new city of Kaduna in the north as a capital,

the construction of the Eastern Railway, and the improvement of harbour facilities in Lagos, might be scaled down, but could not entirely be abandoned.²⁰⁴ To meet the approaching crisis Lugard proposed the replacement of customs duties on spirits by export taxes on produce, the imposition of direct taxation in the Southern Provinces, and measures to break the control of the combine over Nigerian trade. Lugard saw this last as a key element in his programme:

The disappearance of the German Merchants from Nigeria has eliminated what was healthy competition for the buying of produce and the combine of British Merchants now operating has caused a large reduction in the prices paid for produce with a corresponding effect on the purchasing power of the community and consequently on the revenue from Customs Duties.²⁰⁵

However, immediate fiscal concerns were not his only consideration. Direct taxation, along with the extension of a system of indirect rule based on powerful chiefs as Sole Native Authorities, was part of the Governor's vision of a colony organized along the lines which he had already established in the Islamic North. During the war these appeared to work well in preventing a major religiously inspired revolt, even though the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph had proclaimed a jihad against Great Britain.²⁰⁶ Indeed, Nigerian officials came to feel that the war was politically beneficial "for the chance to make the Emirs realize that their interests are bound up with those of the Government and of the Imperial Government has been a heaven sent opportunity ...".²⁰⁷ Lugard also considered that:

It is a cardinal principle of British Colonial policy that the interests of a large native population shall not be subject to the will either of a small European merchant class or of a small minority of educated and europeanised natives, who have little in common with them and whose interests are often opposed to theirs²⁰⁸

Foreign competition was therefore "almost essential to preserve a healthy trade and secure to the producer a reasonable value for his produce". The elimination of the "large and prosperous" German trading community had "proved a calamity".²⁰⁹ On the outbreak of the war, Lugard had seen the United States as a potential market.²¹⁰ He now looked to American capital to restore competition to the Nigerian economy, and

hoped that it might be enticed into the colony through the sale of the German properties, which he wanted extensively advertised internationally. The governor set out his ideas in despatches early in April.²¹¹ In July he returned on leave hoping to convince the Colonial Office of the wisdom and practicality of his programme.

NOTES

1. F.O. to C.O. 24 Mar. 1914, CO583/23/11117.
2. Lugard desp. 508, 24 May, Strachey min. 16 June, C.O. to F.O. 23 June 1914, CO583/14/21639.
3. Fiddes min. 3 Apr. 1914, CO583/23/11117.
4. Prince Lichnowsky (German Ambassador at London) to Sir Edward Grey (Foreign Secretary) 6 July, Strachey min. 27 July 1914 CO/583/23/26744.
5. P.H.S. Hatton, "Harcourt and Solf: The Search for an Anglo-German Understanding Through Africa, 1912–1914", *European Studies Review* (E.S.R.) I 2 (1971), pp. 123–45.
6. Zara Steiner, *Britain and the Origins of the First World War*, London, Macmillan, 1977, pp. 234–36.
7. Robert Rhodes James, *Memoirs of a Conservative, J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers 1910–1937*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, pp. 20–21.
8. C.O. mins. 20–30 July, Harding min. 12 Aug. 1914 (quotation), CO583/15/22347.
9. Baynes min. 3 Aug. 1914, CO583/16/28109.
10. Lugard desp. secret 9 Jan. 1915, CO583/30/4984.
11. A.G. Boyle (Deputy Governor) desp. 813, 25 Aug., enclosing letter from W.K. Duncombe (Acting Comptroller of Customs) 6 Aug., with Gloede to Duncombe 4 Aug. 1914, CO583/17/34936.
12. Lugard desps. secret 9 Jan. & 3 Feb. 1915, CO583/30/4984,8803; C.W. Alexander (O.C. Prisoner of War Bureau) memo 19 Oct. 1914 (quotation), CO583/19/46122.
13. For a discussion of the Lagos press see below, pp. 143–45.
14. *Nigerian Pioneer* 28 Aug. 1914, quoted in Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, Longman, 1979, p. 72. For Lugard's role in the establishment of the *Nigerian Pioneer*, Alister Macmillan (ed.), *The Red Book of West Africa*, London, Frank Cass, 1968 (1920), p. 128.
15. Letter from Willy [Brünger] 25 Aug., sent with translation by Director of Military Intelligence to C.O. 22 Sept. 1914. Brünger arranged for copies of this letter to reach his family by various routes. This one was posted by the Woermann Linie agent in London on 14 Sept. 1914. CO583/23/36398.

16. Lugard desp. secret "A" 14 May 1915, CO583/32/26265, desp. 607, 24 July 1916, CO583/47/38607.
17. Burrowes memo 30 Dec. 1918, CO583/73/10042.
18. The documents are in CO583/41/16358. CO583/31/27255, and CO583/32/17183.
19. R. Taggart statement 24 Jan. 1916 in Dobell (British commander in Kamerun) to War Office 28 Jan. 1915 [*sic, recte* 1916], CO583/52/5122.
20. FO to CO 17 May 1915 CO583/31/22755; FO to Law Officers 4 Aug. 1915, and Law Officers' opinion 6 Jan. 1916, CO583/52/5722.
21. Lugard tel. 13 Apr., desp. Secret "A" 14 May 1915, CO583/32/17183, 26265.
22. Lugard to Lady Lugard 15 Apr. 1917, MSS Lugard 4, LP.
23. Lugard desp. secret 9 Jan. 1915, CO583/30/4984, Boyle telegram 15 Aug. 1914, CO583/17/30539.
24. Strachey min., 18 Aug. 1914, CO583/17/30539.
25. Gysi & Kleinjung Ltd. (Manchester) to Treasury 22 Aug. 1914, CO554/23/32496; Higham to Harcourt 19 Nov. 1914, CO583/27/45915. Higham was being disingenuous. The Liverpool firms made most of their profits on imports rather than exports, and therefore shared Manchester's interest in maintaining the purchasing power of indigenes.
26. Board of Trade notice 9 Oct. incorporating portions of Royal Proclamation 2 Sept. 1914, CO554/22/39564; *Times* clipping with Treasury statement, filed by Strachey 27 Aug. 1914, CO554/23/32406. For a fuller discussion, John McDermott, "Trading with the Enemy: British Business and the Law During the First World War", *Canadian Journal of History* (C.J.H.) 32 (Aug. 1997), pp. 201–19.
27. Lugard desp. (confidential), 6 Nov. 1914, CO583/20/47127.
28. Lugard desp. (secret) 27 Oct. 1914, CO554/18/45296.
29. Scarbrough to C.O. 15 Oct. 1914, CO583/28/39936, R. & W. King to C.O. 14 Oct. 1914, CO583/29/39881. At Garua, Major Festing, employed by the Niger Company, learned of the outbreak of war before the German authorities, with whom he had his usual social evening before escaping down the Benue by canoe. He left behind the Agent, Taggart, and his colleague, Oglesby, who remained captives until the end of the war in Kamerun in February 1916. Festing rejoined the Royal Irish Rifles and died in action in France in 1915. Frederick, Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa, A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company 1707–1931* (London, Heinemann, 1974), pp. 162–63. Trigge to Scarbrough 15 Sept. 1915, 1 Sept. 1916, SP MSS Afr. s. 86. Throughout the war the Niger Company maintained a claim of £36,978 for property destroyed or looted at Garua. Niger Co. to Capital Issues Cttee 16 Oct. 1918, CO583/69/52889.

30. Miller Bros. to C.O. 19 Oct. 1914, CO583/23/40547. The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce sent in three protests against the resumption of German trade and were backed by London. The Manchester protest by contrast was "very limited". A.J. Harding min., 6 Nov. 1914, CO583/20/42821.
31. For the C.O.'s initial dismissal of the Liverpool protest, mins. by Charles Tennyson (Legal Assistant), Strachey, & J.S. Risley (Legal Adviser), 14 & 15 Oct.; for the meeting between Fiddes and the Liverpool delegation of Moore (Company of African Merchants and Chairman, West Africa Section, Liverpool Chamber of Commerce), Miller (Miller Bros.), & Tunnicliffe (African Association), Harding min. 15 Oct., Fiddes min. 17 Oct., Anderson min. 18 Oct., Harcourt min. 19 Oct. 1914, CO583/20/39590. For Fiddes's earlier view, min. 28 Sept. 1914, CO554/22/36378.
32. Risley min. 21 Oct. 1914, CO554/23/40547.
33. Min. on personal conf. report (not preserved) 18 July 1918, CO583/66/32167.
34. Board of Trade to C.O. 24 Oct., C.O. tels. to West African Governors 30 Oct. 1914, CO554/22/41426; Lugard tel. 15 Nov. 1914, CO583/20/45046. Lugard desp. conf. 23 Dec. 1914 (quotation), CO583/21/3191.
35. Burrowes memo on Gaiser liquidation 6 Jan. 1919 (flimsy) CO583/73/13284. For Thomas, *Red Book* pp. 103–4. His role is not mentioned in the archival documents available to me.
36. Lugard desp. Conf. 18 Nov. 1914, CO583/20/48783.
37. R.S. Sperling (Foreign Office) min. 10 Aug. 1914, FO371/2195, 37617/37617. Foreign Office archives, TNA. The writer was summarising arguments for and against maintaining the neutrality of the Conventional Basin of the Congo in accordance with article 11 of the Treaty of Berlin.
38. For the German wireless network, which was intended to compensate for British control over the world's cable network, see Hew Strachan, *The First World War, vol. 1: To Arms*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 452, and map, pp. 450–51, and Peter J. Hugill, *Global Communications Since 1844: Geopolitics and Technology*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999, pp. 46–47, 104–5.
39. Sperling min. 10 Aug (1st quotation), G.R. Clerk (Chief Clerk, War Dept) min. s.d., (2nd quotation), FO371/2195, 37617/37617. The diplomacy of the First World War in Africa has been well studied. Wm Roger Louis, *Great Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, 1914–1919*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1963, remains fundamental. More recent treatments include: Brian Digre, *Imperialism's New Clothes: The Repartition of Tropical Africa 1914–1919*, New York, Peter Lang, 1990;

- and Peter J. Yearwood, "Great Britain and the Repartition of Africa, 1914–1919", *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* (J.I.C.H.) 18/3 (Oct., 1990), pp. 316–41. For the military aspect, Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, is now the best account available in English.
40. Lugard desp. 851, 15 Sept., including statement by deputation 13 Aug. 1914 (quotation), CO583/18/38609.
 41. J.M. Freemantle, "Muri Province Annual Report for 1914" 21 Aug. 1915. He also had problems with complaints that indigenes "were promised protection in return for taxation (another leading question not too easy to answer to natives with a limited outlook)...." SNP 10/3/171 P/1915, Nigerian National Archives Kaduna (NAK). I am grateful to my late colleague Professor Charles Jacobs, then of University of Jos, for having provided me with a copy of this document.
 42. Raymond Gore Clough, *Oil Rivers Trader: Memories of Iboland*, London, C Hurst, 1972, pp. 106–7. This book needs to be used with caution as Clough was writing a fictionalized memoir of conditions on the Coast prior to his own arrival in the early 1930s. He acknowledged in particular the help of his "old friend H.C. Crookenden who started his career in the creeks with Miller Bros. Ltd., in 1913", but "His reminiscences added some of the lighter parts" (p. xii).
 43. Lugard tel. 2 Nov. 1914, CO583/20/42821.
 44. The documents on this are in CO583/20/48783. For a fuller discussion, Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, Longman, 1979, pp. 110–15.
 45. Lugard desp. (confidential) 18 Nov. 1914, CO583/20/48783.
 46. For detailed accounts: Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 101–10; H.A. Gailey, *Lugard and the Abeokuta Uprising: The Demise of Egba Independence*, London, Frank Cass, 1982.
 47. Lugard to Harcourt private letter (copy) 29 Oct. 1914, CO583/28/41270.
 48. Paul Meyer & R. Breitenbach (Witt und Büsch), Karl Note (Gaiser) to Lugard 6 Nov. 1914, quoted in Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 112.
 49. Burrowes memos 30 Dec. 1918 (quotation) & 6 Jan. 1919 (flimsies), CO583/73/10042,13284.
 50. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 144–45, quotation at p. 145.
 51. Harding min. 3 Nov. on Lugard tel. 2 Nov. 1914, CO583/20/42821. As we shall repeatedly see, C.O. officials routinely wrote deprecatingly on Lugard's telegrams and despatches.
 52. A.E. Neale letter of 3 Nov. in Lugard desp. (secret) 6 Nov., *ibid.*

53. Harold Nicolson, *King George V, His Life and Reign*, London, Pan Books, 1967 (1952), p. 309.
54. Mins. by Harcourt 9 Dec. (1st quotation), Harding & Strachey (2nd quotation) 16 Dec. 1914, CO583/20/47130.
55. Fiddian min. 12 June 1913, CO520/124/18836.
56. The details are in CO583/20/48787. Quotations are from minutes by Fiddian 20 Dec., Mächtig 17 Oct. [? *recte* Dec.], and Harcourt 29 Dec. 1914. The notification for Berlin is in C.O. to Prisoners of War Bureau 19 Nov. 1914, CO583/19/44177.
57. Lugard desps. 975 20 Oct. and confidential "C" 12 Oct. 1914, CO583/19/44177, 42180; Harding min. 10 Feb. 1915 (quotation), CO554/26/5843.
58. H. North, Medical Officer on *Obuassi*, statement 6 Nov. (1st quotation), C.O. to P.O.W. Bureau 28 Nov., to Lugard, tel. 1844, 9 Dec. 1914 (2nd quotation).
59. Acting Director, Nigeria Marine, to Director 7 Apr. (1st quotation), Lugard desp. 607 24 July 1916 (2nd quotation), CO583/4738607; complaint of German prisoners at The South Camp, Lofthouse Park 7 Jan. (4th & 5th quotations) & Harding min. 25 Jan. 1916, (3rd quotation), CO554/31/2387.
60. Harding min. 12 Mar. 1915, CO554/25/10933.
61. Lugard desp. Secret 3 Feb. 1915, CO583/30/8803. The missionaries and the nun remained in Nigeria throughout the war. Lugard desp. conf. 14 Aug. 1918, CO583/67/51549.
62. Ungebauer memorial 28 Aug. 1914 in Lugard desp. Conf. 19 Nov. 1917, CO583/61/62015.
63. J.A. Hutton (Chairman British Cotton Growing Association) to Strachey 27 July 1917, CO583/62/35836.
64. Burrowes memo 23 Oct. 1915, CO583/38/55087; Ungebauer statement n.d. in Lugard desp. 19 Nov. 1917, CO583/61/62015.
65. Strachey min. 14 Nov. 1914 (1st quotation), CO583/27/44446, marginal note n.d., on Burrowes memo. 23 Oct. 1915, (2nd quotation), CO583/38/55087.
66. Hutton to Strachey 23 & 26 July 1917, CO583/62/35836, cf. Keep Bros. Ltd. (London & Birmingham) to Tennyson 11 Nov. 1914, CO583/27/44446, and Burrowes memo 23 Oct. 1915, CO583/38/55087.
67. For Ungebauer's masonic links with Pearse and Ajasa see the documents in CO583/73/13285. For a shipment of hides to America, Pearse sent bills of lading through Ungebauer to James Gordon & Co. (Liverpool), Lugard desp. 22 Nov. 1915. Ungebauer arranged for the assay in England of potash, and would have arranged a shipment

- of 100 tons for Pearse, but the material proved to be valueless. (Potash was of considerable importance in the war, as it was the only mineral in which Germany had a near monopoly.) Ungebauer also consulted Pearse over suppliers of silver in England. This record of transactions with Pearse contrasts with the lack of evidence of any contacts with Peter Thomas, who shipped his hides through J.T. Fischer of Liverpool. Ungebauer to Clements 1 Jan., 23 Feb., 26 Mar., & 10 Aug. 1915, CO583/38/57470,55087. For Freemasonry in Nigeria and its originally trans-racial character, E.A. Ayandele, *The Missionary Impact on Modern Nigeria 1842–1914*, London, Longman, 1966, pp. 267–69.
68. This seems to have been recognized only in 1917. It was then acknowledged that there had been no misrepresentation in Ungebauer's application. Lugard claimed that he and the Executive Council had been misled by statements made by F.S. James, the Administrator of Lagos Colony. Lugard desp. Conf. 19 Nov., to Fiddes 18 Nov., R.M. Combe (Nigerian Attorney General) memorial 19 Nov. 1917, CO583/61/62015. Naturalization in a British possession such as Lagos could be granted only to those with five years Crown service or five years residence of which the year immediately preceding had to be unbroken. J.S. Risley, Legal Adviser, C.O., min., 21 Jan. 1915, CO225/12/51849.
 69. Burrowes memo 23 Oct. 1915, CO583/38/55087. This file also contains copies of Ungebauer's correspondence with Schleevogt and Clements. For Ungebauer's connection with Clements, which had the approval of the Home Office, and the payments to the prisoners of war, see also Controller, Foreign Trade Department (F.O.) to C.O. 21 Jan. 1916, CO583/52/3430.
 70. Controller, Foreign Trade Dep't to C.O. 21 Jan. 1916, CO583/52/3430; W.J. Bush (Essence Distillers) to War Trade Intelligence Department 4 Aug. 1916, enclosing Ungebauer to Bush 19 June 1916, CO583/54/37478.
 71. Lugard desp. Conf. "B" 13 Jan. 1915, CO583/30/4961, Boyle desp. Conf. 8 Nov. 1915, CO583/38/55087.
 72. He provided simple information about some of the firms. R.F. Irving to Burrowes 1 Aug. 1916, CO583/54/36414. Lugard had earlier suggested that Ungebauer, as well as some "native" traders, and the Swiss Rahm (see above p. 47, n. 107), and perhaps some other neutrals, might be used for the collection of German firms' debts from African traders, but Burrowes had deprecated this as he regarded Ungebauer's conduct "as inimical to our interests though it can unfortunately not be proved". Lugard desp., 472 18 May, Burrowes memo 14 May 1915, CO583/34/26248.

73. Burrowes memo 23 Oct. 1915, CO583/38/55087.
74. This was substantially what happened in Nov. 1914, CO583/27/44446,46388, in January 1915, CO583/30/4961, and in Nov. 1915–Jan. 1916, CO583/38/55087.
75. See below, pp. 247–50.
76. Lugard's worries anticipated the formal declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire. In a telegram of 2 Nov. 1914 he stressed that: "It is now imperative to put a stop to these [German] intrigues in view of the news regarding Moslem invasion of Egypt". CO583/20/42821. For the situation in Egypt, Strachan, *First World War*, vol. 1, pp. 729–34.
77. The files on this question have been somewhat muddled. The main documents are in CO583/20/44234,46339.
78. Lugard desp. 1206, 31 Dec. 1914, CO583/21/3088.
79. A.J. Stavridis (Greek Consul General, London) to Crown Agents 20 Nov. (1st quotation), C.O. to F.O. 30 Nov. 1914 (3rd quotation), CO583/22/44234; Harding min. 26 Nov. 1914 (2nd quotation), CO583/22/46339.
80. In 1918, Canaris was bought out, and the firm was taken over by G.B. Ollivant, though in Nigeria it would maintain its separate identity as Tangelakis until 1924. *Red Book*, p. 76; Pedler *Lion & Unicorn*, p. 97.
81. Lugard sent the various messages to the C.O. with desp. 1215 of 31 Dec. 1914. That of the Tripoli Arabs was dated 27 Zulhaje 1332. They were presented to the King and released to the press in Feb. 1915. CO583.21/4925. Because of the Italian conquest, Lugard was unsure whether the Tripolitarians were still Ottoman subjects. Lugard desp., secret, 3 Feb. 1915, CO583/30/8803.
82. Lugard esp. conf. "A" 4 Feb., Tennyson & Risley mins. 3 Mar., Fiddes min. 5 Mar., C.O. to Lugard 10 Mar. 1915, CO583/30/8803.
83. C.O. to Manchester Chamber of Commerce 16 Mar. 1915, CO554/25/11410.
84. Risley min. 25 Mar. (quotation), Fiddes min. 26 Mar. 1915, CO554/25/13683.
85. Hutton to Fiddes 8 Mar. 1915, CO554/29/11410. Manchester was particularly concerned about goods prepared by Albrechts before the war and stamped with Gaiser's "Eagle" trade mark. Albrechts eventually sent them to Walkdens and to an unnamed African trader. Burrowes, as receiver, threatened to confiscate the goods. Years later Burrowes would recall that the hostility of the local merchants was a major impediment to his work. Burrowes memo 4 Feb. 1920, CO583/84/15683.
86. C.O. to Law Officers 29 Apr. 1915, CO554/25/13683. Higham to Harcourt 1 Mar. 1915, CO583/43/10149; Lugard desp. 253, 13 Mar. 1915, CO583/31/15526.

87. Law Officers' opinion, Tennyson min. 28 May (2nd quotation), Fiddes min. 31 May 1915 (3rd quotation), CO554/27/24554; C.O. to West African governors 10 June 1915 (1st quotation), CO554/40/32902.
88. African Section, Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to C.O., 15 May (quotation) and Scarborough to C.O. 31 Mar. 1915, CO583/40/27579.
89. D.L.H. Baynes (Niger Dep't) min. on meeting with Liverpool, Manchester, & London Chambers of Commerce 28 June (1st quotation), Fiddes min. 8 July (3rd quotation), Anderson min. 30 July 1915 (2nd quotation), CO554/25/28816; Lagos Chamber of Commerce to Central Secretary, Lagos (copy) 8 May, Harding min. 12 June, Risley min. 18 June 1915 CO554/34/26248; Burrowes memos 28 Dec. & 26 Jan. 1919 (flimsies), CO583/73/13284.
90. Fiddes min. 9 July 1915, CO554/25/28816.
91. C.O. to Law Officers & note from Steel-Maitland to Carson 4 Aug. 1915, Harding min. 12 Nov., Law to Smith 18 Nov. 1915, *ibid*.
92. Law Officers' opinion, 6 Dec. (1st quotation), Tennyson min. 22 Dec. 1915, Steel-Maitland min. 2 Jan. 1916 (2nd quotation), CO554/29/56578.
93. Undated addition to unsigned note of 15 Aug. 1914, SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
94. Robert Miller memo. "Produce Trade in Nigeria", 10 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/47412. In the Commons debate on 8 Nov. 1916 it was claimed that merchants had been buying at £14 in Lagos for sale at £22 in Hamburg. They had to sell at £14 in Liverpool. *HC Debates* 5 series, vol. 87, col. 316 (speech of Alfred Bigland).
95. Company of African Merchants to C.O. 3 Sept., mins. by Harding (quotation) & Strachey, 8 Sept. 1914, CO554/23/33720.
96. These figures are taken from a list of monthly prices for kernels in Liverpool and Lagos from Jan. 1912 to Aug. 1916 in GD193/93/1, Steel-Maitland papers (SMP), National Archives of Scotland (NAS), Edinburgh. In a letter to Walter Runciman (President of the Board of Trade) on 15 Sept., Harcourt noted that German demand had increased the Lagos price by between 16/- to 18/- a ton, CO583/25/33870. In early October Lugard gave a price of £12 per ton which was "a higher one than the native could obtain for his produce only 10 years ago". Desp. (confidential) 4 Oct. 1914, CO583/18/42177. A table and graph of Lagos and Liverpool kernel prices is in Appendix II.
97. Harcourt to Runciman 15 Sept. 1914, CO583/25/33870.
98. Restriction of Enemy Supplies Committee no. 29, 19 Dec. 1914, in CO323/689/1492; Marc Frey, "Trade, Ships and the Neutrality of the Netherlands in the First World War", *International History Review* (I.H.R.) 19(1997), p. 545. T.G. Otte, "Between Hammer and Anvil":

- Sir Francis Oppenheimer, The Netherlands Overseas Trust and Allied Economic Warfare 1914–1918”, in Christopher Baxter and Andrew Stewart, eds., *Diplomats at War, British and Commonwealth Diplomacy in Wartime*, Leiden, Martinus Nijhoff, 2008, pp. 95–99.
99. Mins. of a meeting held in the C.O. to consider matters affecting West African trade, 19 Aug. 1914, CO554/21/31814; Runciman to Harcourt 14 Sept. 1914, CO583/25/33870. Further material can be found in the rather jumbled documents in CO554/22/44460.
 100. Lugard desp. (secret) 27 Oct. 1914, CO554/18/45296.
 101. Niger Co. to C.O. 17 Jan. 1916, CO583/53/2701. The *Red Book*, p. 249, noted a great expansion of trade between the United States and Sierra Leone during the war. It made no similar remark about Nigeria. The United States exported almost a million gallons of rum to the Gold Coast in 1914, most of it in sailing ships, J.A. Calder (West Africa Dep’t) min. 16 June 1916, CO554/32/28428. America was the world’s largest importer of cocoa (mins. of meeting on West African trade 19 Aug. 1914, CO554/21/31814), but this would appear to have come from South America rather than West Africa. Flood memo on German Exploitation of Colonial Products prepared for Reconstruction Cttee, Aug. 1916, CO323/725/40053.
 102. Blue Book Report for 1915, CO583/55/6195.
 103. Leete, Son & Co. (Liverpool) to F.O. (flimsy) 23 Feb. 1916, CO583/52/10531. Leete were selling brokers for Paterson Zochonis, and had regularly sold Lagos palm oil to U.S. Steel Products (N.Y.) “for many years”.
 104. Niger Co. to C.O. 13 Sept 1916, CO583/52/43932; Trigge to Scarbrough 1 Sept. 1916, SP MSS Afr. s. 86. Despite the promising start, exports of kernels and groundnuts from Nigeria to America were negligible by the end of the war.
 105. Miller Bros. to C.O. 13 Dec. 1915, CO583/43/57464.
 106. Lugard desp. (confidential) 4 Oct., and mins. by Harding, 5 Nov. & Strachey, 6 Nov. 1914, CO583/18/42177; Harding min. 4 Sept. 1914 (quotation), CO583/25/33348.
 107. Mins. of meeting of 19 Aug. 1914, CO554/21/31814.
 108. Niger Co. to C.O. 2 Sept., mins. by Baynes, 3 Sept., & Anderson, 4 Sept. 1914, CO583/25/33348.
 109. Lord Islington (Parliamentary Under Secretary, C.O.) min. 24 Aug. 1914, CO583/17/31122; Harcourt to Sir William Lever (private) 3 Sept. 1914 (copy) (quotation), CO583/27/32779.
 110. At the meeting of 19 Aug. 1914 Robert Miller claimed that there were six or seven mills which could take only seven thousand of the thirty thousand tons which were expected to be diverted from Hamburg.

Sir Owen Philipps, Chairman of Elder Dempster, said that there were only two mills, one owned by Elder Dempster, the other by Lever Bros. There might be another plant extracting the oil by chemical rather than mechanical means. CO554/21/31814. In a letter of 3 Sept. 1914 to the F.O. reporting on the meeting the Board of Trade said that the African Oil Mills Company of Liverpool had the only large mill capable of crushing kernels. It could handle ten thousand tons a month out of the twenty-six thousand potentially available, 3 Sept. 1914, CO554/22/44460. As Sir Alfred Jones, the founder of Elder Dempster, had been "originally associated" with this mill (*Red Book*, p. 301), which was purchased by the Co-operative Wholesale Society in 1916 (Wholesale Co-operative Movement, Manchester, to C.O. 9 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54594), this was probably the first of the mills to which Philipps had referred.

111. Charles Wilson, *The History of Unilever: A Study in Economic Growth and Social Change*, London, Cassell, 1954, vol. 2, p. 156.
112. Agricultural Organization Society to C.O. 8 Sept. 1914 covering copy of a letter from British Oil Cake & Mills Ltd. (London) n.d., CO583/25/34226; Report of Committee on Edible Nuts and Seeds, Apr. 1916, Command 8247, copy in CO554/31/20957.
113. Lugard desp. (confidential) 4 Oct. 1914, CO583/18/42177; cf. Owen Philipps to Steel-Maitland 9 June 1915, where cattle cake is said to have added £1/10/- to the price of kernels in Germany, GD193/164/3/10, SMP.
114. Islington min. 8 Sept. 1914, CO583/17/31122. Dennett had a similar view and also blamed farmers' conservatism for a decline in soya bean imports from 1912. Royal Colonial Institute paper 27 Oct. 1914, CO554/29/37110.
115. F.J. Lloyd (Consultant Chemist, British Dairy Farmers Association) to Harcourt 17 Nov. (1st quotation), Harding min. 30 Nov. 1914 (2nd quotation), CO583/27/45615. A special leaflet issued by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries in Feb. 1915 noted that when kernel "cakes contain a very low percentage of oil the great pressure which has been employed makes the cake excessively hard and renders full utilisation by stock difficult". CO554/27/16376.
116. Harcourt mins. 14 Sept. 1914, CO583/25/33348, 3 Dec. 1914 (quotations), CO583/24/33405.
117. C. O. to Board of Agriculture and Fisheries 24 Sept. 1914, CO583/25/33870.
118. Board of Agriculture and Fisheries to C.O. 21 Nov. 1914, CO583/24/33405.
119. Report of the Edible Nuts Cttee, Apr. 1916 (Cmd 8247).

120. 42 W.T.A.C., 20 July 1916, CO323/731/46819.
121. The main documents are in CO583/26/34701,40689,43232,59; quotations from Strachey min. 18 Sept. & Islington min. 19 Sept. 1914 in file 34701. Also, the Report of the Edible Nuts Cttee, Apr. 1916 (Cmd 8247), the précis of evidence sent by the Hull Chamber of Commerce on 28 Sept. 1915, CO554/25/44410, and the pamphlet *Palm Kernels* produced by the London Chamber of Commerce in Dec 1914, copy in SMP, GD193/164/3/10.
122. *HC Debates*, 5 series, vol. 85, 3 Aug. 1916 (speech of Sir Owen Philipps).
123. British Oil & Cake Mills to Bank of British West Africa 27 Feb., forwarded to C.O. 1 Mar. 1915, CO554/29/9311.
124. F.O. to C.O. 15 Feb., Baynes min. 25 Feb. 1915 (quotations), CO583/40/7682.
125. To Agent General 12 Jan. 1915 (flimsy), SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
126. The figures for the comparable period of 1913–1914 were 68,363 tons (£1,671,227) imported and 47,553 tons (£1,150,510) retained). Imperial Institute memorandum, Mar. 1915 in CO583/41/36192.
127. Owen Philipps to Steel-Maitland 9 June 1915, SMP, GD193/164/3/10.
128. This is from the list in GD193/93/1, SMP. Weekly figures for 1915 taken from the J.H. Rayner & Co. circular are attached to the Association of West African Merchants' memo "Produce Trade in West Africa" 23 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/50893. These show a peak of £19/18/9 on 2 Mar. The price fell below £16 on 11 May and remained below that figure until 18 Oct. From that point there was a steep rise.
129. Trigge memo. 15 Sept. 1915, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86, cf. Elder Dempster to C.O. 16 Aug. 1915, CO554/29/3790.
130. Mins. of meeting on West African trade 19 Aug. 1914, CO554/21/31814.
131. Lugard desp. Conf. 4 Oct. 1914, CO583/18/42177.
132. Trigge memo. 15 Sept. 1915, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86.
133. T.F. Burrowes "Notes on the trade combine in Nigeria" 6 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/53413. Burrowes omits Thomas Welsh, which was certainly a member: C.O. memo. to Lagos, Accra, & Freetown 24 Aug. 1916, CO583/53/37164. The eight Lagos companies will be called the "ring", while the word "combine" will be used for the larger grouping.
134. Arthur B. Leather (Secretary, Association of West African Merchants) memo "Produce Trade in Nigeria" 23 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/50893.
135. Elder Dempster to C.O. 16 Aug. 1915, CO554/29/37907.
136. Niger Co. to Agent General 26 Jan. 1915 (flimsy), MSS Afr. s. 99, SP.

137. Remarks by Robert Miller at Royal Colonial Institute 27 Oct. 1914, CO554/29/37110.
138. Elder Dempster to C.O. 16 Aug. 1915, CO554/29/37907.
139. John Holt to C.O. 26 Nov. 1915, CO554/29/54827.
140. Board of Trade to C.O. with copy of Secretary, Liverpool Cttee for the Coordination of Naval, Military, and Civilian Requirements of the Port to Board of Trade 8 Jan., mins. by Harding, 2 Feb., Fiddes, 7 Feb., & Steel-Maitland, 12 Feb., C.O. to Liverpool Cttee 16 Feb. 1916 (quotation) CO554/31/3203. In 1915, Liverpool took 178,000 tons of kernels, while Hull took 42,519 tons, and London 8729 tons. Edible Nuts Cttee Report, Apr. 1916, Cmd 8247.
141. Niger Co. to Agent General 26 Jan. & 16 Feb. 1915 (flimsies), SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
142. To Agent General 26 Jan. (flimsy), cf. to Agents, Upper Igarra 18 Jan., Nassarawa 26 Jan., to Agent General 9 & 16 Feb., to Agent, Oguta 16 Feb. 1916 (all flimsies), *ibid*.
143. Trigge memo 15 Sept. 1915, SP MSS Afr. s. 86
144. The loss in 1914 was £31,072, Colin Newbury, "Trade and Technology in West Africa; The Case of the Niger Company 1900–1920" *J.A.H.* 19 (1978), Table 3, p. 564. For the Company's estimate of 1915 profits, [Trigge] memo. 20 Jan. 1916, SP, MSS Afr. s. 99. Newbury's table gives a 1915 profit of £149,112, but has figures well above £60,000 for each year of 1910–1913. In the war years its profit rates were at or near the bottom of the firms for which figures are provided in Geoffrey Jones, *Merchants to Multinationals, British Trading Companies in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, Table 4.1, p. 95, & Appendix I, p. 354.
145. *Red Book*, p. 64.
146. To Agent, Nassarawa 26 Jan. 1916 (flimsy), SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
147. Robert Miller, "Produce Trade in Nigeria" 10 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/47412.
148. Niger Co. to Agent, Oguta 16 Feb. 1915 (flimsy), SP, MSS Afr. s. 99. In Oct. 1916 Lagos Stores provided the Colonial Office with a breakdown of its profits. Before the war roughly a third came from produce, during the war it was roughly a half. James Pickering Jones to C.O. 14 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/50893.
149. To Agent General 16 Feb. (1st quotation), 26 Mar. 1915 (2nd quotation) (flimsies), SP MSS Afr. s. 99.
150. Burrowes "Notes on the combine" 6 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/53413. The Lagos price, which Burrowes did not give, was £11/16/6. Harding min. 5 Feb. 1917, CO554/33/6563.

151. James Murray Stuart-Young, *The Iniquitous Coaster*, London, Arthur H Stockwell, 1917, p. 187. This confrontation would appear to have taken place in May 1916.
152. Trigge to Scarbrough 1 Sept. 1916, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86.
153. These figures are taken from the list in GD193/93/1, SMP.
154. Ungebauer to Clements 23 Feb. 1915, CO583/38/55087.
155. See above, pp. 78–9.
156. Harding min. 19 Oct. 1918, CO554/40/40508.
157. Ungebauer to Clements 17 May 1915, CO583/38/55087.
158. P.N. Davies, *The Trade Makers: Elder Dempster in West Africa 1852–1972*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1973, p. 204. The company would ultimately lose thirty-three ships to enemy action, and there were also twelve maritime losses. Over the course of the war, government requisition affected about one third of the Elder Dempster fleet. *Red Book*, p. 296. Details of Elder Dempster ships are provided in James E. Cowden & John O.C. Duffy, *The Elder Dempster Fleet History 1852–1985*, n.p., Mallett and Bell Publications, 1986. The thirty three losses to enemy action include ships detained in Hamburg at the beginning of the war (3), ships sunk on British government service (4), and ships of associated lines sunk on non-West African routes (3). They also include the *Appam*, which was captured by the surface raider *Moewe*, interned in New York, and released after American entry into the war.
159. Elder Dempster to C.O. 11 Dec. 1915, CO583/43/57279.
160. Nigeria Marine Dep't, Annual Report 1915, CO583/67/44651; Elder Dempster to C.O. 16 Aug. 1915, CO554/29/37907.
161. Harding min. 15 Aug. 1914, CO583/17/30520.
162. Lugard tel. 15 Jan. 1915, CO583/30/2475.
163. Lugard desp. 1126, 4 Dec. 1915, CO583/38/59211.
164. Trigge to Scarbrough 31 Dec. 1915, SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
165. [Trigge] to Travers Braithwaite (Niger Co. Solicitor) 13 July 1918 (flimsy), MSS Afr. s. 93, SP.
166. Niger Co. to Division Agent, Kano and Jos 9 Feb. 1915, SP MSS Afr. s. 99.
167. This is the date given in the *Red Book*. Raccah, and his colleague Abulafia, went out in Feb. 1915. However, Gowers' report of June 1914 (above, p. 28) stated that many of the Tripolitanian Arabs in Kano were dealing with the firm.
168. *Red Book*, p. 126 (Hassan), 73 (Ambrosini). Trigge to Scarbrough 15 Sept. 1915 (ostrich feathers), SP MSS Afr. s. 86.
169. Exports fell from 16,997 tons in 1914 to 8910 tons in 1915, but were over 50,000 tons in each of 1916, 1917, & 1918. The values were £72,178 in 1915, £473,653 in 1916, £710,308 in 1917, and £920,137 in 1918.

170. Trigge to Scarbrough 21 May 1917, to Braithwaite (unsigned, flimsy) 13 July 1918, SP, MSS Afr. s. 93.
171. Trigge to Scarbrough 21 May 1917, *ibid.*
172. Figures taken from the list in GD193/93/1, SMP.
173. See below, p. 117.
174. Burrowes "Notes on the combine", 6 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/53413. The situation in Nigeria contrasted sharply with that in Sierra Leone, where there was no combine. Because of the absence of shell fragments, Lagos kernels were worth £1 more than Sierra Leone kernels, but when the Lagos price was at its lowest of £7/10 in June 1916 the Sierra Leone price was £12. Harding & Strachey mins 5 & 6 Feb. 1918, CO554/33/6583.
175. Trigge to Braithwaite 13 July 1918 (unsigned, flimsy) (1st quotation), with attached documents, SP, MSS Afr. s. 93, Trigge memos. 1 Sept. 1916 (2nd quotation), 18 Oct. 1917, 7 Oct. 1919, *ibid.*, s. 86, Edgar to Scarbrough 6 July quoting Control Cttee Resolution of 12 Apr. 1916, *ibid.*, s. 93.
176. Documents in *ibid.*, s. 93.
177. Scarbrough letter n.d. to unknown recipient, prompted by letter from Cotterell of 30 Oct. 1915, cf. Edgar to Scarbrough 6 Nov. 1915, *ibid.*
178. Scarbrough note n.d. (mid. Nov. 1915), *ibid.*
179. Cotterell to Scarbrough 11 Nov. (1st quotation), to Edgar (private) (copy) (2nd quotation) 23 Nov. 1915, *ibid.*
180. Edgar to Scarbrough 24 Nov., Goldie to Scarbrough 31 Dec. 1915, *ibid.*
181. Control Cttee mins. 16 Dec., Robert Miller to Scarbrough 17 Dec., Goldie to Scarbrough 31 Dec. 1915, SP, MSS Afr. s. 93.
182. Trigge to Scarbrough 7 Jan. 1916, *ibid.*, s. 99.
183. Scarbrough to Cotterell 12 Feb., cf. Scarbrough to Fiddes 23 Feb. 1916, *ibid.*, s. 93.
184. Goldie to Scarbrough 23 Feb. 1916, *ibid.*
185. Trigge to Scarbrough 4 Apr., Edgar to Scarbrough 5 Apr. 1916, *ibid.* For Cotterell wanting to bring John Holt in, Trigge to Scarbrough 29 Feb. 1916, *ibid.*, s. 99.
186. Lugard to Lady Lugard, 6 May 1916, MSS Lugard, s. 4. A.A. Cowan of Miller Bros., had experience of Nigeria going back to 1887.
187. Robert Miller to Scarbrough 23 May, Edgar to Scarbrough 29 May 1916 (quotation), SP MSS Afr. s. 93.
188. Miller to Scarbrough 5 & 13 July 1916, *ibid.*
189. Edgar to Scarbrough 6 & 10 July, Cotterell to Scarbrough 8 July 1916, *ibid.*
190. Miller to Scarbrough 11 July, SubCttee of Control Cttee (Miller, Trigge, Moore, Tunncliffe) 12 July, Edgar to Scarbrough 14 July 1916, *ibid.*

191. Proof of proposed agreement, 3 Aug., Miller to Scarbrough with counsel's notes, 14 Aug., Cotterell to Scarbrough, s.d., Scarbrough to Braithwaite (flimsy), 15 Aug. 1916, *ibid*.
192. Trigge to Scarbrough 1 Sept. 1916, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86.
193. Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports*, pp. 118–32.
194. Elder Dempster to C.O. 13 Nov.; at the C.O.'s request Elder Dempster was giving priority to the more valuable Gold Coast cocoa, Elder Dempster to C.O. 11 Dec. 1915, CO583/43/52785,57279. John Holt to C.O. 13 Dec.; the C.O. felt priority should be given to oil and kernels as these were more valuable per ton than groundnuts, which could be consumed locally, Harding min. 15 Dec. 1915, CO583/43/57466.
195. Miller Bros. to C.O. 14 Dec. 1915, CO583/43/57464.
196. Lugard desp. 1126, 4 Dec. 1915, CO583/38/59211. For Burrowes's relations with the firms, see above, pp. 57–8, 64.
197. Fiddes to Steel-Maitland 13 Mar. 1918 (copy), CO554/39/14826.
198. Steel-Maitland min. 9 Sept. 1916, CO583/46/41330.
199. Harding mins. 1 Jan. 1916, (quotation), CO583/38/59211, 8 Dec. 1915, CO583/39/56550.
200. Board of Trade to C.O. 26 Jan. 1916, CO583/52/4257.
201. Fiddes min. 28 Jan. 1916, *ibid*.
202. Philipps to C.O. 28 Jan. (1st quotation), Admiralty to C.O. 31 Jan., Bonar Law to Balfour & to Admiralty 3 Feb. (2nd & 3rd quotations), to Lugard 8 Feb. 1916 (4th quotation), CO583/51/5147.
203. In a discussion with C.O. officials on 20 July 1916, Lugard said that customs revenues for the first six months of the year had been £262,000 below the estimates, and that surplus assets (not all of which were liquid) had over the same period declined from £1,273,000 to £520,000. Harding min. 21 July 1916, CO583/45/20906. In 1913, 4,635,273 gallons of spirits had been imported bringing in a revenue of £1,138,305. For 1915 the figures were 1,972,940 gallons and £648,276. Blue Book Report for 1915, CO583/55/6195. This contrasts with the figures for kola imports, which remained steady at over 4000 long tons. Paul Lovejoy, *Caravans of Kola, The Hausa Kola Trade 1700–1900*, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1980, Appendix Table 1, p. 151.
204. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 28–29.
205. Lugard desps. 282, (quotation), & confidential, both 8 Apr. 1916, CO583/45/20789,20906.
206. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 139–50.

207. "Muri Province Annual Report for 1915" 22 June 1916, SNP 10/4/365P. I am grateful to Dr. Jacobs for having provided a copy of this document.
208. Lugard to Harcourt 24 Feb. 1914, quoted in Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 8.
209. Lugard desp. (confidential) 8 Apr. 1916, CO583/45/20906.
210. Lugard desp. (secret) 27 Oct. 1914, CO554/18/45296. See above, p. 57.
211. Lugard desps. 283, & confidential, 8 Apr. 1916, CO583/45/20789,20906.



CHAPTER 4

Lugard, the Colonial Office and the Politics of Crushing

LUGARD AND THE COLONIAL OFFICE

In the early summer of 1916, Sir Frederick Lugard was well placed to get his way in London. He still had great prestige as one of the active builders of the British Empire both in East and West Africa. He had been sent to Lagos as the indispensable man to push through the amalgamation of the Nigerian colonies. His background had been military. In that sphere he was capable of decisive and effective action, as in pressing for the heavy guns which, transported with great difficulty up the Benue, ensured the fall of Garua on 10 June 1915, probably the turning point of the Kamerun campaign.¹ Lugard also saw himself as a man of vision and foresight, capable of establishing the framework of British rule throughout tropical Africa. With the broad lines of his policy the Colonial Office was in complete agreement, as would become apparent when his successor tried to reverse them. It too wanted indirect rule extended from Northern Nigeria “as far as possible to those parts of the Southern Provinces where the break up of native institutions by contact with European ideas has not rendered it too late to do so”. Northern officials had been “trained in a fine school” by Lugard, and “feel that they are carrying out a policy of which as British officers they can be proud – that in native government they are in the van of progress; not in the bogs of the Gold Coast or the back-waters of Southern Nigeria”.²

Despite this agreement on fundamentals, Lugard repeatedly fell foul of the clerks of the Colonial Office, who were rightly unimpressed by

his capacity for detailed administration. Again and again the Governor's despatches apologized for errors made through failure to find or consult documents and maps. Replying to a despatch after almost eleven months, he explained, "The papers had apparently been overlaid..."³ Over the future of Kamerun his recommendations had been particularly confusing and contradictory. Warily the head of the Niger Department minuted on one proposed border line: "(it is the *fourth* he has suggested) is not a good one although the best he has yet put forward."⁴ To be fair, which the Colonial Office was not, Lugard had produced these lines reluctantly, in response to what he believed to be its wishes. He much preferred the policy of Grey at the Foreign Office, who had "consistently affirmed the disinterestness of our action & that we do not need more colonies".⁵ He argued strongly against Harcourt's wish to take Mount Cameroon, his "Naboth's vineyard".⁶ Instead Lugard wanted only what he called adjustments in the north, restoring to the Islamic emirates of Borno and Adamawa the territories which they had lost in the original Anglo-German partition. He clearly did not realize that meeting the Adamawan claim would have transferred roughly half of Kamerun to the British Empire.⁷

Lugard's methods could only exasperate the officials in London. Far from being timid bureaucrats, these were men of strong character and forceful views. The most important were A.J. Harding the number two in the Niger Department, Charles Strachey, the principal clerk in the department, and Sir George Fiddes, the assistant under secretary of the Crown Colonies Division who succeeded Sir John Anderson as Permanent Under Secretary in 1916. Harding, the son of a lodging-house keeper,⁸ came from outside the usual circle of the British elite. He was "a large ponderous Yorkshireman with a rather pompous manner". Sir Ralph Furse, who was briefly a private secretary before the war, remembered him as one who was "a born schoolmaster and never overlooked a slip".⁹ He could be forthright in challenging his superiors, at one point accusing the Parliamentary Under Secretary of proposing a policy which "would be a breach of trust" and "totally incompatible with the principles adopted by H.M.G. for dealing with N. Nigeria land...".¹⁰ Strachey, a man of charm, literary tastes, and a keen sense of humour, was one of the few central officials to have visited West Africa. Lugard felt that "his mode of offence is to learn all he can from subordinates and then to pose as a superior critic and write [over the Colonial Secretary's signature] ... telling me how Native Administration should be carried

on".¹¹ Fiddes had "a spade beard and a pair of blue eyes as cold as the clear logical brain behind them. His tongue could be very sharp – viperish even. Most people feared him; many disliked him". In the Office there was talk of "the tyranny of Fiddes".¹² More was involved than the temperamental incompatibility of the man of action and the men of reflection. Lugard had the most exalted view of his own position. Two years later he would write to his wife: "I am not the servant of either Mr. Long [then Colonial Secretary] or Mr. Fiddes and I shall take pleasure in opposing all their schemes which in my judgement are contrary to the interests of the Empire or the particular country whose interests I represent".¹³ On taking over the governorship, he had insisted upon a scheme of "continuous administration" whereby he would remain in effective control of Nigeria even while on leave in England. In those four months Lugard would have an office in the C.O. and direct access to the Colonial Secretary. He would therefore be able very largely to bypass the clerks he so disliked. Harcourt and Anderson had accepted this arrangement.¹⁴ Their officials were convinced that it was unworkable in theory and a failure in practice "due to the peculiarities of the Governor, to his throttling of the administration by his inability to understand the first principle of administration on a large scale – viz devolution & to his constantly taking decisions without consulting his proper advisers".¹⁵ By the summer of 1915, Fiddes had concluded that the choice was between "the interests of a vast territory and the wishes of an individual".¹⁶

Initially the hostility of the clerks had been more than counterbalanced by the cordiality of their superiors, the Colonial Secretary Sir Lewis Harcourt, and, to a lesser extent, the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir John Anderson. Elegantly slim and with a famously high collar, Harcourt gave the impression of a dilettante. He was in fact "a hard and thorough worker". Furse noted in addition his subtlety, cleverness, tendency for intrigue, and, above all, that he was "rather malicious".¹⁷ J.C.C. Davidson, his private secretary, agreed that he was "a great intriguer, a manipulator...", who "had great influence on Asquith...". But he was also a superb administrator, the best Colonial Secretary ever, "quite as good as Joe Chamberlain...", and adored by the Office.¹⁸ Politics were always likely to strain his relations with Lugard, who was an instinctive and unquestioning Conservative. Writing to his wife Flora in November 1912, when he expected a change of government, Lugard noted that Harcourt "has treated me with very exceptional kindness, and though our side may be good to me they will not have the responsibility

which Harcourt incurred in sending me".¹⁹ Considering him a weak man "very much in the hands of the C.O. officials...",²⁰ Lugard pandered to his vanity by placing his name on the map of Nigeria, where it remains to this day. Harcourt was "pleased as a child" by the naming of Port Harcourt, though anxious that it should not appear that he had suggested it. "Don't care!" he expostulated to Lady Lugard. "But I care immensely. I can't tell you how glad I am to have it called after me...".²¹ He was equally proud of his political reputation. "You don't realise what an advanced Radical I am." Lady Lugard was not convinced. As an aristocrat of deep family feeling, who had a son and heir, unlike Sir Edward Grey, there were limits to his radicalism. Besides, "You are fond of the flesh-pots".²² Nevertheless, the charm offensive which she mounted early in 1914 seemed to be working. By April she could report on "the sympathetic nature of the conversation, how very well he seemed to understand your point of view, how cordially he assented that to let you alone was all right, but that Governors varied very much and that al l[*sic*] of them could not be left all alone".²³

This harmony was soon shattered. As a Unionist, Lugard opposed Home Rule for Ireland and sympathized with the "Curragh Mutiny". "Officers", he told Flora, "are English gentlemen, and it gave me fresh heart when I read of the 70 who sent in their papers".²⁴ His private views became public when he returned on leave.²⁵ In July 1914, he visited Ulster and addressed a regiment of the Belfast volunteers, telling them that "the example they were showing in Ulster of the grit and determination in the people of the United Kingdom would never be forgotten", and congratulating them "in the name of the Overseas Dominions which, perhaps, he might claim to represent...". Harcourt demanded an explanation. Lamely, in his formal reply, Lugard stated that he had said nothing regarding the British government and had not realized that reporters were present. In a private letter he did apologize for the "irregularity of my action", but went on to suggest that "had you been there, and seen the extraordinary self-sacrifice, the devotion, the earnestness, and the intense loyalty of these men, you would yourself have been carried away by admiration, whether you agreed with their ideas of liberty or not". This vision left Harcourt unmoved. After consulting the prime minister he decided to accept an apology for "your very grave breach of the best traditions of the Colonial Service", and added that "this incident must in the future gravely affect my estimate of the value of your judgement and discretion". He told his Private

Secretary to show the correspondence to the staff in the Colonial Office. Lugard himself showed it to the Ulster leader Sir James Craig, pointing out that he had retracted nothing. Craig called Lugard “a brick” and promised to show the correspondence to Sir Edward Carson, the organizer of the Volunteers. The Governor may indeed initially have simply been “carried away”, as he told his brother, but he was now dabbling dangerously in metropolitan politics at a time when responsible persons, from the king on down, were beginning to use the language of civil war.

A fortnight later the Ulster question was eclipsed by the outbreak of the Great War in Europe. British intervention threatened the unity of the Liberal party. Radicals did not want to be dragged into war by balance of power politics. Two ministers, John Morley and John Burns, resigned. The German invasion of Belgium united almost all Britons behind the war effort, but only two prominent Radicals now remained in the Cabinet: Harcourt and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, David Lloyd George. The asperity of his recollections twenty years later suggests that Lloyd George once saw the Colonial Secretary as a dangerous rival.²⁶ Immediately after the outbreak of war Harcourt appeared to be in a strong position. In Cabinet he sat at the prime minister’s right hand.²⁷ Along with Asquith, Sir Edward Grey, the Foreign Secretary, Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and Lord Kitchener, the War Secretary, he received transcripts of intelligence intercepts.²⁸ He was therefore part of a very tight inner circle which initially excluded Lloyd George. With Lugard he remained on bad terms. The governor had promptly proposed the introduction of direct taxation into Southern Nigeria to reinforce the revenue. Official minutes were dismissive, and Harcourt even more so: “This is a ludicrous suggestion in such a crisis as this. Sir F.L. had better get back to Nigeria and deal with actualities.”²⁹ Before he left, Lugard discussed the disposition of Kamerun with the Colonial Secretary. He emerged disgusted with what he considered the land-grabbing of “Field Marshall Harcourt”, who had so lightly embarked on the Kamerun campaign, who regarded it as a war of gain rather than of honour, and who “was detestable in the way he gloated over their [the German colonies] disposal, & detestable in the ignorance he shewed of the very A.B.C. of the matter...”.³⁰ He now looked on Harcourt “as a ‘panjandrum’ a ‘little tin god’ of inferior metal, & a swollen head, & of doubtful claims to the qualities which distinguish an English gentleman”.³¹ He agreed “with Scarbrough’s great desire to see Harcourt & Fiddes removed by a Higher Power”.³² He did not have

long to wait. Never physically robust, heart disease forced Harcourt to delegate much of his work after December 1914.³³ He had already been excluded from the inner circle. When the War Council was established in November, it included Lloyd George rather than Harcourt.³⁴ With the formation of the first coalition government at the end of May 1915, he was relegated to his former post of First Commissioner of Works, and was displaced by the Tory Marquess of Lansdowne from his seat next to Asquith in cabinet.³⁵ The new Colonial Secretary would be the leader of the Conservative Party, Andrew Bonar Law, of all British politicians the least likely to have been put out by Lugard's indiscretions in Belfast. The Governor thought "he has the qualities to make a *great* Col. Secty. I'd sooner have him than anyone I can name".³⁶

Law's appointment as Colonial Secretary was clearly meant as a snub by Asquith, and was resented by Law,³⁷ especially as the Admiralty went to A.J. Balfour, the former Conservative leader, and the India Office to Austen Chamberlain, whom Law had defeated in the contest for the leadership. Asquith explained to the aggrieved Harcourt that "the aliens have to be fed with offices", that they had demanded two state-secretaryships, and "it is thought that Bonar Law will be a less danger at the C.O. than at the I.O.". ³⁸ Law's first biographer has judged that his "administration at the Colonial Office was quiet and competent. Beyond that there is little more to be said". ³⁹ He quickly came to love the C.O., which surprised Asquith, who told the envious Harcourt, "we know the feeling is not reciprocal". ⁴⁰ In fact most of the work was done by the Parliamentary Under Secretary, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, an ambitious Conservative politician linked to Viscount Milner's imperialist group. He had great ability and industry, but, as events would show, wretched luck. Impressive in his mastery of facts, in public he was handicapped by "the impression his halting, apologetic method of speech conveys". Years later, when contemplating his appointment to the cabinet, Stanley Baldwin mused: "He is able enough – got all those firsts at Oxford – but is he human enough?" ⁴¹ With Law, Lugard's relations were good. Nevertheless, the Office continued to produce its carping, critical minutes, eventually convincing Anderson and Steel-Maitland that "the arrangement [for continuous administration] cannot be maintained in existing circumstances without serious detriment to the public interests". Returning on leave, Lugard persuaded Law to keep it going, ⁴² but by the end of 1915 the disillusioned governor concluded: "Things are no better under Maitland and Bonar Law than under Harcourt. The junior

doctrinaire still lays down the law in the veriest detail.”⁴³ Then Harding over-reached himself, penning a long minute on Lugard’s proposal to appoint two superintendants of native revenues. He felt that this was following the mistaken policy of Sir John Anderson when governor of the Federated Malay States, where the sultans had become figureheads, the “pushing Chinese” had come in, and “the Malay is of little more real importance in his own country than the Maori is in his”. Strachey and Fiddes agreed, but Anderson indignantly rejected Harding’s “fancy picture”, and finding in his “lengthy objurgation... no assistance towards the further consideration of this question and indeed the only object of his minute appears to be to shower abuse and suspicion on the Gov. General and incidentally on myself for countenancing him”.⁴⁴ A similar minute on Lugard’s education policy in Northern Nigeria followed the next day. Anderson dismissed part of it as rubbish and regretted “the total inability of the Niger Department to consider any proposal emanating from Sir F. Lugard without animus, and of persistently asking his subordinates to criticize his policy behind his back”. Steel-Maitland hedged by endorsing Lugard’s proposal in a form which “confines the harm within the narrowest limits...”. When this file reached Law, he came down forcefully⁴⁵:

I have read with grave misgiving Sir John Anderson’s criticism of this department. During the time I have been here I have seemed to detect on a good many occasions an inclination in this office to disagree without adequate cause with the views of the Governor. I hope that in every department the Colonial Office will start with the assumption that the man on the spot is likely to be right & will not interfere with him unless there is a real necessity for doing so.

Law circulated this rebuke to each department. Whatever their reservations, the clerks of the C.O. could now hardly resist Lugard’s proposals. Reservations they certainly had, especially to the introduction of direct taxation in the South, which Harcourt had peremptorily rejected in 1914. Lugard had raised it again in 1915. Although Strachey would then have deferred to the governor’s “strongly expressed opinion”, his superiors were not as ready to “underrate the capacity of the ‘educated’ native from Lagos for giving trouble”. With the Kamerun campaign still in progress, they felt “It would be only prudent to wait till the troops return and we have the bayonets to support our philanthropy”.⁴⁶ After

the final conquest in February 1916 this argument for delay could no longer be used. The officials still feared disaffection and disturbances. Although they could not now oppose Lugard's considered judgement, they hedged their approval with conditions: at least at the beginning it could only replace, but not increase, existing taxation; it would be introduced gradually in carefully selected districts where the chiefs were favourable and no serious opposition was expected. Even so, the responsibility would rest with the Governor rather than with the home government.⁴⁷ In the event, Lugard imposed direct taxation on Oyo Province in Yorubaland as punishment for the Okeiho-Iseyin rising of October 1916.⁴⁸ In January 1918, he would extend it to Egba Province, where it provoked one of the most serious of all the wartime revolts in Nigeria.⁴⁹ A decade later it was introduced in the East, sparking the massive demonstrations known as the "Women's War", which in turn led to a fundamental reconsideration of the framework of British rule in Nigeria.⁵⁰

The Colonial Office also deprecated Lugard's proposal to replace the spirit duties,⁵¹ which it considered "unobjectionable" despite the humanitarian clamour against the gin trade. New restrictions would simply lead to smuggling and deflect the trade elsewhere. In his meeting with Fiddes, H.J. Read, who had replaced Fiddes as Assistant Under Secretary,⁵² Strachey, and Harding, on 20 July, Lugard had to admit that he could not possibly get on without the spirits revenue for years to come, and he would not raise the duties during the war. This meant that, to make up the drop in revenue, the Office had seriously to consider Lugard's proposals for export taxes on kernels, palm oil, and cocoa. The suggestion had originally come from one of the new firms trying to break into the produce trade.⁵³ They had argued that, as the price paid for oil and kernels in Nigeria was at rock bottom, the incidence of the duty would fall on the firms of the combine. Lugard accepted the reasoning, as did Harding. His superiors were less convinced by this argument. Strachey and Fiddes thought that the lowest producer price might not have been reached and that the duty would therefore hit the native. Read doubted that the firms were making unprecedented profits, given diminished shipments, increased freight and insurance rates, deterioration of produce through delays and uncertainties, and the restrictions on the export of hard oils to the United States. Nevertheless, with customs revenue expected to fall by between £250,000 and £300,000, he accepted that the additional revenue would have to be found somehow. Steel-Maitland

had private information that the expatriate companies were indeed making large profits, but did not favour a general export duty replacing those on imports. The meeting with Lugard ended with his being asked to look at the matter again. At the end of August he proposed rates of £2 a ton for oil and cocoa, and £1/2/6 for kernels. Law agreed on 13 September, but his officials had favoured lower rates for kernels and expected representations from the firms over forward contracts.⁵⁴ In fact, customs receipts did not fall as much as had been feared in 1916. It was therefore possible to reduce the duty by half on shipments made up to 1 April 1917, allowing merchants to clear at least a large part of their stored produce.⁵⁵ Harding recognized that this was rough justice, but it was “received with less grumbling than I expected”.⁵⁶

GERMAN PROPERTIES AND NEUTRAL BUYERS

The last of Lugard’s major recommendations⁵⁷ had been to attract American capital into Nigeria to replace German, and therefore to break the stranglehold of the combine and restore foreign competition to ensure good prices for indigenous producers. Here again the officials had worries. They did not see how the government could encourage American businesses. Harding minuted: “The American as a cure for combines is rather a speculation – he might be worse than the British combine, especially as combines are regarded as rather an American speciality which we can only imitate at a respectful distance.” A draft by Steel-Maitland effectively turned down the proposal, but the formal reply, as revised by Law and sent on 21 August, placed no real barrier to Lugard going ahead:

Nor am I able to support without qualification your suggestion that steps should be taken to encourage United States capital to take the place of German in Nigeria. The desirability of the object which you have in view in making this suggestion is undoubted but in my opinion any Government encouragement which can properly be afforded to new trading firms to establish themselves in Nigeria should be given in the first instance to British firms & any special encouragement should only be given to U.S. capital if British capital is not available.⁵⁸

The question of “special encouragement” was in fact something of a red herring. In December 1915, an interdepartmental committee

established at the initiative of the Colonial Office and chaired by Fiddes had recommended moving from the existing “conservative system of liquidation” of enemy property adopted when “It was thought desirable, having regard to modern views on the confiscation of enemy property on land and to the possibility of reprisals by Germany to avoid anything which might look like confiscation”. This would be replaced by a “complete system of liquidation which will include the sale of the good-will, trade-marks, land and buildings (whether freehold or leasehold) and other permanent assets of firms affected”. The committee justified this on the grounds that the colonial governments could not continue to be “burdened” with these assets, while further postponement of the sales would “deprive the goodwill and trademarks of all their value”. The proceeds would be held at the disposal of the court, either to be paid to the firms at the restoration of peace, or to be set against German liquidations or confiscations of British assets.⁵⁹ In either case, the duty of the liquidator as a good trustee was to secure the best price for the property.⁶⁰ Directives to proceed with the sale went out to West Africa on 16 February, followed on 23 March by instructions that local legislation would be needed.⁶¹ Lugard saw this as providing the opportunity for attracting American capital. Burrowes arranged for the auction to be held in London at the end of October. From June he advertised widely, including in the neutral United States and The Netherlands.⁶² Much later, he reflected: “I would have avoided expense, anxiety and the hostility of the West African firms had I lacked imagination and sold in Lagos.”⁶³

Despite this, London had not yet decided whether neutral purchases of enemy property in the colonies would be allowed. On the one hand, officials were strongly committed to free trade, and had a very long departmental memory. As W.D. Ellis minuted: “It is worth remarking that under the Navigation Acts we had the revolt of the American Colonies – and under Free Trade we have had the present demonstration of loyalty by all parts of the Empire.”⁶⁴ The growth of the combine in Nigeria was perceived as a serious threat. The creation of the Association of West African Merchants in September 1916 was seen as “just the old mob in a new grouping...”. It was an attempt “to try to buy up the German properties in Nigeria cheap & then have a ‘knock-out’”. In short it is about the last body we should try to encourage...”. Following Adam Smith, Ellis, for once in line with his colleagues, felt that it showed the danger of co-operation between business men and government as “our

policy may be guided by a small but active ring whose interests may be antagonistic not only to the producers in the colonies, but also to commerce in this country, to manufacturers here and even to merchants & shippers who are outside the ring".⁶⁵

On the other hand, opinion in Great Britain was turning away from free trade and towards a more stringent economic war. Up until 1916 there had been considerable trading with Germany through neutrals. However, in 1915 the Trading with the Enemy Act was widened to cover enemy firms in neutral countries, and the War Trade Advisory Committee, which had been formed in September, drew up a black list, which was extended to neutral countries in July 1916. The Trading with the Enemy Amendment Act was directed against enemy firms in the U.K. Three hundred and sixty eight of these were wound up by 23 July.⁶⁶ In February, the Manchester Chamber of Commerce called for penal sanctions against Germany and preferential trade within the Empire.⁶⁷ In March, the Mayor of Birmingham, Neville Chamberlain, urged that Great Britain would have to make treaties with the Empire and with the Allies to counter the post-war threat from the United States of America.⁶⁸ Others focussed more clearly on Germany, fearing that it might use its domination of "Mitteleuropa" as the basis for an economic offensive, "an attack on our Allied markets, and a ... vigorous and, if possible, a victorious competition in neutral markets". In response the Allies had negotiated the Paris Resolutions in June, providing for inter-allied control of raw materials in the reconstruction period and the denial of most favoured nation status to Germany.⁶⁹ The Colonial Office was soon involved in detailed, painstaking investigation of the implications for the Empire.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Washington's growing suspicions of likely British post-war commercial policy contributed strongly to the steady decline in the cordiality of Anglo-American relations in the second half of 1916.⁷¹

As well as these long-term considerations, there was the obvious danger that German firms might use neutral "dummy" purchasers to preserve their establishments in the colonies. The question first arose not in West Africa, but in the Far East. A long-established, Swiss merchant, Robert Sturzenegger,⁷² was the leading partner with 40% of the shares of two firms, Rautenberg, Schmidt & Co. in Singapore, and Schmidt & Küstermann in Penang. The two other partners were German, Herr Suhl, who was interned in Australia, with 35%, and Herr Hasche, who was in Hamburg, with 25%. Both were considered enemy firms and were

wound up. Sturzenegger himself was allowed to establish a new firm, Sturzenegger & Co., of Singapore and Penang. He wanted to purchase the buildings of the two liquidated firms.⁷³ When the Swiss Legation took up his case, the Foreign Office was inclined to agree with it. Tennyson saw no legal objection, provided the Straits Settlements government "is satisfied that his object is not to keep the liquidated firm's business alive for them so as to enable them to start again after the war". Officials on the political side at first doubted that this could be done. If British victory were complete, the government could then keep the Germans out, and action now was unnecessary. If victory were not complete, action taken during the war would not be enforceable. Attaching conditions to the sale was considered, but rejected as likely to depress the price.⁷⁴ The governor's views were sought. Meanwhile, the sale, which had been set for late June, was postponed, and, at the urging of the F.O., instructions were sent that Sturzenegger's interests should not be prejudiced.⁷⁵

The governor replied that Sturzenegger was believed to be pro-German, and that the liquidator should therefore hold a public auction.⁷⁶ Despite this, the Foreign Office presumed that the Swiss Legation could be told that Sturzenegger would be able to bid. The initial C.O. response was simple astonishment, but Tennyson argued that he could not personally be barred, that limiting bids to British, or British and Allied, subjects had not been done elsewhere, and "the elimination of foreign or neutral buyers might reduce the chances of getting a fair price & add to the plausibility of the charge that our liquidation arrangements are simply a dodge for stealing German trade".⁷⁷ Many in the Colonial Office did indeed want "to cripple the German trade-octopus...",⁷⁸ and the Officer Administering the Government of Fiji had been told to take "all possible steps to ensure that the trade hitherto done by enemy firms in the Colony passes in the future into the hands of non enemy and preferably British firms".⁷⁹ Nevertheless, Tennyson had raised an important point. Berlin usually retaliated against British moves against German property whether in the colonies or in occupied German territories. The announcement of the sales in Nigeria had been met with a threat to sell the property of Sir Francis Oppenheimer, who had been largely in charge of the commercial aspects of the British Embassy in Germany. Investigations suggested that British assets in Germany and Austria-Hungary exceeded German assets in Great Britain and the Empire.⁸⁰ Moreover, almost all of Belgium and some of the most economically

valuable parts of France were under German occupation. Prudence was therefore clearly called for in dealing with German properties overseas.

The Colonial Office eventually decided to adopt some of the provisions already in force for prize ships, that the conditions of sale should include a statutory declaration that the purchaser was not acting for an enemy subject or corporation, and should give a bond effective for the duration of the war and for ten years afterwards. It was recognized that the Sturzenegger case would “form an important precedent”. Neutrals could not be excluded from bidding, especially as that would bar American purchasers if German cocoa plantations in the West Indies were put up for sale.⁸¹ A circular of 1 August told the colonial governors that these proposals were being considered, but that London “do not propose that non-enemy foreign buyers should be excluded from the sales”.⁸²

On 15 August, the Swiss Legation was informed that Sturzenegger would be allowed to bid. However, the Foreign Office objected to attaching conditions to sales, preferring local legislation, though it would agree to conditions preventing Sturzenegger from preserving his former partners’ interests, provided that these did not breach existing commercial treaties. The F.O. referred the general question of excluding enemy commerce from British possessions after the war to the Reconstruction Committee, which would not be able to deal with it for some time. Nevertheless, it told the C.O. that it assumed “that any action that may be urgently required in connection with the liquidation of any estates overseas will not be delayed or prejudiced pending the settlement of the general question of after-war policy...”.⁸³ In the Colonial Office the matter was dealt with by George Grindle, who had recently replaced Fiddes as the Assistant Under Secretary of the Crown Colonies Division. He would be remembered as “one of the ‘quiet’ men of the Colonial Office, little was seen or heard, but getting through great quantities of business in the background”.⁸⁴ His previous experience had been with the West Indies. He had dealt with a case in Trinidad, where enemy properties were liquidated as early as November 1914. These included Paul Scheerer and Company, which handled about a quarter of the cocoa crop. Scheerer was a naturalized American, though not recorded as such at the U.S. Consulate. The American government was ready to back him in a claim for US\$1,350,000.⁸⁵ Grindle was therefore acutely aware of the need to tread carefully as “the enemy agents will be hyphenated Americans with their consuls behind them”.⁸⁶ He had already minuted

in favour of allowing Scheerer to buy his German partner's share in the company,⁸⁷ and therefore of not excluding neutrals from sales of German property. He had not been involved in the earlier discussions with Lugard, and he presumed that "the neutral is not an important factor in W.A....". If there were a problem with neutrals bidding, "it should be considered as a general question before a decision is taken", but he felt that "We cannot hang this [the Nigerian Ordinance] up until the F.O. and the Reconstruction Ctee have settled the question of general policy & what we are proposing "appears to come within the rule in Sturzenegger's case...".⁸⁸ He hoped that the liquidations would enable British firms to take over some of the German trade and give them an initial advantage over enemy competitors if these were allowed to re-establish themselves after the war.⁸⁹ As Grindle instructed that action should be taken on his minute, his decision was not reviewed by Fiddes, Steel-Maitland, or Bonar Law. The Colonial Office proceeded with drafting the Nigerian Ordinance, which would "probably be found useful as a model for other Colonies in which other firms are being liquidated".⁹⁰

In moving forward, the officials were well aware that the subject they were tackling was one of "repulsive complexity".⁹¹ Their aims were in many respects contradictory. While they were in fact eliminating the German commercial presence in Nigeria, this might not openly be avowed. The Foreign Office had agreed to the sales going ahead on the Sturzenegger precedent because this had been presented as the necessary consequence of the earlier actions in stopping German trade and deporting the German traders. Discriminatory provisions in the ordinance were simply to prevent the German owners using "dummies" to buy back the firms.⁹² They were not meant to prejudice the general questions of post-war economic measures to be taken against German trade in the British Empire. Therefore possible claims by German mortgage holders not recorded in Nigeria might not simply be swept aside. Personal property might not be touched for fear of reprisals in occupied France and Belgium,⁹³ especially as the Foreign Office had more or less pledged that le Havre would be consulted over any confiscation or sequestration of enemy property in Great Britain or the colonies.⁹⁴ In Great Britain, German firms were still operating under control, and Walter Runciman, the President of the Board of Trade was one of the strongest Liberal free-traders. British policy in the colonies had broadly to follow that in the home country.⁹⁵ The Belgians particularly insisted on differentiating between sequestrations, which might be justified on grounds of military

necessity, and liquidation and sale, which could never be justified.⁹⁶ The Colonial Office itself distinguished between the treatment of enemy firms in British colonies and in occupied territories, arguing that whatever was done in the former could not be used by Berlin as a precedent for its actions in the latter. The C.O. considered that its policy in the German colonies was in line with the old policy of conservative liquidation, and therefore lenient. By contrast, the new policy in British colonies such as Nigeria was designed to extirpate German trade. The Office felt that Germany did not respect this distinction. Eventually it would conclude that whatever was done in the British colonies would have no effect of German policy in occupied Europe.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the C.O. was divided over post-war questions. When the new policy was decided, Harding had looked ahead ten or fifteen years after the war when Germany might demand compensation “which if we are then anxious to be on good terms with Germany, we shall be forced by the F.O. to refer to arbitration – and after the manner of arbitrations we shall be sure to have to pay something”.⁹⁸ In the memorandum which he prepared for the Reconstruction Committee, Flood worried that Great Britain would not be able to “stick out for a rather high handed procedure against private property” if there were a negotiated end to the war.⁹⁹ The framework memo prepared for the Reconstruction Committee warned that excluding German trade from the colonies might deflect it ever more vigorously into neutral markets.¹⁰⁰ While the consensus within the Colonial Office was to bar post-war private claims, H.C.M. Lambert, who was taking over the Dominions Department, strongly dissented, as this was “essentially wrong, and for the principal creditor nation of the world a very dangerous policy”.¹⁰¹

Issues of principle aside, the details of the ordinance were difficult enough. As Burrowes noted: “The conditions are lengthy, but the lots are many, the title deeds incomplete, the conveyances defective in many instances and the nature of the titles in some cases not defined”.¹⁰² As the properties were owned by companies with their head offices in Germany, authoritative records of changes of ownership, mortgages, and other claims against them might not be available in Nigeria. For the main Gaiser property on the Marina there was no documentation after 1876. Purchasers would need secure possession, but neither the Nigerian government nor the Colonial Office wanted “to manufacture – for the probable benefit of the German firms – better titles than those by which they held their properties”.¹⁰³ The eventual solution would involve the

drawing up of a detailed eight page Schedule of all the properties so as to “define the interest to be vested in the Receiver in each property & extinguish all conflicting interests, throwing the owner of a conflicting interest onto the purchase money or other assets of the firm for compensation, his right to be decided by the Court...”.¹⁰⁴ Uncertainty of title would obviously depress the price; so also would attaching conditions or requiring a bond to prevent purchase by dummy companies acting in the interest of the former German owners. As a “good trustee” the Office felt obliged to ensure that the properties were sold at the highest price. Much was made of this in Runciman’s correspondence with the Belgian government, which was keenly concerned to prevent any precedent for the cheap sale of properties in occupied territory.¹⁰⁵ Particular problems arose over the sale of trade marks which was a “very technical question”.¹⁰⁶ By far the most important was Gaiser’s “Eagle” brand, used primarily on goods provided by Albrechts, which was still operating under control in Great Britain but was soon to be liquidated. Attempts to secure an arrangement between Burrowes and Albrechts’s controller or liquidator were unsuccessful.

Subject to these contradictory pressures, the Ordinance was repeatedly “very much pulled about”.¹⁰⁷ Eventually it would provide for title to the properties listed in the Schedule as they were on 19 November 1914 to be vested in the Receiver.¹⁰⁸ Any other rights, except those of the Crown and of the public, were extinguished. Nevertheless, claims could be made for up to six months after the sale. The governor might allow enemy claims, and those which were successful would be paid as determined by him after the end of the war. Leases, except those from the Crown, might be re-assigned without the consent of the lessor. The Receiver might not sell to an enemy, or an enemy subject, or to a company under enemy control. Such a company was defined as one with a majority of enemy directors or shareholders or organized in such a way that it was in fact under direct or indirect enemy control. Purchasers would have to make a Statutory Declaration that they were not enemies, enemy subjects, or under enemy control, and that they had no arrangements to sell to such persons or companies. They would be fined £5000 if they did, and the Attorney General might get the Court to declare the property forfeit. However, the governor might override this in particular cases, or more generally by Proclamation, though this would appear to have been intended to cover the immediate post-war situation. In all of this the issues were complicated, co-ordination with the Board of Trade

was necessary, and the question of trade marks was intractable. Although the sale was several times postponed, the Ordinance was not settled until 27 October, and could not be passed before the sale on 14–16 November.¹⁰⁹ By then Lugard had returned to Nigeria.

Meanwhile, Burrowes's publicity went ahead. Notices were posted in the main railway stations in London, in the provinces, and in New York. Newspapers in the United Kingdom, in Italy, the Netherlands, the United States, and Canada carried advertisements.¹¹⁰ In September these attracted the attention of the Nigerian Chamber of Mines, which urged that the sale should be limited to British or Allied purchasers, as otherwise there was a danger that the properties might be bought by German-American firms for return to the former owners. Harding, noting the Foreign Office position with regard to Sturzenegger, prepared a reply along the lines that, although the conditions were still finally to be settled, it was not intended to exclude neutrals not acting on behalf of enemy interests. Steel-Maitland insisted on seeing the final draft, as "It is just one of the questions which may cause a row". He eventually added a passage that the C.O. would be glad to see purchases made by British or Allied persons or firms.¹¹¹ As the row began to develop, the Office privately regretted that Lugard had not consulted it before advertising in America, but it would remain strongly committed to allowing neutral purchasers.¹¹²

THE POLITICS OF KERNEL CRUSHING

By this time the question of Nigerian trade, particularly of palm kernels, had become the subject of sharp political debate. Early in 1915 the merchants and crushers had repeatedly urged the government to consider measures to ensure that the crushing of kernels would not revert to Germany after the end of the war. Coupland of the Bank of British West Africa had been particularly insistent. Harcourt and the Colonial Office were unresponsive, feeling that there were far too many committees already.¹¹³ For Free Trade Liberals there would be little that any new committee might do. When Owen Philipps's committee, backed by the London, and then the Liverpool, Chamber of Commerce, continued to press in March, the C.O. did sound the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries and the Board of Trade. Neither wanted to do anything. The former would not promote a particular feedstuff. The latter did not see the use of a committee. Lord Islington, the Parliamentary Under

Secretary at the Colonial Office, did not accept these responses. He felt that the two Boards took “a narrow view & do not appreciate the importance of encouraging this industry and securing it during the War”. He wanted a conference with them to get a “move on”. Harcourt agreed to make one more effort, which would at least shift the onus for failure off the C.O.¹¹⁴ Eventually, on 26 May, a conference was held with the two Boards and with the India Office. Islington as chairman said that any committee it was decided to establish would have on political grounds to exclude the two big questions of subsidizing crushers and preventing the export of oil and nuts to Germany after the war. Nevertheless, a committee “might have a good moral effect” by collecting information and making useful suggestions such as a small free distribution of new cattle cakes by the government. The Board of Agriculture now favoured the establishment of kernel and groundnut crushing in the U.K., as “Both these cakes were superior to cottonseed cake as milk from cottonseed cake was found to be deleterious to children and infants”. The India Office looked for a new market for groundnuts, as the French crushing industry was practically closed down. However the Board of Trade still did not see the use of a committee, and thought that it would probably “wish to wander on the forbidden paths mentioned by Lord Islington”. It was agreed to ask the Chambers of Commerce for their detailed recommendations.¹¹⁵

The replacement of the Liberals Islington and Harcourt by the Conservatives Steel-Maitland and Bonar Law at the head of the Colonial Office did not at first give any new impetus to consideration of the question. The letters which went out to the Chambers of Commerce on 11 June suggested that it would be difficult for a committee to make recommendations “without raising subjects of political controversy in a manner which would be undesirable at the present time”. If the Chambers still wanted a committee, they should “indicate in details what line of investigation they think that the Committee should follow & what useful information that is not already available they could collect”.¹¹⁶

This failed to discourage the Chambers of Commerce. Although depressed by the prospect of “another Committee, & more talk!” the C.O. concluded that “its non appt. may do harm by conveying the impression that the govt. are indifferent”. A large committee representing diverse interests would be desirable to impress the public, though, as more and more names were suggested, Fiddes pointed out, “We can’t hire the Albert Hall for our meetings”. While the membership was

confined to officials, including Lugard and Clifford, the Director of the Imperial Institute, and representatives of the various commercial interests, it was felt desirable also to include a Liberal MP, preferably one connected with agriculture, “to shew that there is no intention of using the Ctee to promote views on fiscal policy”. Sir William Lever (who was no longer an MP) or the industrialist Sir Alfred Mond (who represented Swansea) were suggested, but eventually the much less prominent Thomas Wiles, a grain merchant and member for Islington South, was selected. Steel-Maitland was chairman. The brief would be: “To consider and report upon the present condition and the prospects of the West African trade in edible or oleaginous nuts & seeds, and to make recommendations for the promotion in the United Kingdom, of the industries dependent thereon”.¹¹⁷

The Committee eventually reported at the end of April 1916.¹¹⁸ Its main recommendation was the imposition of a two pound per ton levy on palm kernels exported from British West Africa. It would be remitted if the kernels were crushed in the British Empire. This was an obvious and major break with the principles of free trade. While the Committee gave many and various reasons for the continued supremacy of Hamburg over Liverpool, its main explanation set out the principle of what later economists would call “path dependency”:

Once thus established, the *vis inertiae*, or rather the *vis momenti* of such a trade is difficult to overcome, especially when, as in the present instance, it possesses, not a single, but a two-fold product, each part of which has cut its own trade channels and established its own market.

Therefore, the bar to kernel crushing in the United Kingdom lay not in natural disadvantages but rather “was a result of circumstances, ... which a special stimulus could overcome”. Although experts remained divided over the nutritional value of kernel cake, it had been introduced to farmers, and there had been no difficulty in disposing of all of it. Nevertheless, at the end of the war the trade would not be sufficiently rooted in the U.K. “to overcome the competition which it will then have to meet”. There was:

an appreciable danger of state aid on a lavish scale being used in Germany to retain such an industry as palm kernel crushing, and the British Colonies concerned must be prepared to adopt a resolute policy if they are to avert the danger of the trade returning to its pre-war channel.

Accordingly, the duty should last for five years after the war. If two pounds were found insufficient, it should be raised until it “is adequate to effect its purpose, and this determination should be made clear from the outset”. As the expanding British market would be more than large enough to compensate for the loss of the German, “competition among importers, in the absence of a ring or trust, will keep up prices and the native will suffer no hardship”. Because pools were inherently unstable, the risk of a ring emerging in West Africa was not serious, and the risk was worth taking.

While most of the Committee approved the imposition of the levy, Wiles, the representative of parliamentary Liberalism, opposed it, and submitted a minority report. He believed that the duty would indeed encourage the formation of rings, and would hit the indigenous producer. He would postpone till after the war “the whole question of the rearrangement of tariffs and duties within the British Empire...”. This discussion would bring in the Dominions, the Colonies, and the Allies. He made proposals for strengthening forestry and agriculture departments in West Africa, for providing better means of cracking kernels and obtaining oil, for capping freight rates, providing elevators, and setting up a standing committee of scientific and commercial experts. If this did not work, the government might provide a grant on the same principle as that to British Dyes Ltd. Steel-Maitland was inclined to dismiss Wiles as “one of the least constant in attendance...”, but his re-assertion of free-trade orthodoxy and his belief that the levy breached the “political truce” established at the beginning of the war and had therefore to be debated in parliament, led Bonar Law to refer the report to the prime minister. In his covering memorandum he cited the precedent of two duties on tin, the first imposed in the Federated Malay States in 1903 to prevent the U.S.A. from capturing the smelting industry, the second initiated by Harcourt in 1915 for Nigeria, “so that you will see that it has been quite irrespective of the particular government in power at the time”. Steel-Maitland had been careful to remove from the draft Fiddes’s phrase about the kernels trade having previously been with Germany. Although this was accurate, “it might give the impression that the Committee set out with a tariff reform intent. So I think the vaguer phrase the best”. Asquith’s first reaction was that the report should go to a small Cabinet Committee, but “after consultation with some of his colleagues...”, he decided that this would not be necessary. The report was approved on 27 May, and sent to Nigeria on 1 June.¹¹⁹

The report had concentrated almost entirely on palm kernels. As the French were again buying groundnuts, these were not considered. On the other hand, particular attention was paid to margarine, as Sir George Watson, chairman of Maypole Dairy, was a prominent member of the Committee.¹²⁰ His margarine did not use kernel oil. That of Jurgens and Van Den Bergh did. Imports of Dutch margarine into the United Kingdom had steadily increased during the war. By 1916, they had over half of the market.¹²¹ Jurgens's margarine was sold by Home and Colonial Stores; Van Den Berghs by Meadow and Pearks.¹²² The Van Den Bergh product was sold "in packets wrapped in a Union Jack cover".¹²³ Watson persuaded the Committee to include a recommendation, which was also backed by Wiles, that margarine produced in the United Kingdom should have "British Made" on its wrapper. This would create technical problems. Unscrupulous traders had always tried to pass margarine off as butter. An act of 1887 had provided that it should be handed to the customer in a wrapper with the word "margarine". Retailers had got round this by burying "margarine" in the small print. The Food and Drugs Act of 1897 had therefore provided that no printed matter other than the word "margarine" might be put on the wrapper. Any change would be strongly opposed by the butter interests and by the Local Authorities administering the Act. In any case, margarine usually had two or three wrappers, and there was "grave doubt" as to which of these should carry "margarine". Maypole's practice was to put it on the inner wrapper.¹²⁴

This rivalry between British and Dutch margarine manufacturers would soon become an explosive element in the politics of the Nigerian trade. In the early months of 1916 stockpiling of raw materials especially by the Dutch firms had forced up the price of kernels in Liverpool to a peak of £26/-/- in March.¹²⁵ The recommendations of the Nuts Committee would obviously harm Jurgens and Van Den Bergh in the short term. Jurgens asked whether the levy might be remitted on that portion of kernel oil sold as margarine in the United Kingdom. The Colonial Office refused to consider this. As Ellis noted, "The object of the legislation is to make Jurgens & others start their factories in the U.K....".¹²⁶ At Purfleet they were building what was intended to be the largest margarine factory in the world.¹²⁷ As they could not get priority for labour, it might not be completed before the end of the war. This was one of the reasons which, by the end of July, led the Colonial Office to conclude that the export levy would have to be a post-war policy.¹²⁸

While Jurgens appealed to the C.O., the other Dutch firm looked to the support of public opinion. It also had high-level connections. Donald van den Bergh was the nephew by marriage of the Home Secretary, Herbert Samuel.¹²⁹ When Percy Molteno, a prominent Scottish Liberal MP and shipowner, asked for the selling prices of kernels in Liverpool and West Africa for each year since 1909, both Fiddes and Steel-Maitland minuted that he was acting in the interests of Van Den Bergh. Steel-Maitland doubted that Molteno's question would do him much good, rightly pointing out that "the monthly fluctuations rob annual averages of their value...". Nevertheless, he went to considerable effort to obtain monthly averages from 1912, as Molteno "is a decent fellow and I want to shew him the stuff freely. He will then see that it is possible that the Committee were right and not the ignorant ass in the Manchester Guardian – nor yet Mr Wiles!". One of those whom Steel-Maitland consulted was Moore of the Company of African Merchants, who had been the only trader on the Committee. He replied that John H. Harris of the Aborigines Protection Society was trying to build up opposition to the report, that a small minority of merchants opposed the duty, but "there are a few to say the least who are not whole-heartedly in favour of it".¹³⁰ Liverpool kernel prices were falling in the summer, reaching a low of £18/15/4 in August. The merchants complained that this had put them largely in the hands of the crushers. As Robert Miller argued when a deputation of merchants went to the Colonial Office on 12 July, knocking out the Dutch and French markets would exacerbate the situation. While Ellis still wanted to favour manufacturers over merchants, it seemed clear from the meeting that the duty could not be imposed during the war.¹³¹

For the time being the duty would be a symbol of intent rather than an active policy. This decision was not publicly announced, but even as a symbol, perhaps even more as a symbol, the duty would be attacked. The debate on the Colonial Office estimates on 3 August¹³² provided the opportunity. While Bonar Law and Steel-Maitland tried to avoid "start[ing] again the old Free Trade controversy...", cited the Malayan and Nigerian precedents, and denied that the levy was "a terrible new departure, upsetting everything that all of us once held",¹³³ its critics insisted that it involved "a great change of far-reaching importance altering the whole of our international commerce practically...".¹³⁴ They raised two big issues. Firstly, the duty violated the principle, sacrosanct since the end of the War of American Independence, that colonial

taxation should be imposed only for the benefit of the inhabitants of the colony. Sir G. Toulmin, Liberal MP for Bury, stated this with religious fervour: the secret of British usefulness “is our Divine mission to govern, wherever our power extends over backward races, in their interest and for their good, and never to prostitute our power to selfish ends”.¹³⁵ Other speakers against the levy, Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck, the maverick but strongly humanitarian Conservative member for Nottingham South, Ramsay MacDonald, displaced as leader of the Labour Party by the outbreak of the war, and Percy Molteno, avoided reference to the deity, but made much the same point, that the indigenous producer would suffer from the restriction of competition and the likely emergence of rings. Some Conservative supporters of the report took a robust view on this. Halford Mackinder, founder of “geopolitics” and member for Camlachie, insisted that by keeping the *pax Britannica* by vast war-like expenditure, “we are entitled to treat those regions as being Imperial estates”. These should be governed not merely for “the savage and barbarous inhabitants of those regions...”, but for mankind and “above all for that vast portion which is in our Empire and which holds the *pax Britannica* in those regions”.¹³⁶ He was echoed briefly by Major Rowland Hunt, the member for Ludlow, who said that as the British were protecting the nut producers, it was “perfectly right” that they “should have the first and a better chance of buying the nuts off that land than anybody else”,¹³⁷ and, more substantially, by Alfred Bigland, MP for Birkenhead, a former produce-broker who now had a senior position in the Ministry of Munitions, one of the first of the businessmen who would eventually play important roles in government during the war.¹³⁸ He denounced humanitarians with “virtues that are almost gone mad”, and urged that “there are times when we, as Englishmen, have got to think for the people of our own country...”.¹³⁹ Bonar Law and Steel-Maitland, backed by Sir Owen Philipps, who was Conservative member for Chester, avoided rhetoric. Instead they insisted that indigenous interests were fully protected by the presence on the Committee of Clifford and above all by Lugard, “whose sympathy for the natives is well known to every Member of the House...”, and who “quite explicitly expressed his approval of the proposal...”.¹⁴⁰

The second big point raised by opponents of the levy was that, in Ramsay MacDonald’s words, it was “an ordinary, rather commonplace, unforeseeing application of the crudest Protective ideas...”.¹⁴¹ They linked it to the recently adopted Paris Resolutions, that the Allies

would deny Germany most favoured nation status after the war, pool their resources for reconstruction, encourage trade among themselves, and try to ensure their economic independence of the Central Powers. As already noted, Bonar Law and Steel-Maitland insisted that no major change of policy was intended. Steel-Maitland in particular argued that the rapid expansion of the market for vegetable oils which was expected after the war meant that the duty would not have to be maintained for long, but it would initially be required so that the crushers would have confidence to make the necessary investment in new plant. Bigland took a slightly different line. German duties had brought the industry there in the first place. Therefore the imposition of a British duty would be necessary “to prevent Germany from rebuilding her stolen trade, for it was stolen trade, not trade obtained in natural competition with a Free Trade country like ours, but trade stolen through clever artifices and tricks”.¹⁴² However, Conservative backbenchers were eager to attack what Philipps called the “doctrines of the obsolete Manchester school”, and Mackinder “the orthodox faith”.¹⁴³ They insisted that the fact of war had transformed the situation, and that policy would have to be adjusted accordingly.

Critics of the duty, Cavendish-Bentinck, Ramsay MacDonald, and Wiles argued that it would beget rings and combinations to force down the price paid to Africans for kernels. MacDonald and Wiles also charged that the Committee had effectively been packed in favour of the commercial interests. Otherwise their accusations were imprecise, and they assumed that merchants, shippers, and manufacturers were all in it together.¹⁴⁴ Here Steel-Maitland, aware of the antagonisms between them, could rebut effectively. Did not MacDonald “realise that it makes not a hap’orth of difference to a merchant whether he imports the goods to Liverpool or Hamburg?”. His claiming that it was in the interest of the merchant that the kernels came to Great Britain “robs his criticism of any value whatever...”.¹⁴⁵ Points were also raised about the impact of the duty on other countries, particularly upon France as an ally. Bonar Law and Steel-Maitland pointed out that few kernels went to France, but if that changed, “arrangements will be made during the War, at all events, that France shall not pay any of the extra duty which is involved”.¹⁴⁶ They pointedly refused to make any promise of favourable treatment for neutral Holland. Molteno brandished the palm kernel prices which Steel-Maitland had furnished. These showed that on 9 June the Liverpool price was £19/15/- and the Lagos price £9/10/-. He then added a

figure from a West African newspaper of 17 July: £6/15/-, a further fall of almost fifty percent which must “most seriously cripple the development of West Africa...”. Unfortunately for him as a debater, this was a figure too far. Steel-Maitland pointed out, it was from Abeokuta, and “of course the price falls as you go up country...”.¹⁴⁷ He did not add that Abeokuta prices were particularly low because there the Ring faced no competition.¹⁴⁸

Although the Colonial Office had prepared a two page memorandum covering the points likely to be raised,¹⁴⁹ the vigour of the debate clearly took the Colonial Secretary by surprise: “I did not expect this fuss from any considerable number....” His response then turned fuss into uproar. He read out a letter of 21 June, evidently intercepted by the censorship, from “the representative of a firm of margarine manufacturers in a neutral country “saying that they had “asked a Member of the House to put a question down asking the Premier if time will be given for a discussion of this matter...”. They had also placed a notice in the press, and were “drawing the attention of Members to what is going forward, for otherwise matters of this kind are likely to slip through”.¹⁵⁰ Cavendish-Bentinck, MacDonald, and Molteno each indignantly denied that their actions had been influenced by Dutch margarine makers. Law had to concede that “there is no charge against any individual Member of the House”. Nevertheless, he insisted that the letter showed “that vested interests do attempt to use whatever influence they can to get political pressure brought to bear in this House”.¹⁵¹ A division was forced which the government won by 76 to 34.

This stormy debate raised questions of Nigerian trade to high prominence in British politics. In the much bigger debate three months later Steel-Maitland would refer to “the old friend of many of us – palm kernels”.¹⁵² They now had a certain symbolic value in the controversy between Free Trade and Tariff Reform which had been central up to 1914, but which had been put to one side by the “political truce”. To a degree this was paralleled by the split between those who insisted that the Empire had to be governed primarily in the interest of its indigenous populations, and those who wanted it to be developed for the benefit of Great Britain. In shielding themselves against humanitarian attack, Bonar Law and Steel-Maitland had had to rely heavily on Lugard’s prestige as a champion of “native” interests. On his return to Nigeria the governor would strongly defend the levy against the criticisms of the Lagos Auxiliary of the Aborigines Protection Society. As Germany would still

want to buy the oil from the British crushers, "There will still be practically the same, and (with the use of kernel oil for margarine) an increasing demand, and with it, as I hope, a healthy competition by which the native producer will benefit".¹⁵³ Appealing to Lugard's authority over the duty made it more difficult to over-ride him on other matters. While the political leadership of the Colonial Office tried to damp down divisions over humanitarian and economic issues, the vehemence of the debate showed how strong and potentially explosive such issues were. What followed would greatly exacerbate the situation as the C.O. and the Ministry of Munitions struggled over the regulation of the world trade in oleaginous materials, and as Nigerians themselves began to make a direct impact on British politics.

NOTES

1. Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2004, pp. 47–49.
2. Harding memo 15 Jan. 1920, CO583/96/2062. The references to the Gold Coast and to Southern Nigeria were deliberate slurs on Lugard's successor, Clifford.
3. Lugard desp. Conf. 17 Oct. 1916, replying to no. 1682 of 25 Nov. 1915, CO583/49/50471.
4. Strachey min. 3 Sept. 1915, CO649/3/35560.
5. Lugard note on copy of private letter to Harcourt 26 Dec. 1914, Lugard Papers, MSS Lugard s. 75/46.
6. Harcourt min. 28 Oct. 1914, CO583/28/41270. The Biblical reference is to *I Kings* 21: 1–29.
7. As he was unsure whether Garua was in Adamawa, his knowledge of the historical geography of the area was obviously deficient. Lugard to Harcourt private letter (copy) 26 Dec. 1914, LP s. 75/46; Lugard to Harcourt private letter (copy) 29 Oct. 1914, CO583/28/41270. The fullest discussions of the partitions of Kamerun are: Peter J. Yearwood, "In a Casual Way with a Blue Pencil: British Policy and the Partition of Kamerun, 1914–1919", *Canadian Journal of African Studies (CJAS)* 27 (1993), pp. 218–44; and "The Reunification of Borno 1914–1918", *Borno Museum Society Newsletter* 25 (1995), pp. 24–44. Both were written before the release of transcripts of the correspondence between Lugard and his wife.
8. John M. Carland, *The Colonial Office and Nigeria, 1898–1914*, Houndmills, Macmillan, 1985, p. 26.

9. Major Sir Ralph Furse, *Aucuparius: Recollections of a Recruiting Officer*, London, Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 27.
10. Harding min. 6 Oct. 1915, CO583/36/44266. At issue was the grant of 250,000 acres to Miller Bros. for cattle ranching.
11. Margery Perham, *Lugard: The Years of Authority 1898–1945*, London, Collins, 1960, pp. 412, 608; Lugard to Lady Lugard 6 Apr. 1916 (quotation), LP, MSS Lugard 4/15; Robert Rhodes James, *Memoirs of a Conservative: J.C.C. Davidson's Memoirs and Papers 1910–37*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1969, p. 11.
12. Furse, *Aucuparius*, pp. 24–25.
13. Lugard to Lady Lugard 4 Mar. 1918, quoted in Perham, *Lugard*, p. 573.
14. Perham, *Lugard*, pp. 607–12.
15. Harding min. 4 Sept. 1915, CO583/35/40134.
16. Fiddes min. 23 June 1915, CO583/34/28490.
17. Furse, *Aucuparius*, pp. 30 (1st quotation), 20 (2nd quotation).
18. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 10.
19. Lugard to Lady Lugard 11 Nov. 1912, LP, MSS Lugard 4/15.
20. Lugard to Lady Lugard 13 Mar. 1914, *ibid*.
21. Lady Lugard to Lugard 24 Jan. 1914, LP, MSS Lugard 4/9; cf. Harcourt min. 22 Aug. 1913: “I hope some method may be found of making it known publicly that the name was not suggested by me, but is adopted at the express request of Sir F. Lugard”. CO583/4/28787.
22. Lady Lugard to Lugard 29 Jan. 1914, LP, MSS Lugard 4/9.
23. Lady Lugard to Lugard 7 Apr. 1914, *ibid*.
24. Lugard to Lady Lugard 23 Mar. 1914, LP, MSS Lugard 4/5.
25. The rest of this paragraph follows Perham, *Lugard*, pp. 623–27, quotations at pp. 623–24, 626, 627.
26. Frances Stevenson (Lloyd George’s secretary, mistress, and later wife) diary entries 16 Nov. 1934 & 30 May 1936 in A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George: A Diary by Frances Stevenson*, London, Hutchinson, 1971, pp. 291, 322.
27. Harcourt diary 25 May 1915, uncatalogued, LHP, Lewis Harcourt additional papers.
28. Asquith to Lady Venetia Stanley (confidante) 18 Aug. 1914, in Michael and Eleanor Brock (eds.), *H.H. Asquith, Letters to Venetia Stanley*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 176.
29. Lugard desp. Conf. 10 Aug., mins. by Baynes 11 Aug., Harding, Strachey, Fiddes, & Harcourt 12 Aug. 1914, CO583/17/29836.
30. Lugard to Lady Lugard 6 Jan. (1st quotation) & 8 May 1915 (2nd quotation), LP, MSS Lugard 5.
31. Lugard to Lady Lugard 9 Oct. 1914, LP, MSS Lugard 4/5.

32. Lugard to Lady Lugard 8 May 1915, LP, MSS Lugard 5.
33. John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War: Coalition and Conflict 1915–1918*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 62.
34. The former Conservative leader A.J. Balfour was also effectively a member. Paul Guinn, *British Strategy and Politics 1914 to 1918*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1965, pp. 33–34. Harcourt was later brought in along with the Marquess of Crewe (Lord Privy Seal & Secretary for India), Viscount Haldane (Lord Chancellor), and Reginald McKenna (Home Secretary), George H. Cassar, *Asquith as War Leader*, London, Hambledon Press, 1994, p. 54.
35. Asquith note 27 May 1915, Harcourt diary, uncatalogued, LHP.
36. Lugard to Lady Lugard 27 May 1915, LP, MSS Lugard 4/6.
37. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 25.
38. Harcourt diary 24 (1st quotation) & 25 May 1915 (2nd quotation), uncatalogued, LHP. The reference to feeding of aliens relates to the policy of internment adopted at the beginning of the war.
39. Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister: The Life and Times of Andrew Bonar Law 1858–1923*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955, p. 261. Law's most recent biographer says even less. R.J.Q. Adams, *Bonar Law*, London, John Murray, 1999.
40. Harcourt diary 8 Jan. 1916, uncatalogued, LHP, cf. James, *Memoirs of a Conservative*, p. 25. As Davidson later became Law's personal private secretary and was close to him, his testimony carries weight.
41. Thomas Jones (Assistant Cabinet Secretary) diary, 29 July 1925 (1st quotation), 8 Nov. 1924 (2nd quotation), in Keith Middlemas (ed.), *Thomas Jones: Whitehall Diary, vol. 1, 1916–1925*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 324–25.
42. C.O. mins.: Anderson 23 June (quotation), Steel-Maitland 24 June, Bonar Law 26 June 1915, CO583/34/28490. The papers on ending continuous administration are collected in CO583/33/27195.
43. Lugard to Lady Lugard 12 Nov. 1915, LP, MSS Lugard 4/6.
44. Harding min. 18 Nov., Strachey min. 23 Nov., Fiddes min. 24 Nov., Anderson min. 25 Nov. 1915, CO583/36/43195.
45. Harding min. 19 Nov., Anderson min. & marginal note 25 Nov. Steel-Maitland min. 28 Nov., Bonar Law min. 30 Nov. 1915, CO583/38/50522.
46. Lugard desp. secret 13 Mar., mins. by Baynes 8 Apr., Strachey 17 Apr. (1st quotation), Fiddes 19 Apr. (3rd quotation), Anderson 19 Apr. (2nd quotation), Islington 20 Apr., & Harcourt 21 Apr., to Lugard 30 Apr. 1915, CO587/31/15673.
47. Mins. by Harding 17 May, Strachey 25 May & 21 July, Read 27 May, Fiddes 7 June & 25 July, Steel-Maitland 10 June, Harding min.

- of meeting of Lugard, Fiddes, Read, Strachey, & Harding 20 July, to Lugard conf. 21 Aug. 1916, CO583/45/20906.
48. Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, Longman, 1979, p. 125. See also below, p. 206.
 49. *Ibid.*, pp. 126–33.
 50. The outstanding study of the Women’s War (also somewhat misleadingly known as the Aba riots) is A.E. Afigbo, *The Warrant Chiefs*, London, Longman, 1972.
 51. They may to a degree have misunderstood the governor. His main point was that the spirits revenue had so declined that the shortfall in revenue would have to be made up, but he also wanted to inaugurate a policy which would “finally put an end to the dependence of the revenue on this undesirable source of income”. Lugard desp. (conf.) 8 Apr. 1916, CO583/45/20906. Except where otherwise noted, this paragraph is based on the material cited in note 47 above.
 52. Unlike the others, Read seems to have been a nonentity. Lugard described him to his wife as “long necked Reade [*sic*]... - man of no particular ability”. 2 Dec. 1915, LP, MSS Lugard 4/5.
 53. African Oil Nuts to Bonar Law 7 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/53803.
 54. Lugard desp. Conf. 30 Aug., mins by Harding 6 Sept., Grindle 7 Sept., Steel-Maitland 9 Sept., Law 13 Sept., to Lugard 15 Sept. 1916, CO583/48/41330. This duty imposed purely for revenue purposes must be carefully distinguished from the conditional duty of £2 a ton on kernels recommended by the Committee on Oleaginous Nuts in April/May 1916 which was intended to ensure the flow of kernels to Great Britain but which did not come into force during the war. That duty is discussed separately below, pp. 97–101.
 55. Lugard desp. 791 (pressing) 19 Oct., mins.: Harding 21 Oct., Strachey 23 Oct., Steel-Maitland 24 Oct., Bonar Law 26 Oct., to Lugard 30 Oct. 1916, CO583/48/50159. C.O. to Niger Co. 31 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/50228.
 56. Harding min. 7 Dec. 1916, CO583/54/58368.
 57. This paragraph is also based on the sources cited in note 47 above.
 58. To Steel-Maitland’s draft Law added the phrases “without qualification”, “in my opinion”, and “in the first instance”. His final clause “& any special encouragement ... is not available”, replaced Steel-Maitland’s “and not to neutral aliens”. An earlier undated draft referring to “the lessons of the present war” is misfiled in CO583/45/15652.
 59. Report of the Committee on the Liquidation of Enemy Firms 17 Dec. 1915 & C.O. Memo n.d., CO323/689/58139. The quotation referring to “modern views” is from the C.O. memo, which was one of the documents considered by the Committee. Apart from Fiddes, the

- members of the Committee were: E.R.H. Blackwell (Home Office), H. Fountain (Board of Trade), E.J. Turner (India Office), C. Tennyson (C.O.), H.W. Malkin & R.T. Nugent (F.O.)
60. Harding min. 20 Oct. 1916, CO563/52/50161; *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 87, col. 358, 8 Nov. 1916 (Bonar Law's speech); Walter Runciman (President, Board of Trade) to E. Carton de Wiart (Financial Delegate, Belgian Gov't) 24 Oct. 1916, CAB1/20/29, Cabinet papers, TNA.
 61. C.O. to F.O. 27 July, CO583/52/38846; Lugard desp. 643, 30 Aug. 1916, CO583/47/33586.
 62. Lugard desp. 282, 8 Apr. 1916, CO583/45/20789; Lugard desp. 578, 1 Aug. 1916, CO583/47/36630; Lugard desp. 643, 30 Aug. 1916, CO583/48/41329; Burrowes to Crown Agents (copy) 4 Dec. 1916, CO/583/51/58558.
 63. Burrowes memo 15 Mar. 1919 (flimsy), CO583/74/28013.
 64. Ellis min. 11 Aug. 1916, CO323/725/40056.
 65. C.O. mins.: Flood 2 Sept. (1st quotation), Harding (2nd quotation) & Ellis (3rd quotation) 4 Sept. 1916, CO554/32/41764.
 66. McDermott, "Trading with the Enemy", pp. 202, 211–15.
 67. Andrew Marrison, *British Business and Protection, 1903–1932*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, p. 236.
 68. *Ibid.*, p. 233.
 69. *Ibid.*, pp. 228–36; V.H. Rothwell, *British War Aims and Peace Diplomacy 1914–1918*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1971, pp. 26–70; Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'or et le sang, Les buts de guerre économiques de la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris, Fayard, 1989, pp. 216–21. The quotation is from Asquith's Commons speech of 2 Aug. 1916, *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 85, col. 533.
 70. The documents are in CO323/725/40053.
 71. Peter J. Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace: The League of Nations in British Policy 1914–1925*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 50–51.
 72. His father, Conrad Sturzenegger, had gone out in the 1860s. Robert had inherited in 1909. Christof Dejung and Andreas Zangger, "British Wartime Protectionism and Swiss Trading Companies in Asia During the First World War", *Past & Present [PP]* 207 (May 2010), pp. 202–3.
 73. Swiss Legation memos. (copies) 1 & 14 April 1916, CO273/446/16734, 18938.
 74. F.O. to C.O. 25 May, C.O. mins.: Tennyson 23 & 27 May, Risley 24 & 27 May, Grindle 25 May 1916, CO273/448/24165. The Foreign Office files for the First World War are badly disorganized; I have not been able to trace those relating to Sturzenegger.
 75. To Young (Singapore) tel. 16 June, F.O. to C.O. 15 June 1916, CO273/449/28097, 28397.

76. Young tel. rec'd 10 July 1916, CO273/442/32299. It would appear that the governor was correct, Dejung & Zangger, "Swiss Trading Companies", p. 203 and n. 63.
77. F.O. to C.O. 17 July; C.O. mins.: B.A. Finn (Straits Settlements Dep't) 18 July, Tennyson & Risley 19 July, Grindle 20 July 1916, CO273/449/33705.
78. Risley min. 19 July 1916, *ibid.*
79. To Hutson tel. 24 Feb., desp. 28 Feb. 1916, CO83/130/7861.
80. F.O. memos. 21 July & 17 Aug. 1916, CAB37/152,154.
81. C.O. mins: Tennyson & Risley 19 July, Grindle 20 July 1916 (quotation), CO273/449/33705.
82. Circular desp. 1 Aug. 1916, CO583/47/36098.
83. F.O. to C.O. 28 Aug., Tennyson min. 1 Sept. 1916, CO273/449/33705; Reconstruction Cttee to F.O. 11 Sept. 1916 (copy), CO273/452/44494.
84. *Times* obituary quoted in Carland, *Colonial Office and Nigeria*, p. 34.
85. Le Hunte (Governor) conf. 23 Nov. 1914, CO295/493/49068, conf. 19 Mar. 1915 (covering U.S. Consulate claim s.d.) CO295/497/16306; J.R. Chancellor (Governor) desp. 273, 17 July 1916, CO295/498/28496; C.O. to Lord Liverpool (Governor, New Zealand) tel. 19 July 1916, CO209/287/26768.
86. Grindle min. 27 Sept. 1916, CO323/714/44734.
87. Grindle mins. 20 July 1916, CO273/449/33705, 7 Nov. 1916, CO323/705/53363.
88. Grindle min. 5 Sept. 1916, CO583/48/41329.
89. Grindle to Secretary, Reconstruction Cttee 4 Sept. 1916, *ibid.*
90. C.O. to Board of Trade 6 Sept. 1916, *ibid.* C.O. procedure was to write "at once" if a minute was to be acted on, and the decision was not to be taken to a higher level.
91. Harding min. 28 July 1916, CO583/47/38586.
92. F.O. to C.O. 18 Sept. 1916, CO323/714/44734.
93. Harding min. 24 July 1916, CO583/52/38846.
94. Villiers (le Havre) commercial 79, 26 Sept. 1916 (copy) with copy of Belgian note, in F.O. to C.O. 16 Oct. 1916, CO323/715/49768. Le Havre was the wartime base of the Belgian government.
95. Harding min. 21 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/50309.
96. Carton de Wiart to Runciman 17 Oct. 1916, CAB1/20/29.
97. Tennyson memo & min. 2 Nov., Risley min. 3 Nov., Fiddes min. 10 Nov., Steel-Maitland min. 11 Nov, C.O. to F.O. 22 Dec. 1916, CO/323/715/49768.
98. Harding min. 24 Dec. 1915, CO323/689/58139.
99. Flood memo "Enemy Property" n.d. [Aug. 1916], CO323/725/40053.
100. T.C. Macnaghten (General Dep't) skeleton memo 23 Apr. [*sic, recte* Aug.] 1916, *ibid.*

101. Lambert min. 11 Oct. 1916, CO323/714/44734. Lambert is listed as an acting Assistant Under Secretary in the *Colonial Office List* for 1916, and as the only A.U.S. in the 1917 *List*.
102. Lugard desp. 689, 15 Sept. 1916, CO583/48/44902.
103. R.F. Irving to Burrowes 1 Aug., Harding min. 7 Aug. 1916 (quotation), CO583/54/36414. Irving had come with Burrowes from Nigeria.
104. Tennyson min. 26 Oct. 1916, CO583/54/50901.
105. Runciman to Carton de Wiart 24 Oct. 1916, CAB1/20/29.
106. Strachey min. 22 June 1916, CO583/35/32226. The subject is beyond easy summary. It will be discussed below, pp. 186–87.
107. Tennyson min. 18 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/49955.
108. There is a printed copy of the Ordinance and Schedule in CO583/48/41329.
109. Tennyson min. 26 Oct. 1916, CO554/54/50901.
110. Burrowes to Crown Agents 4 Dec. 1916 (copy) CO583/51/58558.
111. Nigerian Chamber of Mines to C.O. 11 Sept., Harding min. & draft reply 14 Sept., Steel-Maitland min. 28 Sept., C.O. to Nigerian Chamber of Mines 6 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/43777.
112. Fiddes min. 23 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/50041.
113. Couper to Anderson 23 Feb., Ellis min. 4 March 1916 & Fiddes min., s.d., reporting views of Harcourt, CO554/29/9311.
114. London Chamber of Commerce to C.O. 9 March, Liverpool Chamber of Commerce to C.O. 8 March, C.O. to Boards of Trade & Agriculture 16 Mar. 1915, CO554/25/11581,11355; Board of Trade to C.O. 24 Apr., Islington min. 27 Apr., Harcourt min. 28 Apr., C.O. to Boards of Agriculture and Trade 4 May 1915, CO554/27/16376,19048.
115. Note of Conference at C.O. 26 May 1915, CO554/27/26962.
116. C.O. to London, Liverpool, & Manchester Chambers of Commerce, *ibid*.
117. London Chamber of Commerce to C.O. 23 June, Strachey min. 25 June (1st quotation), Fiddes min., s.d. (2nd quotation), Anderson & Steel-Maitland mins. 26 June, Harding min. 29 June, Fiddes min. 30 June (4th quotation), C.O. to Chambers of Commerce 6 July 1916 (5th quotation), CO554/25/29145; Fiddes min. 16 Aug. 1915 (3rd quotation), CO554/29/9311. The members of the Committee were Steel-Maitland, Fiddes, Lugard, Clifford, Couper (Bank of British West Africa), Prof. Wyndham Dunstan (Director, Imperial Institute), C. Knowles (Lever Bros.), T.H. Middleton (Board of Agriculture), G.A. Moore (Liverpool Chamber of Commerce), Sir Owen Philipps (London Chamber of Commerce), T. Walkden (Manchester Chamber of Commerce), Sir W.G. Watson (Maypole Dairy), T. Wiles M.P., and T. Worthington (Director, Commercial Intelligence Branch, Board of Trade).

118. Command 8247. There is a copy in CO554/31/20957.
119. Steel-Maitland min. 3 May, Bonar Law to Asquith 22 May, Steel-Maitland min. 19 May, Asquith min. 22 May, Bonar Law min. 27 May (quotation), C.O. to Lugard 1 June 1916, CO554/31/20957.
120. For a fuller discussion of the margarine question, see below, pp. 172–6.
121. Charkes Wilson, *The History of Unilever: A Study in Economic Growth and Social Change*, London, Cassell, 1954, vol. 2, p. 175.
122. Flood memo. 15 Apr. 1917, CO554/32/37064.
123. Flood min. 25 July 1916, CO554/32/34860.
124. Board of Agriculture to C.O. 5 Aug. 1916, Flood min. 15 Apr. 1917, CO554/32/37064.
125. Board of Trade memo. “Policy in Licensing Exports of Animal and Vegetable Oils and Fats” 13 Mar. 1916, CO323/721/12938. On 19 July 1916 Jurgens told the C.O. that they had 28,010 tons of kernels in the U.K., CO554/32/34860. Trigge of the Niger Company believed that Lever Bros. and Maypole were partly responsible for the price rise in January in an attempt to induce the government to prohibit the export of oilseeds and fats from the U.K. Trigge to Scarbrough 7 Jan. 1916, SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
126. Jurgens to C.O. 19 July, Flood & Ellis mins. 25 July 1916, CO554/32/34860.
127. Wilson, *Unilever*, vol. 2, pp. 174–75.
128. Ellis min. 25 July, Strachey & Read mins. 26 July 1916, CO554/32/34860. Sir Francis Hopwood, the Chairman of the W.T.A.C., felt that Jurgens had not put “their case [for priority] sufficiently forcefully”. 60 W.T.A.C. 7 Dec. 1916, CO323/733/60418.
129. F.L. Turner (Local Government Board) to Butler 8 Dec. 1914, CO583/29/39948.
130. Molteno parliamentary question for 11 July, Fiddes min. 5 July, Steel-Maitland min. 8 July (1st quotation), Steel-Maitland min. 29 July (2nd quotation), Steel-Maitland to Molteno 31 July 1916, C.C. Knowles (Lever Bros.) to Steel-Maitland 17 Aug. 1915 [*sic, recte* 1916], Moore to Steel-Maitland 14 July 1916, CO554/31/31487.
131. Mins. of meeting of 12 July, Flood & Ellis mins. 24 July 1916, CO554/32/33751.
132. *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 85, cols. 547–640. Column references will be provided only for direct quotations.
133. *Ibid.*, col. 585 (Bonar Law, both quotations).
134. *Ibid.*, col. 609 (Wiles).
135. *Ibid.*, col. 554.
136. *Ibid.*, cols. 573 (1st & 2nd quotations), 574 (3rd quotation).
137. *Ibid.*, col. 614.

138. L. Margaret Barnett, *British Food Policy During the First World War*, Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1985, p. xviii.
139. *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 85, col. 625 (both quotations).
140. *Ibid.*, col. 630 (Steel-Maitland, both quotations).
141. *Ibid.*, col. 561.
142. *Ibid.*, col. 627.
143. *Ibid.*, cols. 566 (Philipps), 570 (Mackinder).
144. In a later debate Wiles said exactly that: "all these three classes of traders are working very, very closely together", *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 87, col. 327 (8 Nov. 1916).
145. *Ibid.*, vol. 85, col. 633.
146. *Ibid.*, col. 591 (Bonar Law).
147. *Ibid.*, cols. 597 (Molteno), 636 (Steel-Maitland).
148. Burrowes "Notes on the Trade Combine" 6 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/53413, see above, p. 72.
149. "Nuts Committee" n.d., CO323/705/29549.
150. *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 85, col. 587.
151. *Ibid.*, col. 589.
152. *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 87 (8 Nov. 1916), col. 268.
153. Lugard desp. 965, 11 Dec., with copies Lagos Auxiliary to Secretary Southern Province 30 Oct., resolution of 9 Oct., and reply of 30 Nov. 1916, CO554/30/819; Lugard speech to Nigerian Council 29 Dec. 1916 (quotation), in desp. 68, 5 Feb. 1917, CO583/55/10736.



The Colonial Office, the Ministry of Munitions, and the Shippers

THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND THE MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS, I: THE GLYCERINE CONDITIONS

In 1914, vegetable oils and fats stood out among the rather few items for which Germany was heavily dependent on supply from abroad.¹ Palm oil and palm kernels came overwhelmingly from British West Africa.² No cruisers had to be stationed off Lagos to stop their flow to Hamburg. As Alan Kramer has pointed out, “not the blockade but going to war against its main suppliers drastically reduced [German] food imports”.³ British policy would focus not on preventing these raw materials for soap and margarine from going to the enemy, but rather on ensuring that they came to Great Britain for the production of munitions. As the Colonial Office noted retrospectively, British policy was “to secure them as far as possible without too much competition from other countries as to price”.⁴

Oils and fats were sources of glycerine. Before the war this had been a little valued by-product of soap manufacture. By 1916, it was a major input into the manufacture of cordite, the main British explosive.⁵ This concerned the Ministry of Munitions, and especially Alfred Bigland, who had been brought in as an advisor and became Assistant Director of the Propellants Branch. He saw himself as “a Vulture for Glycerine”,⁶ although, as the Colonial Office later noted, he retained the instincts of a broker, and was so fond of a bargain that he often refused to grant a licence unless the firm would do something outside of the ordinary

conditions of the licence.⁷ The easiest way to increase the supply of glycerine in the United Kingdom was to encourage the domestic production of soap. Imports were therefore prohibited while exports were pushed. Following a transaction in July 1915, the Ministry of Munitions set a price of £59/10/- a ton for ordinary glycerine, rising to £87/-/- for dynamite quality. This was a low price by world standards, but the monopoly over the home market let soap-makers recoup by charging high prices to domestic consumers. They hoped to increase their production of glycerine in 1916 by roughly a fifth from 19,000 to 22,000 tons, leaving 13,000 tons to be got from other sources.⁸ A largely unstated corollary of this concentration on soap production was that margarine would continue to come in large quantities from the Netherlands. This could be justified in that, as copra for Dutch production also came from outside the British Empire, "We are of course getting back considerably more margarine than the equivalent of the raw material we are sending to Holland".⁹ The arrangement also economized on British shipping.¹⁰ The Dutch would provide glycerine as well, agreeing to supply a ton for every fifteen tons of soap they exported to Germany.¹¹

The Netherlands would remain a special case, as would Scandinavia and the Gambian trade in groundnuts to France.¹² For the rest of the world, including most importantly the United States of America, a much more restrictive policy began on 12 January 1916 when the export of oils and seeds from the Empire to countries other than Great Britain, was stopped. This was a temporary measure to allow for the formulation of new procedures, which would allow some resumption of trade under licences. For Ernest Pretymann, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Board of Trade, tonnage was the key, and therefore "every ship which can carry them should bring them here and nowhere else".¹³ He urged a firm policy, "since the larger portion of the world's production we can control and the more dependent on us we can make the [United] States, the more effective is our action in taking all Empire supplies likely to be".¹⁴ The Colonial Office recognized the necessity of the change, especially as a leakage of palm oil from the U.S.A. to Sweden meant that "we can no longer say that the American record is a clean one". Now that "the question of scarcity [in the U.K.] has been raised", the prohibitions on export from the colonies should be brought into line with those from Great Britain as this was "the only way in which we can reserve our Colonial coconut oil & palm oil for the requirements of the U.K.". The broad lines of the new policy were settled at an interdepartmental

meeting at the Colonial Office on 20 February. Oils and fats would not be exported from the United Kingdom, with an exception for copra if more came in than could be treated. Oils to Norway from British possessions would be rationed, and could be carried only on Norwegian ships. Coconut oil from Ceylon was reserved to Great Britain. Denmark would receive a generous ration of 70,000 tons of oils and fats so that it could continue to export butter to Great Britain. Exports to the Netherlands would have to be in Dutch ships. Seeds and nuts might go from the colonies and from India to Italy, France, and Russia, but there would have to be a check on improper destinations from Italy, and it was expected that there would be a return of glycerine from France.¹⁵ Licences might be given for exports only if certain conditions were met. The Ministry of Munitions set glycerine percentages for the various fats and oils: 12% for kernel and coconut oils, 5.5 and 7.5% for different kinds of Nigerian palm oil, 5.7% for kernels, and 7.8% for copra. Shippers would have to open a London banker's credit at 2/6 per pound according to these equivalents. This would be forfeit unless the glycerine was sold within ninety days to the Ministry at its standard prices. These were now well below world and American market prices, which ranged from £150 up to £300 per ton.¹⁶

As the British had a virtual monopoly over palm oil and palm kernels, they could easily control that trade. Therefore the Board of Trade thought it "desirable to meet our requirements with West African produce as far as possible".¹⁷ However, because copra and coconut oil were far more important in the world market, the success of the new policy would depend not on West Africa but on South Asia and the Pacific, where there were major sources of supply outside of the Empire, in the Dutch East Indies and the Philippines. The hope was that the British controlled enough to impose the glycerine conditions. As shipping became scarce and expensive, San Francisco rather than Liverpool or London was the obvious destination for Pacific copra. The Colonial Office soon realized that what London really wanted was "copra going to the U.S.A. and glycerine coming back here...".¹⁸ American copra imports were likely to increase in 1916 as the United States began to turn to coconut oil as a major ingredient in soap production.¹⁹ However, if America resisted the glycerine conditions and its markets were closed, copra was more likely to rot in the Pacific than to flow readily to the United Kingdom, with grave consequences for the region.

The new policy rapidly broke down. From Melbourne the Governor-General telegraphed at the end of March: "Australian traders urge permission export copra [Fiji] America impossible obtain freight England. If export America stopped effect on Island trade will be disastrous".²⁰ At this early stage the Colonial Office still supported the Board of Trade and the Ministry of Munitions in directing Pacific copra to Great Britain.²¹ As it continued to pile up in Sydney, the Governor-General became more insistent. American buyers would not accept the conditions "and are unconditionally obtaining supplies from Philippine Islands. No prospect that restrictions will induce Pacific tonnage divert to London as you suggest". Trade with the United States had stopped "as oil crushers in San Francisco cannot sell glycerine to Great Britain for 13 cents per lb when local American market is 60 cents".²² American firms said the same thing, the glycerine conditions "will make it impossible to continue importing copra from British Possessions...". Instead they were turning to the Philippines.²³

Despite this, the Ministry of Munitions remained adamant: "if we gave the U.S.A. a little longer, she might agree to glycerine terms as the Philippine supply of copra, though large will not meet all their needs."²⁴ This would prove a bad miscalculation. America's shipping problem was overcome. Copra was also arriving from the Netherlands East Indies, some of it sent by the Australian firm Burns Philp without the glycerine conditions.²⁵ Most importantly, the Philippines had already begun to crush copra in Manila, and turned to shipping the less bulky, but more valuable oil instead. Whereas only two million pounds worth of oil had been exported before the war, this would eventually rise to over two hundred million pounds, making it briefly the American colony's most important export.²⁶ This would be in the long term, but for the glycerine conditions in the Pacific there would barely be a short term. By the end of May Melbourne had lost patience with a visibly failing policy. It decided that copra might go to the United States without the conditions if ships were not available to take it to the U.K.²⁷ William Morris Hughes, Australia's vinegary prime minister, was in London to deal with the shipping question. He went to the Shipping Control Commission "as to getting more tonnage for Australian products and copra will be dealt with there". Steel-Maitland now considered it "a hopelessly absurd proposition to use up shipping to force Australian copra to this country...".²⁸ Hughes was in fact mainly concerned with wheat, which, unlike copra, was produced by the white Australians of

his electorate. The Admiralty had insisted that this should come instead from North America from where steamers could carry three times the amount.²⁹ Unable to overcome this opposition, Hughes secretly purchased a fleet of fifteen ships for Australia. This brought him before the War Committee where he was castigated by McKenna, Curzon (the Shipping Controller), and Balfour, and only tepidly defended by Law. He complained of ungenerous treatment, but had to accept Asquith's ruling that he would purchase no more ships, and that when the thirteen which were then under Admiralty or French Government control became available, they might yet be requisitioned for military, though not for commercial, purposes.³⁰ As Melbourne was still under pressure from the Ministry of Munitions and from Burns Philp to maintain regular shipments of copra or of coconut oil to Great Britain, the first of Hughes's ships to sail, the *Strathendrick*, carried 3450 tons of copra as its main cargo in October 1916. Steel-Maitland considered this "a real misuse of shipping". It would be the last significant shipment of copra from Australia to Great Britain.³¹

Despite its failure in the Pacific, the Ministry's restrictive policy had been remarkably successful elsewhere in channelling oils and fats to Great Britain. While the target for nett imports of all the raw materials estimated at their oil values had been set at 320,000 tons for the first six months, just over 375,000 tons had come in. The great success had been with what was called "fish oil", but this affected all the others, including kernels, where the price slump has already been noted.³² Prospects for the big West African trading firms were now anything but hopeful, as Trigge of the Niger Company noted: "Bigland[']s Committee is seriously affecting everything and we can but do all possible to get them to view things in a reasonable light."³³ They feared that "curtailing markets ... may ... mean a permanent diversion either to other Oils or to other countries", and that "all that was needed could have been obtained without such a burden and loss upon the merchants". Nevertheless, by keeping producer prices low and buying in large quantities they still expected to make normal profits.³⁴ As for the Pacific, although London could not dictate to a Dominion such as Australia, Bigland still tried to maintain the glycerine conditions for the British colonial possessions or, failing that, to replace them with a straight export duty. Again Washington protested, this time threatening to cut off exports to the Allies from the Philippines. The American protest was endorsed by the Minister of Blockade, Lord Robert Cecil, who felt that the effect of the policy was "merely to prevent

supplies going to America without providing this country with glycerine in sufficient quantities to justify the restrictions...". With the Ministry of Munitions now on the defensive, Steel-Maitland joined the attack. The Colonial Office had given the policy a fair trial, but the conditions would have to be reconsidered for copra and for palm kernels. Bigland was still holding out for high values for Pacific copra to prevent it undercutting kernel prices in the Atlantic. So far he had succeeded in imposing glycerine conditions only for a shipment of two thousand tons of coconut oil to Cincinnati, where Proctor and Gamble was based. "In other words to bolster a very dubious policy for the East Coast of America we are asked to embark on a much more dubious policy for shipments to the West Coast." The conditions were justified if they brought glycerine into Great Britain and saved the Exchequer the difference between the British and the world prices. However, the domestic market was now saturated, and the amount of copra and kernels in British possessions was more than could be absorbed either by the U.K. or by Dutch margarine production. This surplus might go to the U.S.A., but "the result of the demand for these conditions is to prevent a sale of the produce and to keep it spoiling in the country of origin". Kernels contained 4½% glycerine. Setting the difference between the British and world prices at £160 a ton, Steel-Maitland calculated that the glycerine conditions added £7/8/- to the price of kernels. Bigland was destroying a trade worth potentially £1,500,000 a year for a gain to the Exchequer of, say, £40,000 just when Nigerian finances could least afford it. He had clearly got his figures wrong, especially for kernels and copra, which were used for margarine rather than for soap, and therefore did not have glycerine as a by product. The Ministry of Munitions was therefore asked for reasons for continuing with the conditions.³⁵

Faced with this opposition the Ministry had to give ground. While insisting that the policy had "proved decidedly successful", and insisting that there was no case for withdrawing or substantially relaxing the glycerine conditions, it would review them for kernels in light of the pending imposition of the conditional £2 export duty recommended by Steel-Maitland's committee.³⁶ The Colonial Office rejected this link, partly because the duty would be postponed, probably until after the war. The key point was the loss of a potential American market. There Bigland had so far managed to impose the conditions only for 7510 tons of produce, of which 3485 were palm oil. As this went over in many small shipments mainly for industrial uses, the imposition of uniform conditions might

be considered successful. By contrast, they had been imposed only for 700 tons of kernels. Trigge claimed that the Niger Company could ship 4000 tons a month if the conditions were removed, though this was considered perhaps optimistic. In 1915, before the prohibition, only 5022 tons had gone to America. Now, the Niger Company said that an Elder Dempster steamer could take 4000 tons every two months, while American crushers could send steamers of 5000 tons, and sailing ships of 700–1200 tons, which had been chartered to bring barrel staves to West Africa, required return cargoes. As usual, Ellis dissented from the Office's consensus. He wanted to keep the conditions, but oil and kernels were of less importance for his West African colonies than for Nigeria, he had already admitted his inability to grasp the details of the trade, and he had also said he would place the interests of the British manufacturers above those of the merchant firms. His views were ignored. The Colonial Office restated its earlier position.³⁷

Bigland now backed down to the extent of offering "to reduce the percentages of glycerine required to be returned to half their present value, it being understood that this reduction does not involve any abandonment of the principles of the glycerine equivalent and is not necessarily to be regarded as permanent".³⁸ However, for the C.O. the situation was now complicated by Lugard's imposition of export duties, which involved oil as well as kernels.³⁹ The Board of Trade on the other hand opposed a general halving of the equivalents, which it would accept only for palm kernels from West Africa.⁴⁰ This now fitted in with Bigland's thinking. In October, he concluded that there would be a larger demand for glycerine in 1917 than he had foreseen. It would be 39,000 tons at a time when raw material prices were again rising in response to expected deficiencies in Argentine linseed and American cottonseed, and the high price of butter and lard. Palm kernels went up to £22/4/4. Bigland accepted that some equivalents had been set too high, and that there would have to be reductions to compensate for Lugard's duties. Basing his calculation on a standard price of £60 and a U.S. price of £180, he reduced the equivalent of kernel and coconut oil from 12 to 10%, of 7.5% palm oil to 6%, of 5.5% palm oil to 4%, of kernels from 5.7 to 4%, and of copra from 7.8 to 6%. Steel-Maitland was sure that Bigland had got his figures wrong. A 4% equivalent would add £4/16/- to a ton of kernels in addition to an export duty of £1/2/6 for a total burden of £5/18/6. Quoting Hesiod, *νήπιοι, οὐδ' ἴσασιν ὅσω πλέον ἤμισυ παντός*, he concluded: "The kernels won[']t be bought: he won[']t get

his half loaf & the Nigerian trade will suffer.” If lower equivalents led to increased supply direct from West Africa, American prices would drop, and the Ministry of Munitions would then get more glycerine. When the Oils and Fats Subcommittee met a couple of days later, Bigland agreed to reduce the kernels’ equivalent to 3%, falling to 2% when the Nigerian export duty came fully into effect.⁴¹ Steel-Maitland had largely won his point, but the moment had perhaps been missed. In September, after the lifting of the glycerine conditions in the Pacific, Washington had enquired whether they still applied for West Africa. While a temporizing answer was sent, the C.O. did “rather the U.S. Govt. make a fuss as they did over South Sea copra...”.⁴² There was no such fuss, and no great flow of kernels across the Atlantic. The American demand for oils greatly increased, as after 1916 coconut oil became a major ingredient in margarine as well as in soap. It would come from the Philippines, the Pacific, and the Dutch East Indies.⁴³ While America turned to the Pacific, Great Britain concentrated ever more on West Africa for kernels, and on Ceylon and Malaya for copra and coconut oils, as these were areas which were under its political control.⁴⁴

THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND THE MINISTRY OF MUNITIONS, 2: THE ALLOCATION OF SHIPPING

In pressing the Ministry of Munitions to modify the glycerine conditions, the Colonial Office felt it was acting in the interest both of the expatriate firms and of Nigerian trade. At the same time it was also engaged in another battle, in which it saw the Ministry as being largely in the hands of the trading combine, against which it tried to champion the smaller companies and, especially, the African traders. Before the war the difference between Lagos and Liverpool prices for palm kernels had been in the order of £4 to £5, seldom rising above £5, with £5/11/3 in March 1914 having been quite exceptional. After the outbreak of war the monthly gap went below £5 only once, in October 1914 (£4/5/-), and was usually well above £6. From October 1915 it rapidly widened from £7/5/- to reach £15/13/- in March 1916.⁴⁵ This tempted many new traders into the export of produce. Some were European. Of these the most conspicuous were the recently formed African Oil Nuts. In March 1916, noting the effect of the shutting down of the German firms, they announced their “intention to try and capture this trade for this country”. They also noted the impact of the combine in “incensing

the native and actually driving him out of collection and production". Their appeal for "the moral and active support of His Majesty's Government" in acquiring some of the German factories for their own use was only slightly undercut by their request that their director, W.F. Hebron, who was going out to Nigeria, should be classified as being in a reserved occupation. They were backed by the leading Liverpool firm of crushers J.J. Bibby & Sons. Fiddes thought "that we should bless the newcomer", even though, as Steel-Maitland pointed out, "as the supply [to the U.K.] is at present governed by the tonnage available, the new-comer[']s presence will not increase the *amount* of supply...".⁴⁶ Hebron did eventually meet Lugard. He would later claim to have influenced him in favour of imposing the export duty.⁴⁷

Other newcomers were African. In the historiography they have often been depicted as small men being driven out of the trade and forced to close down. While they did indeed try to present themselves in that light, there is little to suggest that these traders had been significantly involved in the export of produce, particularly palm produce, before August 1914. They made no claims to Woermann's receiver concerning such shipments, while expatriate firms such as John Holt and C.F.A.O. did so for substantial sums.⁴⁸ With the European companies no longer bidding up prices after the outbreak of the war, the Lagos traders moved in.⁴⁹ While nine of them had been exporters before the war, there would be seventy by 1917.⁵⁰ This was much resented. In April 1915, John Holt complained that Elder Dempster were "directly encouraging natives to buy produce and make arrangements for them that none of the heavy expenses, either through storage and its attendant losses or even by paying higher freights shall fall on them". They also pointed out that, unlike the expatriate firms, African merchants did not pay British taxes, and that they had already made nearly £30,000 profit.⁵¹ We first hear the voices of the Lagosians themselves in August 1915 through Dyer and Wintle, a London firm which saw itself as providing "invaluable service to the native traders who have no direct representatives or connections in Great Britain". It charged that the large firms were combining against Elder Dempster and, using the threat of independent chartering to secure all the available tonnage, "endeavouring to crush out of existence their smaller competitors". According to Dyer and Wintle, Elder Dempster wanted a communication from the Colonial Office to "strengthen their hands in dealing with the unreasonable demands of the large firms". Questioned about this by the Colonial Office, the shipping company

replied that the large firms were complaining that they had had largely to stop buying because of lack of freight, and that as a result:

the smaller firms and particularly the native, who we are informed, in many cases had not done any shipping hitherto, elects to do so now for he knows that he will get a proportion of the steamer space offering, thus placing the regular Merchant at a disadvantage directly caused by the War.

As Ellis pointed out, this was not an entirely consistent argument, but it was clear that Elder Dempster were not soliciting C.O. support against the combine. Rather, Sir Owen Philipps felt that “a regular shipper who had an accumulation of cargo was entitled to have his arrears cleared before dealing with the casual [*sic*] and new shipper”.⁵²

The complaints of the African merchants were next reflected in Lugard’s despatch on the shipping question at the end of the year. He also claimed that Elder Dempster had acted under pressure to recognize the claim of the Ring firms “as old and reliable customers to be first considered when ships are available and their right to ship the same proportions as they shipped prior to the war”. The governor said that much of this trade was in fact “new having formerly been in the hands of the Germans, while German bottoms carried the bulk of the palm kernels and ground-nuts”. As the Ring had enough produce to fill the ships, Elder Dempster’s policy disadvantaged the “native traders, who were not the customers of the shipping company or who shipped a very small proportion before the war, and newcomers...”. While the government railway “has of course shown no such discrimination...”, its yards were seriously congested, as consignees had to keep their produce in the wagons while waiting for shipping. This had obvious consequences further up the line.⁵³

In April 1916, the Lagos authorities intervened to regulate the situation. Produce arriving by rail would get sixty percent of the shipping while the lagoon trade would get forty percent. The lagoon trade would continue to be controlled by Elder Dempster, which gave 75% to the firms of the Lagos Working Agreement and 25% to the others. However, shipment from the railway would be determined by an allocation committee on a previous six month basis with sixty percent going to the combine and forty percent to the others, which for this purpose included the Niger Company, though it exported from Burutu rather than Lagos. This committee was chaired by Colonel Moorhouse, the Secretary for Southern Nigeria, and included the Traffic Manager of the railway, two

representatives of the Ring, one from the other firms, and the agent of the Niger Company.⁵⁴ Discontent quickly expressed itself. London and Kano, a long-established firm, but not part of the Ring, complained that, while the "Pool" and the Niger Company knew exactly how much they could buy and ship, "the operations of the other Companies and Traders are subject to the ordinary laws of competition between themselves and have to take what they can get out of the 40% space allotted to them". They appealed for a return to the previous practice of allocating shipping in accordance with the arrival of wagons at Iddo, the railhead in Lagos.⁵⁵

Although the Colonial Office did little about this, it was much more active in dealing with shipments to non-British destinations, which were not subject to the April arrangements. The Ministry of Munitions allowed the Niger Company to apply to ship 3000 tons of palm oil to Marseilles, leaving it to the merchants to arrange the proportions from Burutu and Opobo. The C.O. noted that Bigland "quite realized the importance of not giving away the interests of the non-Niger Co firms but he hadn't heard of the approaching amalgamation of the African Assocn, Millers, & the Co of Afr Merchants with the Niger Co". The Office therefore insisted on getting the written consent of John Holt, MacIver, and the Company of African Traders before agreeing to authorize the shipment, which was on the "understanding that it will not prejudice consideration of applications in respect of shipments of palm oil to France from other ports in British West Africa within the 3 months referred to in your letter".⁵⁶ The problem came in the next three month period, from July through September, when again the Ministry of Munitions agreed to allow 3000 tons to France. Tin Areas of Nigeria, a firm originally established to supply the minefields but now rapidly expanding as a trading company in Nigeria and the Gold Coast, applied for a share. It was outside the combine. Bigland wanted to restrict shipments to those firms which had participated in the trade before the war, "as there were believed to be a number of recently established concerns having no real claim to participation and more of these would no doubt arise if latitude were allowed".⁵⁷

While acknowledging the justice of this position on grounds of abstract equity, the Colonial Office chose "to look mainly to the interests of Nigeria, whose export trade has been greatly crippled by the closing down of the German firms...". London should therefore grant preference "to new British firms rather than to the old". Bigland agreed to allow Tin Areas, and also the Liverpool firm Taylor & Co., to ship

outside the 3000 ton allocation, as they had arranged shipping independently, but he reaffirmed his point of principle to confine participation in the 3000 tons "to firms established in the French trade", so as "to secure the good will of the African trade as a whole and to induce them to make the necessary arrangements". The allocation would be made by the West Africa section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, but favourable consideration would be given to "deserving applications for small amounts from new firms...".⁵⁸ The Ministry demonstrated how it intended to apply this principle by recommending the rejection of an application from J.J. Fischer and Co. a Liverpool firm which was mainly concerned with the export of cotton textiles. It had been long established in the Gold Coast, but did not operate in Nigeria, The request had been referred to Miller Bros., who replied that Fischer's involvement in shipping palm oil from Lagos had to be "entirely on commission and on account of natives", and "those native shippers are simply taking advantage of the present position". Fischer were in fact shipping on behalf of Peter Thomas.⁵⁹ The C.O. had already noted that "the ignorance of the Ministry of Munitions of the conditions of W.A. trade make their dealings with merchants rather dangerous".⁶⁰ Now it was aghast: "The Ministry are entirely in the hands of 'the ring'." Fischer and Thomas were precisely the sort of people who should be assisted against the Ring, and "there is the possibility of a holy row if the non-combination firms find that they are not being given licences while the old gang are & that Miller Bros are the advisers of the M of M in assigning such privileges". In any case, the Ring firms could hardly claim to have been established in the trade with France, which was a new one, having barely started in 1913. Harding and Strachey were probably looking forward to an acrimonious correspondence. For once Read intervened. The telephone was used. A meeting was arranged with Bigland and his deputy Bird on 17 August. It decided that the Liverpool group would keep 3000 tons per quarter, but that licences would also be given for a further 1000 tons, with 500 coming from Nigeria (including the occupied zone in Kamerun), 200 from Sierra Leone, and 300 from the Gold Coast (including the occupied zone of Togoland).⁶¹ The quantities involved were tiny, but the Colonial Office had highlighted its determination to stick up for Nigerian interests against the machinations of the combine. This prefigured a much greater confrontation which was soon to come.

In August, Harding noted that the Office had received many complaints "from the small firms which are being crowded out by a

combination of the big".⁶² Not all of these have been preserved. One which has was again from Taylor & Co, a house which had "Activity" as its cable address. The C.O. knew them well and considered them "a loudmouthed firm" which had given them trouble in the past. Their letter lived up to this reputation. They asserted that Elder Dempster gave virtually all of the space available for kernels at the standard rate of £2/5/- per ton to the Ring firms. Government pressure had made charters available on which native shippers had reasonable space, but at £6/10/- a ton. The government had enforced a 60/40 ratio between the Ring firms and the others for the railway to Iddo, but "No representative was put on [the Allocation Committee] to protect the interests of independent shippers both black and white". The combine claimed a favourable position because of the money it had put into Nigeria, but "We think it would be found that instead of investing capital in West Africa they have in the aggregate drawn millions of pounds from it", while Taylors "have endeavoured during the last twenty years to cultivate trade by giving natives facilities and credit to enable them to do business". The Colonial Office disliked the tone, but recognized that "there is a good deal in what they say here". It used the letter to back up its case for giving African merchants a share of the Marseilles trade.⁶³

LAGOS TRADERS PROTEST

While representations continued to be made in London through firms such as Taylors, traders were now protesting in Lagos as well. By doing this they propelled themselves into the tumultuous politics of the Nigerian capital during the war, and into the nascent West African nationalist movement. The Lagos élite was still a small one in which everyone knew each other, and it was markedly cosmopolitan. In medicine and the law Africans might advance to positions which Europeans had to acknowledge and even to a degree respect. Journalism gave others the chance to express stirring ideas in the orotund phrases of their time and place. It was a field which Europeans did not enter. While the Colonial Office dismissed the local newspapers as rags,⁶⁴ historians have long acknowledged their role in promoting and inspiring a modern sense of African identity and pride of race.⁶⁵

In Lagos, there were five papers with a combined circulation of about 2000.⁶⁶ Ajasa's *Nigerian Pioneer* broadly supported the government. The four other papers were highly critical of Lugard and his

administration. Ajasa's origins were obscure and disputed. In 1912, he claimed to be "a native of Lagos and related to the native chiefs of Lagos and the reigning prince".⁶⁷ He is often depicted as a conservative, as "The African mouthpiece of the Nigerian colonial oligarchy...", and as an "African Reactionary".⁶⁸ Nevertheless he was a man of strong character, an early cultural nationalist who had Africanized his name.⁶⁹ He saw Nigeria's future within the British Empire, but supported the claims of the Lagos white cap chiefs before the West African Land Committee in 1916.⁷⁰ A decade later, the young Nnamdi Azikiwe would first be impressed by his "dignity and gentility", but then follow his contemporaries in finding that he lacked the necessary dynamism. Eventually, much later, he "learned to appreciate him as a great man".⁷¹ George Williams edited the *Lagos Standard*. Of Egba ancestry, Williams had originally come as a trader from Sierra Leone. He was a strong cultural nationalist, a proponent of the Yoruba language, and one of the nine founders of the United African Native Church. A later historian would remark on his "assertive and fearless opposition to the colonial government...".⁷² He was quite ready to attack the "high-handed tyranny" and the "fatuous eccentricities of the present administration...", and urge the election of a representative Legislative Council at least for Lagos.⁷³ Nevertheless, according to the *Red Book*, the *Standard* always tried "to present matters on the broadest principles and to unite both whites and blacks in community of interest and welfare".⁷⁴ The *Nigerian Chronicle* was the paper of Christopher Josephus Johnson, who had studied economics at the University of Liverpool, and maintained a high academic tone, which may have led to its failure in 1915.⁷⁵ He urged the "peaceful evolution along modern lines of African institutions, especially those in Yorubaland...".⁷⁶ In contrast to his characterization of Williams, Allister MacMillan could not find his usual words of fulsome praise for Johnson. He merely acknowledged that he had the courage of his opinions, and that these had had an impact on the political history of Lagos.⁷⁷ To Thomas Horatius Jackson of the *Lagos Weekly Record* he was more charitable. He was "an able and influential champion of the Negro race". His family had come originally from Liberia and had run the paper since 1890. A keen sportsman and a frequent visitor to England, in 1918 he would become a member of Essex County Cricket Club.⁷⁸ Jackson is remembered as "one of the most colourful personalities in the history of the Nigerian press.... Whenever there was a fight to uphold the right of the underdog, he was always at the centre of the fray".

He would become a supporter of the Jamat faction of the Moslems opposed to the Lemomu, and a collaborator of Herbert Macaulay in founding the Nigerian National Democratic Party. He looked to Japan and to the United States as models for the development of Nigeria.⁷⁹ The fourth newspaper was the *Times of Nigeria* published by James Bright Davies, who at 68, was the old lion of Nigerian journalism. Like Williams he had come from Sierra Leone, but his ancestry was Igbo, and the authorities considered that he had “no local influence”. His turbulent career in government service and in commerce had included establishing a Nigerian Shipping Corporation along with A.W. Thomas, T.H. Doherty, S.H. Pearse, W.F. Lumpkin, and Prince Ladapo Ademola in 1909. This was evidently short-lived. In 1910, he took over the *Times*.⁸⁰ After the outbreak of war he turned the customary affirmation of British values on into a condemnation of Lugard’s “legislative measures, his political administration, his educational policies, in fact the whole policy and principle of his administration [which] bear such close resemblance to, or are in such intimate relations with German rule ... and ... are so entirely un-British”.⁸¹ In February 1916, his unrelenting criticism of the “austerities and severities of a continuous series of measures and enactments which could only have been dictated by a rancorous negrophobia and which apart from German rule could only flourish under the British Crown Colony System of government or under a constituted or authorised autocracy”, led to his prosecution for seditious libel. He was fined one hundred pounds with the threat of a six-month prison sentence if he did not maintain good behaviour for a year.⁸²

By the time of the *Red Book*, Williams and Davies had died, and the *Chronicle* had closed.⁸³ Partly as a result, lawyers and doctors feature more prominently than editors. A page of photographs displays “Some Native Representatives of Law and Medicine, Lagos”, while the group photograph of “Exponents of Law, Calabar”, is the only place in the Nigerian section of the book in which Africans and Europeans are shown intermingled.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, lawyers were relatively inconspicuous in this stage of nationalism in Nigeria. Only J. Egerton Shyngle, who came originally from the Gambia, and was closely linked with Herbert Macaulay, had any prominence.⁸⁵ Boyle in 1913 had considered him “Probably the ablest native in Lagos, but is dishonest”.⁸⁶ Far more important were three doctors: Richard Akiwande Savage, John Randle, and Ọrìşadipe Ọbasa. Randle and Ọbasa have already been noted in connection with the water rate agitation.⁸⁷ Savage appears not to have taken any part in this.

He was an Egba who had played an important role in student politics at Edinburgh University. His enemies considered him “an intemperate, self-assertive and self-satisfied man with a penchant for mud-slinging and abuse”, who could see no viewpoint but his own.⁸⁸ In June 1900, he attended the first Pan-African Conference in London as a delegate of the Afro-West Indian Literary Society of Edinburgh. He had worked for a long time in the Gold Coast, where he had met J.E. Casely Hayford, the leading West African nationalist of the time. Just before the outbreak of the war they had sent a circular letter to leading men in the Gold Coast, Sierra Leone, and Lagos proposing the establishment of a Conference of British West Africa. Savage returned to Lagos determined to promote this idea and to be its leader in Nigeria.⁸⁹ Johnson’s *Nigerian Chronicle* took up the cause, though it warned of “wolves in sheep’s clothing”.⁹⁰ A meeting was held in the house of the prominent merchant David Taylor. Doherty was present as was another merchant, B.C. Vaughan. He and his brother J.W. Vaughan ran a hardware business which had been established in 1873 by their father J.C. Vaughan, who had come from Camden, SC. They were the only African traders who could compete with the European firms in this trade.⁹¹ Four doctors, Savage, Randle, Obase, and Lumpkin, participated, as did Shyngle the lawyer, and Jackson of the *Lagos Weekly Record*. They elected Randle as chairman, Jackson and Savage as joint secretaries. However, their organization quickly faded away. It would be some years before the idea was seriously revived.⁹²

On 12 July, a manifesto was issued entitled “THE SHIPPING DIFFICULTY or THE RESTRICTIONS AND DISADVANTAGES PLACED UPON NATIVE SHIPPERS IN THE EXPORT OF LOCAL PRODUCTS”.⁹³ It was addressed “TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN!” The writers appeared to call themselves “the Principals of the British and African Produce Supply Company” as if this were an umbrella organisation. They may have hoped to create one. They proclaimed that “never has the sentiment for combination been so strong among the Native Shippers than at the present moment...”. Nevertheless, as a prominent Lagosian, Patriarch James G. Campbell of the West African Episcopal Church, lamented in 1918, “no lead is taken by us the natives and we refuse to form a combine or a limited company...”.⁹⁴ In fact, the B.A.P.S.C. already existed as a firm which had been founded in the Gold Coast in the 1890s by W.T. Duncan. It was extended to Nigeria in 1915 by his eldest son S.W. Duncan, who had previously been cashier to H.B.W. Russell, one of the Ring firms, and

also their agent in Ibadan.⁹⁵ He was one of the “five other Influential Native Shippers” who signed on the second page. He did so as Manager and Representative of the B.A.P.S.C. The four main signatories on the first page were Josiah Doherty, Frederick Williams, who signed as Treasurer of the Agege Planters Union, Jacob K. Coker, who signed as Secretary of the Union, and Salami Agbaje. The Manifesto claimed that as a result of the closure of the German firms, and particularly of Woermann Linie, “the Native Produce Shippers of Nigeria have been undergoing untold hardships and have also been experiencing considerable difficulty in the export of their produce”. They accused “the local Merchant firms” of having formed “a Great Pool or Combine with a view of the control of all local Shipping whether it be lagoon produce or Railway-borne Traffic and thus oust Native Shippers from the Produce Market....” They had done this by exerting “considerable pressure” on Elder Dempster. The “Pool Combine” wanted to use a pre-war average to cut out what they saw as “a lot of mushroom Shippers”. The African merchants argued that they did not fall into this category, as before the war kernels and cocoa had gone to Germany, “and therefore the bulk of native shipments found their way to Hamburg by the Woermann Boats”. They could not now produce evidence of shipment by the German firm to establish their claim to tonnage according to a pre-war average. They did argue that some of them had passed their documents through the Ring firms in exchange for cash advances, and the Ring was now claiming these as having been their own shipments.

However, the next paragraph introduced a quite different and rather contradictory argument: that the ruthless, pre-war trading methods of the big firms had forced the native shippers out of produce, while, “had they recognised the principle of ‘live and let live’, they could have paid normal prices which would leave a very fair margin of profit”. “Live and Let Live” was the motto of the Nigerian British and African Produce Supply Company in 1920 when the *Red Book* was composed. It was surmounted by a world map featuring Africa and Europe, while “Over the map is an eye, and immediately underneath the eye are the clasped hands of a silk-hatted European and an African, the latter clothed in the elaborate robes for which the North and West of the great ‘dark continent’ are noted”.⁹⁶ MacMillan does not say whether this was the motto and philosophy of the original company in the Gold Coast, which Sam Duncan brought with him to Nigeria, or whether he created it himself for the Nigerian company.

The Manifesto went on to assert the right of native shippers “to follow the law of expansion by participating in the legitimate and general endeavour to capture German trade; especially as war conditions make it entirely impossible for the Pool Combine to indulge in any reckless trading without incurring the certain risk of very abnormal losses”. Without great reserves of capital, the Lagosians, as shrewd businessmen would pull out of produce whenever “the Pool Combine are playing a loosing game”. Given “equality of conditions”, the native shippers “can easily put up tonnage equal to or more than that of the Pool Combine”. Agitation in the local press or elsewhere had led the government to appoint a commission to enquire into the congestion of trade, especially along the railway. Apart from government officials this included two representatives of the “Pool Combine” but none of the native shippers or of the other European firms. It was therefore arranged that the “Pool Combine” should get 60% and the other firms 40%. However, the tin mining companies were allocated 20% of this, leaving only 20% for the rest which also included powerful British firms such as the Niger Company and London and Kano. At the same time, the Ring practically monopolized the lagoon traffic. As a result only meagre allocations of shipping space were doled out to the Lagosians. Of 12,000 tons exported in May in five steamers only 400 tons went to the native shippers, while they got only 350 tons of the 9000 tons exported in six steamers in June. This was less than six percent of total export tonnage. A fair system would have allocated at least 2000 tons, or ten percent. The African merchants now had over 1500 tons ready for shipment and could easily muster another 1000 tons inside a couple of weeks, “which proves the wonderful facilities at their disposal for the control of the local purchase of produce”.

The Manifesto was most immediately directed at Elder Dempster calling on them either to make a fairer allocation or to arrange a charter party to clear the merchants’ stock. It did not attract the attention of the Lagos authorities or of the Colonial Office for several months. We shall shortly look at their comments and criticisms.⁹⁷ First we must note what the Manifesto was not. It did not criticize the Ring for holding down prices in Lagos so as to make profits at the expense of African producers. Rather the native shippers saw their opportunity in the low Lagos prices and wanted a larger share in the Liverpool profits. The first point which the Lagos authorities made was that the signatories “do not represent the best of the Native Traders”. Neither Pearse nor

Thomas had signed. Doherty was the most important of those who had. Cooper, the General Manager of the Railway, who eventually supplied the most detailed analysis, noted that he was a general merchant with no interest in produce. Williams and Coker each signed as representatives of the Agege Planters Union. This was primarily concerned with cocoa rather than with palm produce. This new crop for Yorubaland had more than doubled over pre-war production with exports reaching 179,121 hundredweight worth £393,000 in 1916. Coker and Williams had been involved with Doherty in the early development of cocoa at Agege. Coker had a farm there to which he devoted much of his time.⁹⁸ However, he had only recently moved into produce export. Both he and Williams had been allocated tonnage. Salami Agbaje styled himself general merchant and timber contractor. He was also in produce and had been given tonnage. Of the next five “influential” signatories, Duncan, as we have seen, was a new man, but he had the backing of Doherty and Williams for £1000 and of Agbaje for £500. Karimu Kotun was the representative of a German firm in Manchester, E.H. Stein & Co., which would later be closed down. A comparatively young man, born in 1881, he had some prominence, having been made in 1907 president of the first Muslim Cricket Club in Lagos.⁹⁹ Unlike the other merchants he also became involved in the water rate agitation.¹⁰⁰ He was mainly concerned with cotton, and had made no application to ship produce. Saidu and Brimah Williams were cotton traders, but also bought produce, which they sold to Lagos Stores, one of the Ring firms. They did not ship on their own account. David Taylor appears in the *Red Book* as the exemplar of the “successful merchants here who have, by their own unaided efforts, risen from humble circumstances to positions which they can regard with complacency and satisfaction...”. In 1916, he leased his general merchandise store on the Marina to the Colonial Bank, which, originally established in the West Indies, was moving in to challenge the monopoly of the Bank of British West Africa.¹⁰¹ Taylor had recently moved into produce and had lodged an application for tonnage. T.A. Lawanson had just left Elder Dempster, where he had been a tally clerk, to become a baracooner buying produce for resale. He had applied for tonnage. Four other persons had also signed the Manifesto. Moses Coker, who came from Abeokuta, was the first African agent employed by J.J. Horsfield and Co. They were commission agents for cotton.¹⁰² Cooper thought that they would also handle produce. T.B. Dawodu had been the Curator of the Botanical Department, but was now a planter.

He sold produce through Williams and also through Thomas, but did not ship himself. Candidu da Rocha called himself a landed proprietor, general merchant, and Manager of the Agricultural Bank of Lagos. Cooper dismissed him as a moneylender, but he had inherited a large fortune. While in 1913 the authorities had distrusted him as linked to Herbert Macaulay, in 1925 Ajasa would include him alongside himself in a list of eminent men to whom Eleko should have listened.¹⁰³ The last signatory, Joachim Branco styled himself a landed proprietor. Cooper called him a spirits dealer.

Cooper's main concern was to show that those who were genuine produce exporters had been given tonnage, or were about to get it. He did not try to say how much tonnage they had, or whether this was a fair allocation. He considered that the African traders "are as a rule business-like and they certainly receive equal consideration with other customers of the Railway". No complaints had been received, and the representatives of the Agege Planters Union had expressed satisfaction. Back in London, Millers said that the A.P.U. had shipped on commission before the war "and the Merchants offered to continue doing their business in this way but the offer was declined".¹⁰⁴ Writing in October, Cooper said that since May 22,720 tons had been shipped by the railway, of which 3290 tons had been tin, leaving 19,430 tons for division between the Ring and the other firms. The Ring had shipped 12,220 tons. At 62.86% this was slightly over its allocation. The others had shipped 7210 tons. Of this 1750 tons had gone to the British Cotton Growing Association, which had been given priority late in August,¹⁰⁵ 2950 tons to the European firms outside the Ring, and 2510 tons to the African firms. The Niger Company was not considered part of the Ring, but this was of little importance because it did not ship from Lagos. Because of the preferential treatment given to the B.C.G.A., the non-Ring firms did have a grievance. It had therefore been decided to place cotton on the same basis as tin, and to deduct its share from the total rather than from the non-Ring portion. Apart from cotton, the African firms had received nearly half of the independent allocation. Cooper's memorandum was endorsed by Boyle, the Acting Governor, who acknowledged that it was the government's duty "to do everything in its power to see that he [the native merchant] is not squeezed out of the export produce trade".

Of the eleven main signatories, three—F.E. Williams, Salami Agbaje, and J.K. Coker—had been allocated tonnage. Given their backgrounds, Williams and Coker were almost certainly shipping cocoa rather than

kernels or oil. Two, Lawanson and Taylor, appear to have been new men in the field, as they had only recently applied for tonnage. That Taylor had just leased out his successful general merchant store re-enforces the impression that he was moving into something new. Three others, S. & B. Williams, Horsfield, and Dawodu, did not ship on their own accounts. Two, Doherty and Kotun were not in produce. Finally, Sam Duncan does not seem to have applied for tonnage himself at this point. The manifesto claimed that merchants formerly in produce had been squeezed out. This sort of language was widely current. Even Osuntokun, usually a careful historian, claims that the combine “managed to perpetuate their monopoly to the detriment of the smaller firms which were forced to close down”.¹⁰⁶ He provides no instances. The *Red Book* has nothing on this, as it dealt only with firms which were going concerns in 1920. However, it can be used to paint a very different picture. Apart from Pearse and Thomas, it lists at least four firms which may have been in produce before the war and which survived it. The most important was probably Overmann and Co., a Manchester firm, but, like J.J. Horsfield, included in the African section because their Lagos business was run by an African, J.T.A. White. Listed solely as produce merchants, they had had a considerable trade before the war. They had had to cut back because of the shipping difficulty, and had not yet recovered their earlier position.¹⁰⁷ David Evaristo Akerele and Thomas Olukotun were both produce dealers and general merchants who had started in 1909 and 1908 and were still in business.¹⁰⁸ L.A. Cardoso had gone into commerce in 1893. He had a farm at Agege and exported cocoa, but he was a “man of varied activities”, being also a general importer and exporter as well as a licensed auctioneer.¹⁰⁹ This flexibility allowed men like him, Akerele, and Olukotun to move into and out of produce in response to commercial opportunities, as the manifesto had pointed out.

The *Red Book* gives three men who had not previously been in the produce trade, but who entered it between 1913 and 1916. Delo Dosumu, the son of a chief from Ijebu Remo, a small Yoruba state on the lagoon east of Lagos, returned to the city with a B.A. from the University of London in 1913. Described in glowing terms as an “excellent type of the educated and progressive Nigerian”, he set himself up as a produce dealer and general merchant.¹¹⁰ S.O. Bamgbose and Brothers began as general merchants and produce dealers in 1915. Their business “has developed very considerably...”. They made a strong impression

on MacMillan, who eulogized them as being “of the new order of things...”.¹¹¹ Most flamboyant of all was T.B. Johnstone, who started in a small way in produce in 1916 but had “developed enormously” by 1919, when he hired a Scotsman D.A. Cuthbert, the former sub-manager and chief accountant of the Lagos branch of the Colonial Bank. One photograph in the *Red Book* shows him with Cuthbert surrounded by his employees. Another shows him with his racehorse.¹¹²

These were the Lagos merchants of 1916: versatile, enterprising, ambitious. They were not old men being pushed out; they were new men trying to push in. Therefore they were resented by the established European firms, who “regard as ridiculous the proportion of tonnage given (especially in Lagos) to native firms, the majority of whom have come into existence as shippers within the last few months only”.¹¹³ The African traders were loudly supported by James Bright Davies. Undaunted by the threat of a gaol sentence hanging over him, he claimed to have found “a strong undercurrent of sympathy for the German cause...”, among “the majority of the native population...”. In daily conversations about trade they hoped “that Germany should win this war, as they would prefer to come under German rule if only to be saved from the tyranny and exploitation of the British merchant”. This would lead to another trial and conviction of six months imprisonment for sedition, although the Chief Justice recognized that there was also a “war” going on between the European and African merchants in Lagos, and some of Davies’s remarks might be considered “justifiable journalese comment”.¹¹⁴ Dr. Randle was also inflammatory. In a speech on the second anniversary of the outbreak of the war, moving a resolution put forward by the Central Committee of the National Patriotic Organisation in London, he declared, “The people see that the Government is not carried on in their interest”.¹¹⁵ By then Sam Duncan had already left for England on 29 July. He was subsidized by Doherty and Agbaje. His immediate purpose may have been to arrange a charter through Dransfield and Price, a Liverpool firm of general export and import merchants who were commission agents in cotton in a small way, who were now ready to handle produce, but had no previous involvement in the West Africa trade.¹¹⁶ He would also use this connection to bring the manifesto and the grievances of the African merchants to the attention of the metropolitan authorities.

THE WATER RATE RIOTS

Two months after Duncan left, the political tensions in Lagos finally exploded. The authorities recalled of 1915 that “profuse protestations of loyalty were accompanied throughout the year by a continuance of agitation...”.¹¹⁷ As well as the long-standing concerns about land rights and the water rate, there was also criticism of Lugard’s Provincial Courts Ordinance and his new Criminal Code. The governor saw these as necessary tidying-up after amalgamation. His critics considered them dangerous steps to authoritarian rule. Eleko issued a petition with, it was claimed, more than 1350 signatures stating that “a tax imposed irrespective of the consent of the tax-payer appears to him [the West African native] to be derogatory to liberty”. Judging that there was nothing new in this, Lugard declined to pass it on. It reached the Colonial Office by a very different route. In 1850, Queen Victoria had taken under her protection a six- or seven-year-old Yoruba girl Sarah Bonetta, who had been rescued from human sacrifice in Dahomey when King Gezo had been persuaded instead to present her to the British monarch as a gift. Sarah married a Lagos businessman, James Davies, in 1862. The Queen was godmother to her eldest daughter, who married Dr. Randle. Victoria Randle travelled frequently to England, and was *persona grata* at Windsor. Through George Williams of the *Lagos Standard*, Eleko gave her the petition, and asked her to speak to the king through the queen and Queen Alexandra. The Royal Secretary, Lord Stamfordham, told her this could not be done, but, as did the Colonial Office, he appreciated her “native acumen” when she said she preferred the annoyance of the government to “the resentment of the people she would be living with for the rest of her life”.¹¹⁸

On 1 July 1915, the water works were inaugurated, though the rate was not immediately imposed, as the assessment had not been completed.¹¹⁹ Oḃasa and Randle organized a meeting on 17 July, backed by the Lemomu, A.W.U. Thomas the auctioneer, Alli Balogun, the white cap chiefs, Shyngle, and David Taylor. All criticized Samuel Pearse’s backing of the scheme. He was not representative of the people, and his friends “should please warn him how to speak in future and to refrain from telling lies simply to please European elements”. A telegram was sent to the Colonial Office on behalf of the princes, chiefs, and people of Lagos calling for the suspension of the water rate and of the criminal code for the duration of the war.¹²⁰ As this was ignored, a further

meeting was held on 5 August and another telegram was sent. The Lagos authorities remained unperturbed. The successful containment of a fire the day after the meeting seemed to demonstrate the obvious advantages of piped water. Trouble was considered unlikely when the time came to collect the rate, and the police were “quite capable of maintaining law and order upon the occurrence of any small disorder”.¹²¹

London was equally dismissive of the petition and of the cable, telling Lugard that the second lacked “the scarcely veiled threats of seditious action contained in...” the first. Protest against the rate was useless, though reasonable objections to the criminal code should be considered. No more cables should be sent, and the leaders of the agitation should now “understand that the first duty of a loyal subject is to obey the laws of his country”.¹²² This rebuff did not stop the movement. Q̄basa and Randle submitted observations, which under colonial regulations Lugard had to transmit. They complained that they were “stigmatised as Leaders of a seditious agitation—an idea so far from our mind when we addressed you, that it leaves us under the impression that it is not desired that we should make any further constitutional representation on matters affecting our vital interests”. Lagosians had not asked for the water, and the rate was excessive, especially as it was based on the capital value of the properties. As always, Lugard was unmoved. Ajasa told him that the agitation “was the work of a few individuals and was not shared by the responsible classes”. F.S. James, the Administrator of Lagos, felt that Q̄basa and Randle were moved by jealousy of the native members of the Legislative Council. The governor agreed: they had “no right to speak for the people of Lagos, and ... their presumption in doing so is keenly resented by other educated natives in the Colony”. Opposition in the press was muted. As for the “uneducated populace of Lagos”, they looked instead to Eleko and the white cap chiefs as traditional rulers. The people had no real grievance, as most “will either be exempt or will be called upon to pay a rate of a few shillings a year”. The Colonial Office agreed. The Lagosians’ case had been too weak to attract support from humanitarian lobbies in Great Britain. Fiddes minuted: “It is time to ‘sit on’ these people.” Lugard was told that Law would not receive any further submissions.¹²³

Trouble erupted the next year, when the water rate began to be collected. Returning on 3 September, Boyle was told of unrest and the possibility of rioting. He took a hard line with a deputation of five hundred

three days later. A somewhat inflammatory meeting in Eleko's courtyard called for a boycott of standpipes and markets. Boyle told Eleko to send his bellman "to proclaim that everyone was free to attend markets or draw water". The reply was found "both untrue and evasive". A crowd in front of the Court was peacefully broken up on 15 September. At least two persons were arrested for non-payment of the rate. In the morning of 17 September large menacing crowds, comprised chiefly of Moslems and including women and children, were repeatedly dispersed. Kitoyi Ajasa's appearance was a particular provocation. The police had to protect him. Violence began at about 11:30. Senior policemen were assaulted. Bricks and stones flew. Baton charges in front of the Court were ineffective. Reserves were brought up, some with bayonets. The square was cleared by 12:30. There was an attack on a police detachment at Carter Bridge. Oḅanikoro's house was burned and looted. One of his men had to be hospitalized. Police estimated that between seventeen and eighteen thousand were involved at the height of the disturbances. Control was regained as patrols joined up at Eleko's palace at 2:15. Five constables had been injured and twenty-seven arrests made. Boyle promptly stopped the salaries of Eleko and the white cap chiefs, who were no longer recognized "as having any official status in Lagos". He thought the rioters had "learnt a lesson which will last for some time to come".¹²⁴

Compared with what had happened some five months before in Dublin and what would happen some five months later in Petrograd, a few hours of rioting in Lagos, in which no one was killed, would seem insignificant. Nevertheless, in all three cases the long-term consequences were similar. Those who had previously appeared as substantial leaders of broadly based oppositional movements would lose much of their following, and would be superseded by very different men. The Acting Inspector of Police noted that several "of the most respectable" Lagosians had tried to calm the situation at the beginning.¹²⁵ Of these the most important was the Lemomu, who had previously sided with the protestors. Years later, Lugard's successor would praise his "force of character, and... moral courage...".¹²⁶ It cost him the support of his community. A new faction, called the Jamat Party, emerged seeking his deposition. It had the support of the majority. This division between Muslims would determine the course of Lagos politics for at least a generation.¹²⁷ Randle and Oḅasa were also discredited. According to Clifford, the next governor, "...Dr. Oḅasa and certain others of the

educated population of Lagos had led the people in their resistance to the rate up to the brink of violent action, but when they found that their followers were likely to exchange constitutional agitation for lawlessness, they abandoned them”.¹²⁸ No longer seen as leaders of a popular movement, they became conservatives by-passed by history. The People’s Union shrank into insignificance. Attempts to revive it were ephemeral.¹²⁹ Oppositional politics would centre instead on a man who had not been at all prominent in the water rate agitation. Later historians agree that the effective abdication of the People’s Union “practically sold Lagos to Herbert Macaulay who identified himself more reliably and resolutely with the popular cause”.¹³⁰ By contrast, the grievances of a small group of traders and the pan-West African nationalist aspirations of doctors and lawyers had little resonance with most Lagosians concerned with more immediate matters such as water taxes, rights over land, and chieftaincy. Apart from Karimu Kotun, the signatories of the merchants’ Manifesto kept clear of the water rate protests, as did the leaders of the National Congress movement. But in Great Britain, Duncan’s advocacy of the merchants’ cause would help to precipitate a major political crisis.

NOTES

1. 15 W.T.A.C. 6 Jan. 1915 [*sic, recte* 1916] (remarks of Lord Robert Cecil, Parliamentary Under Secretary, Foreign Office and soon to be Minister of Blockade), CO323/727/2578, 43 W.T.A.C. 27 July 1916, CO323/731/46819.
2. Before the war, Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith of the Board of Trade had noted that the British Empire had an effective monopoly over three items which Germany imported: wool from Australia, jute from India, and palm nuts from West Africa. Nicholas Lambert, *Planning Armageddon, British Economic Warfare and the First World War*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2012, p. 160.
3. Alan Kramer, “Blockade and Economic Warfare”, in Jay Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War*, vol. 2, *The State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 475.
4. C.O. memo (printed Misc. 339) “Control of Oleaginous Produce After the War”, 18 June (revised 11 Nov.) 1918, CO554/39/60715.
5. Imperial War Museum, *The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions*, Uckfield, East Sussex, The Naval and Military Press, 2014, vol. 7, part 4, p. 78.

6. Alfred Bigland, *The Call of Empire*, London, Cecil Palmer, 1926, pp. 58, 66.
7. Harding min. 28 Aug. 1917, CO323/762/28142.
8. *Ministry of Munitions*, vol. 7, part 1, p. 20, part 4, pp. 10, 79–80, Steel-Maitland to Bigland 1 Mar. 1916 (copy), CO323/727/6672.
9. Board of Trade memo, “Policy in Licensing Exports of Animal and Vegetable Oils and Fats” 13 Mar. 1916, CO323/721/12938.
10. 55 W.T.A.C. 2 Nov. 1916, CO323/732/54154.
11. *Ministry of Munitions*, vol. 7, part 1, p. 29.
12. A full, or even adequate, discussion of oleaginous nuts and seeds and their oils would be far beyond the scope of this book. Some of the considerations as they affected the Colonial Office at the inception of the new policy may be found in the material in CO323/721/2646,5320.
13. Pretymen to Steel-Maitland 12 Jan. 1916, CO323/721/2646.
14. Board of Trade memo. n.d., in Pretymen to Steel-Maitland 1 Feb. 1916, CO323/721/5320.
15. Note of decisions on fats and oils, 20 Feb. 1916, CO323/721/1185. Participants included Pretymen, Cecil Hurst (Assistant Legal Adviser, F.O.), Bigland, Rew (Board of Agriculture), C.T. Davis (Dominions Division, C.O.), & Steel-Maitland. For Denmark: F.O. to Danish Trade Office (flimsy) 16 June 1917, CO323/750/30933.
16. War Trade Dep’t to C.O. 26 Apr. enclosing form letter on glycerine conditions 14 Apr. 1916, CO583/53/19651. For comparison of Ministry of Munitions and world prices, Steel-Maitland min. 18 July 1916, CO83/134/33864.
17. Board of Trade memo “Policy in Licensing Exports of Animal and Vegetable Oils and Fats” 13 Mar. 1916, CO323/721/12938.
18. C.W. Dixon (Dominions Division) min. 11 Apr. 1916, CO418/156/17311.
19. Katherine Snodgrass, *Copra and Coconut Oil*, Fats and Oils Studies no. 2, Food Research Institute, Stanford University, Apr. 1928, pp. 5–10, appendix, pp. 228–29, & chart 2, p. 10.
20. Sir Ronald Monro-Ferguson tel. 28 Mar. 1916, CO418/14414882.
21. To Wellington & Melbourne tels., 28 Mar. 1916, CO418/144/14882.
22. Monro-Ferguson tels., 18 May (1st quotation) & 27 May 1916 (2nd quotation), CO418/144/23464,25249.
23. Ross desp. 82, 8 Apr. sent by F.O. to C.O. 15 May 1916, CO418/152/23190.
24. Dixon min. 29 May 1916, CO418/144/25249.
25. Ross to Monro-Ferguson 20 June, desp. 216, 7 Aug., sent by F.O. to C.O. 2 Sept. 1916, CO418/153/33067,41942.

26. Snodgrass, *Copra and Coconut Oil*, pp. 66–67, 99 (statistics); Daniel F. Doeppers, *Manila, 1900–1941, Social Change in a Late Colonial Metropolis*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1984, pp. 24–25.
27. K. Buckley & K. Klugman, *The Australian Presence in the Pacific, Burns Philp 1914–1946*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1983, p. 42.
28. Dixon min. 2 June 1916 (1st quotation), Steel-Maitland min [date concealed in binding of volume] (2nd quotation), CO418/144/25249.
29. Port and Transit Executive Committee to Admiralty 31 Dec. 1915 (copy), CO418/151/379.
30. War Committee 21 June 1916, CAB 22/31.
31. Monro-Ferguson tel. 27 May 1916, CO418/144/25249, Buckley & Klugman, *Australian Presence*, pp. 43–44, Steel-Maitland min. 29 Sept. 1915, CO418/156/46140.
32. 41 W.T.A.C. 13 July 1916, CO323/731/46819. This was mainly whale oil, which was often placed under this heading. Fish oils themselves were of less importance. K.E. Hunt “Raw Materials”, in J.H. van Stuyvenberg, *Margarine, An Economic, Social and Scientific History 1869–1969*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1969, pp. 48, 64. For the slump in the price of kernels, see above, p. 117, below, p. 167.
33. Trigge to Scarbrough 3 June 1916, SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
34. Trigge to Scarbrough 1 Sept. 1916, *ibid.* s. 86.
35. F.O. to C.O. 17 July (1st quotation), covering Spring Rice tel. 2070 (R) 8 July, Dixon min. 15 July, Steel-Maitland min. 18 July (2nd & 3rd quotations), C.O. to Ministry of Munitions 22 July 1916, CO83/134/33864. Steel-Maitland did not say where he got his 4½% figure from. The Board of Trade estimated that kernels contained 45% crude oil which in turn contained 13% glycerine. On these figures the glycerine content should have been 5.85%. The Ministry of Munitions set the glycerine equivalent at 5.7%.
36. Sir H. Llewellyn Smith (Ministry of Munitions) to C.O. 28 July 1916, CO554/32/36462. For the conditional duty, above, pp. 97–105.
37. Mins. by Dixon 3 Aug., Flood 4 Aug., Elis 8 Aug., Steel-Maitland to Bigland 23 Aug. 1916, CO554/32/36462. For the 1915 figures and the Niger Co.’s arguments in 1916, Harding mins. 2 & 11 Sept. 1916, CO554/32/41172. For Ellis’s earlier admissions, min. 24 July 1916, CO554/32/33751.
38. W.T.A.C. memo, “Glycerine equivalents in respect of exports of oils” n.d. [mid Sept. 1916], CO323/732/47343.
39. See above, p. 104.
40. 41 W.T.A.C. 13 July 1916, CO323/731/46819.

41. Bigland to C.O. 13 Oct. with copy Bigland to WarTrade Department. s.d., Steel-Maitland mins. 14, 17, & 19 Oct. 1916, CO554/31/49412. The quotation from Hesiod is *Works and Days* l. 40: "Fools, they do not see how much more the half is than the whole". The Loeb edition reads οὐδὲ for οὐδ'. The context is of a refusal to settle a dispute. Mr. Robert Leyland kindly identified the quotation from my poor transcription.
42. F.O. to C.O. 7 Sept., forwarding Spring Rice tel. 2694, 4 Sept., Dixon min. 8 Sept. (quotation), C.O. to F.O. 11 Sept. 1916, CO554/31/42782.
43. Snodgrass, *Copra and Coconut Oil*, pp. 8–10 with charts 1 & 2, & appendix, pp. 228–29.
44. For copra and coconut oil see the tables in *ibid.*, appendix, pp. 228–29.
45. Monthly prices of palm kernels 1912–1916, GD193/93/1, SMP.
46. African Oil Nuts to David Lloyd George (Minister of Munitions) 8 Mar. (1st–3rd quotations) w. Bibby & Sons to Cttee on Fresh Issues of Capital 2 March (copies), Davies min. 14 Mar. 1916 (4th quotation), Steel-Maitland min., s.d. (5th quotation), CO583/53/12460.
47. See above, p. 104.
48. Burrowes memo 13 May in Lugard desp. 480, 19 May 1915. The only local claims against Woermann were £180/16/4 by Kitoyi Ajasa for professional services and £101/17/3 by Mustafa Mogaji and others for refund of passage fares.
49. This was noted in the "Manifesto" of the African Traders, see above, pp. 146–48.
50. Ayodeji Olukoju, *The "Liverpool" of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900–1950*, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, 2004, p. 61.
51. John Holt Jr to W. Whitehead (Secretary, Lagos Working Agreement) 19 Apr. 1926 [*sic, recte* 1916] quoted in Olukoju, *Liverpool of West Africa*, p. 65, with ref. CSO19/4/N61/1916.
52. Allister, MacMillan (ed.), *The Red Book of West Africa*, London, Frank Cass, 1968 (1920), p. 90 (1st quotation), Dyer & Wintle to C.O. 6 Aug. (2nd & 3rd quotations), C.O. to Elder Dempster 12 Aug. 1915, CO583/42/36326, Elder Dempster to C.O. 16 Aug. (4th & 5th quotations), Ellis min. 25 Aug., C.O. to Dyer & Wintle 30 Aug. 1916, CO554/29/37907.
53. Lugard desp. 1126, 4 Dec. 1915, CO583/38/59211.
54. Boyle desp. 31 Oct. with memo by A.S. Cooper (General Manager, Nigeria Railways) 20 Oct. 1916. Cooper was contradictory on the composition of the Committee, at one point saying that there was one representative of the Lagos firms (apart from the Niger Co.), at another point saying that there were two representatives. This puzzled the Colonial Office, but in any case it would not accept the Niger Company as representative of the nonCombine firms. To Lugard 1674, 2 Dec. 1916. CO583/49/55579.

55. London & Kano to C.O. 24 May 1916, CO583/53/24667.
56. Niger Co. to C.O. 18 Apr., Harding mins. 18 & 19 Apr. (1st quotation), C.O. to Ministry of Munitions 20 Apr. 1916 (2nd quotation), CO583/53/18577.
57. Strachey to Bigland 3 Aug. replying to Bigland to Harding 21 July (not in file) (quotation), CO583/53/36731.
58. Ibid. (1st & 2nd quotations), Bird (Dep't of Explosives Supply, Ministry of Munitions) to Strachey 4 Aug. 1916 (3rd & 4th quotations), CO583/53/37164.
59. Bird to Strachey 4 Aug. 1916 w. Miller Bros. to Bigland n.d. (quotation), CO583/53/37164.
60. Strachey marginal note 24 Apr. 1916, CO583/52/18577.
61. Harding mins. 8 Aug. (2nd quotation), & 11 Aug., Strachey min. 10 Aug. (1st quotation), Harding account of 17 Aug. meeting, 22 Aug., C.O. to West African colonies 24 Aug. 1916, CO583/53/37164.
62. Harding min. 16 Aug. 1916, CO583/53/38089.
63. Taylor & Co. to C.O. 7 Aug. (2nd, 3rd, & 4th quotations), mins. by Lugard, 10 Aug., Harding, s.d. (1st & 5th quotations), & Strachey, 11 Aug. 1916, CO583/54/37635.
64. Harding min. 13 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/61491.
65. J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900–1945, A Study in Ideology and Social Classes*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973, p. 177; Akinjide Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, London, Longman, 1979, p. 66, which provides the framework for the rest of this paragraph.
66. Fred I.A. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880–1937*, Bristol, Longman, 1978, p. 85.
67. P.D. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, London, Longman Nigeria, 1975, p. 250, n. 37, Omu, *Press and Politics*, p. 44. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 95, n. 7. Buchanan Smith (Assistant Commissioner of Lands) report on Lagos land tenure with testimonies 5 Dec. 1912 (quotation), CO520/123/9943.
68. J.B. Webster, "Political activity in British West Africa, 1909–1940", in J.F.A. Ajayi & Michael Crowder, *History of West Africa*, vol. 2, p. 582 (1st quotation), Robert W. July, *The Origins of Modern African Thought, Its Development in West Africa During the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, London, Faber & Faber, 1968, p. 429 (2nd quotation). July's treatment of Ajasa is particularly disparaging as he wants to distinguish him from Henry Carr, whom he admires.
69. Osuntokun, "Lagos and Political Awareness in Nigeria 1880–1930", in Adefuye, et al. (eds.), *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja, Lagos State, Lantern Books, 1987, p. 260.

70. T.O. Elias, *Nigerian Land Law*, London, Sweet & Maxwell, 1971 (1951), p. 12, n. 19.
71. Nnamdi Azikiwe, *My Odyssey: An Autobiography*, London, C. Hurst, 1970, p. 67.
72. Omu, *Press and Politics*, pp. 36–38.
73. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, citing *Lagos Standard* 11 Aug. 1915.
74. *Red Book*, p. 112.
75. Omu, *Press and Politics*, pp. 39–40.
76. Osuntokun, “Political Awareness”, p. 266.
77. *Red Book*, p. 116. Johnson was included not for his journalism, but because he had become a produce merchant.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 109.
79. Omu, *Press and Politics*, pp. 50–55, quotations at 50, 51, H.O. Danmole, “The Crisis of the Lagos Muslim Community 1915–1947”, in Adefuye, et al. (eds.), *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja, Lagos State, Lantern Books, 1987, p. 299.
80. Omu, *Press and Politics*, pp. 40–43, Boyle to Lugard 12 May 1913, CO520/130/19439.
81. *Times of Nigeria* 15 Sept. 1914, quoted in Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 68–69.
82. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 82–83, quotation from *Times of Nigeria* 15–19 Feb. 1916.
83. The *Standard* was taken over by Williams’s son, and is included in the *Red Book*, but it had also folded in January 1920. Omu, *Press and Politics*, p. 38.
84. *Red Book*, pp. 60, 54. Group photographs of expatriate firms show only European staff. The one exception is Stavely & Co. (p. 86), which had recently expanded from the Gold Coast. The three Europeans are seated on chairs at the front, while the Africans are seated on the floor or standing behind. Stavely’s Gold Coast photograph (p. 190) has two Europeans and three Africans seated on chairs with the rest of the African staff standing or sitting on the floor. One newly established African firm, T.B. Johnstone & Co. (see above, p. 152) has its photograph with Johnstone and the Scots chief of his clerical staff seated together in front with the African staff standing behind. The Calabar lawyers’ photograph has two Europeans and three Africans seated in front, four Africans and one European standing behind.
85. Shyngle is not in the *Red Book*. The information comes from Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa*, pp. 189–90.
86. Boyle to Lugard 12 May 1913, CO520/130/19439.
87. See above, pp. 23–24.
88. Omu, *Press and Politics*, p. 60.
89. Langley, *Pan-Africanism*, pp. 28, 178–79, 189, *Red Book*, p. 136.

90. *Nigerian Chronicle* 26 Feb. 1916, quoted in C.O. Olusanya, "The Lagos Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa", *J.H.S.N.* 4/2 (June 1968), p. 322.
91. Allister, Macmillan, ed., *The Red Book of West Africa; Historical and Descriptive, Commercial and Industrial Facts, Figures, & Resources* (London, Frank Cass, 1968 (1920)).
92. Olusanya, "Lagos Branch", p. 32, Langley, *Pan-Africanism*, pp. 178–79.
93. The "manifesto" is in CO583/54/43145.
94. J.G. Campbell, *Observation on Some Topics, 1913–1917, During the Administration of Sir Frederick Lugard*, Lagos, 1918, cited in Langley, *Pan-Africanism*, p. 192.
95. *Red Book*, p. 109. The Gold Coast section of the *Red Book* has nothing on the parent company.
96. *Ibid.*
97. These are contained in a detailed memo. by Cooper, 20 Oct., covered by Boyle's despatch 31 Oct. 1916, CO583/49/55579.
98. Sara Berry, *Cocoa Custom and Socio-Economic Change in Rural Western Nigeria*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1975, pp. 40, 42, 214, *Red Book*, p. 114.
99. *Red Book*, p. 113.
100. His was the last name on the major petition of 20 Nov. 1915, CO583/39/8391.
101. *Red Book*, p. 108. For the Colonial Bank, *ibid.*, pp. 302–3.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 106.
103. The others were Peter Thomas, David Taylor, Dr. Randle, Dr. Obasa, Henry Carr (the former Resident of Lagos), and Chief Obanikoro. Ajasa clearly saw them as the leaders of the conservative faction in Lagos politics. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, p. 136, n. 69. For the 1913 evaluation, Boyle to Lugard 12 May 1913, CO520/130/19439.
104. Robert Miller to Steel-Maitland 24 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/57242.
105. For this, see B.C.G.A. to C.O. 11 Aug., C.O. mins. 16–21 Aug., B.C.G.A. to C.O. 24 Aug. 1916, CO583/53/38089,40480.
106. *Nigeria in the First World War*, p. 40, cf. p. 39: "Nigeria was at the mercy of the merchants and the shipping company".
107. *Red Book*, p. 108.
108. *Ibid.*, pp. 114, 115.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 107.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
112. *Ibid.*, pp. 105–6.
113. Boyle desp. 31 Oct. 1916, CO583/49/55579.
114. Osuntokun, *Nigeria in the First World War*, pp. 83–84, with quotation of *Times of Nigeria* article of [29] Aug. 1916 from *Nigerian Pioneer*, 1 Dec. 1916.

115. Quoted in Michael Crowder "The 1914–1918 European War and West Africa", in Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa*, vol. 2, p. 510.
116. Cooper memo. 31 Oct. 1916, CO583/49/55579.
117. Blue Book Report 1915, 16 Nov. 1916, CO583/55/6195.
118. Stamfordham to J.C.C. Davidson 30 Aug. (2nd & 3rd quotations) covering petition of 30 May (1st quotation) and Eleko to Victoria Randle 1 June, Davidson to Stamfordham (copy) 1 Sept., Lugard conf. E, 18 June 1915, CO583/43/29214. There is nothing to suggest that Dr. Randle was personally involved in the use of his wife as an intermediary. For the story of Sarah Davies, Walter Dean Myers, *At Her Majesty's Request, An African Princess in Victorian England*, New York, Scholastic Press, 1999. Although written for children, this is a carefully researched book based on primary sources.
119. Blue Book Report 1915, 16 Nov. 1916, CO583/55/6195.
120. Boyle conf. A, 21 July, 1915 covering report by Detective Superintendent E.A. Shyllon (quotation), CO583/34/38069; Chief Ojora & Chairman Obasa to C.O. tel., 18 July, 1915, CO583/43/33127.
121. Boyle desp. conf., 10 Aug. 1915, CO583/35/40131.
122. To Lugard desp. 1210, 30 Aug. 1915, CO583/43/36358.
123. Lugard desp. 1103, 24 Nov. (3rd quotation) covering observations by Obasa and Randle 18 Nov. (1st quotation), Fiddes min. n.d. [20 or 21 Dec.] (5th quotation), to Lugard desp. 1810, 28 Dec. 1915, CO583/38/54783; desp. conf., 13 Dec. 1915 (2nd & 4th quotations), CO583/39/547; Harding min. 17 May 1916, CO583/45/20906. For the press, Omu, *Press and Politics*, p. 215.
124. Boyle desp. conf. 23 Sept. (quotations), with copy conf. report by T.F.R. Parry, Acting Inspector General of Police, 22 Sept. 1916, CO583/48/49544. Adamu Akeju, the Obanikoro, was the white cap chief most conspicuously on the side of the administration. Henry Carr admired him. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, p. 133. His stipend, and those of two other chiefs, was not stopped after the riots. Lugard desp. conf. 31 Jan. 1918, CO583/65/11411.
125. Parry report 22 Sept. 1916, *ibid.*
126. Clifford desp. conf. 12 Dec. 1920, CO583/94/63713.
127. Buell, *Native Problem*, p. 665.
128. Mins. of Lagos Executive Council 1 Dec. 1920, CO583/94/63713.
129. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, pp. 98, 100, 104, 144; Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties, Power in an Emergent African Nation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963, p. 48.
130. Omu, *Press and Politics*, p. 222.



“An Agitation Has Been Got up”; the Sale of the German Properties

GERMAN PROPERTIES: THE COLONIAL OFFICE AND THE FIRMS

Duncan's mission did not begin well. Dransfield and Price requested an interview for him with the Colonial Secretary, but Harding was sure that Law would not want to see someone from a firm “of whom I have not previously heard in connection with Nigerian trade”, and “a native merch. from Lagos...”. They were told to put their case in writing. This they did, forwarding the Manifesto, which the Colonial Office now saw for the first time. Harding's judgement was: “Though rather Babuish in wording, there is probably a good deal in the complaints....” On the other hand, Dransfield & Price were “saying the thing which is not...”, as the promise of a percentage of the tonnage was made to all the firms outside the Ring rather than to the “native traders”, who “may be getting less of that share than they hoped, but that is not a breach of promise”.¹ When the documents reached Cooper of the Railway, he remarked that: “It seems a pity that the case for the small trader should have been so badly presented – and a still greater pity that the signatories should have gone to the trouble and expense of entrusting their case to a Firm in England who apparently know nothing about the Trade.”² Meanwhile, Duncan had gained a more powerful ally. He saw Hutton of the British Cotton Growing Association, who drew Read's attention to the “indignation and even bitterness” in Lagos, where “some of them say that the English merchants have cleared out the German merchants in order that they should be able to obtain a monopoly”. He hoped that

an interview with the Assistant Under Secretary or some of his officials, with Lugard present, "would go a long way to promote peace and quietness". Although Harding was still inclined to write dismissive minutes, Read insisted that he should see Duncan.³

This he did on 25 September, at the same time as a letter came in from the Manchester cotton exporters Rose, Hewitt drawing attention to the merchants' grievances. They made no reference to Duncan, but they used his language. Boyle in Nigeria judged that they were inspired by the same source. In the interview Harding cross-examined Duncan on his claim, which was not in the Manifesto, that the African traders had been promised 20% of the tonnage. Duncan could only reply that this was what the Lagosians had understood, and that it had been so reported in the local press. On this point Harding would be swayed only by written evidence, but like Hutton he was impressed with the African's evident intelligence. Duncan had already seen Bigland, who had said that the Lagos firms could not expect equal treatment as, unlike the Liverpool companies, they did not pay British income tax or excess profit duty, an argument that Harding attributed to the Ring and had no time for.⁴ Bigland would later go beyond the arguments put forward by the Ring to claim that the African merchants had kernels for export because they were buying at £7/10/– what the firms had to turn away at £10 because of the lack of storage space.⁵ Duncan went on to see Lugard. Meanwhile, Harding got from Grant, the Traffic Manager of the Railway, details of the allocation procedure, and confirmation that no separate promise of tonnage had been made to the Lagos traders. Lugard would be told that the committee would have to be expanded to include a European firm, other than the Niger Company, outside the Ring, and also an African firm.⁶ Harding had already put Duncan in touch with the very much aggrieved head of a British company trying to break into the Nigerian trade.

Five days earlier, Harding had seen H.T. Van Laun, whose firm was a major importer of Gold Coast cocoa. He complained that, while Lagos traders wanted to sell him kernels, the Bank of British West Africa had told him that he would be "mad to try to do business in present circumstances...". He would not be able to get freight, as this had been given to the Ring by arrangement between Elder Dempster and the Colonial Office. Patiently Harding explained that the C.O. "had had nothing to do with it, except receive complaints about the arrangement". Abolishing the allocation committee would only place everything in the

hands of the shipping line. Van Laun had to admit "that it was certainly very difficult to see how a fair allocation could be arranged in practice". This did little to assuage his indignation. Harding suggested that he should see Lugard, and also pointed out that Duncan was in England, and gave him his address.⁷

Coming so soon after the Commons debate on the differential duty on kernels, the arguments of Duncan and Van Laun greatly strengthened the impression that Nigeria was a colony where the interests of the indigenous population were routinely subordinated to the greed of a small cartel of ruthless capitalists. For the Liverpool firms it seemed very different. The high import prices for kernels of the first four months of the year had not been maintained. From £26/-/- in March they fell to a low of £18/15/- in August. Lagos prices, already low, could not be squeezed proportionally. The difference of £15/13/- in March shrank to £9/16/6 in August. Palm oil in the East and groundnuts in the North were still coming in, despite the low purchase prices. While the profits of the first few months had to be considered abnormal, normal profits might still be made. Nevertheless, the crushers now clearly controlled the market for kernels.⁸ Steel-Maitland's committee on kernels had been stacked against the merchants. While it was unlikely that the recommended differential duty would be imposed during the war, the firms could not count on this. Meanwhile, Lagos had imposed its own export duties. The firms wanted these remitted for goods in storage, which were plentiful as a consequence of the shipping problem. For that reason, and because Nigeria needed the revenue, full remission was unlikely.⁹ In Lagos, relations with Burrowes remained frigid. He would do what he could to break the Ring.¹⁰ Lugard backed him. The Colonial Office was equally hostile. The attempt to replace the Joint Committee of the West Africa Sections of the Liverpool, Manchester, and London Chambers of Commerce with an Association of West African Merchants had been badly received. The C.O. was inclined "to turn a very cold shoulder towards it".¹¹ After the Commons debate in August, Steel-Maitland was so concerned with the charges of profiteering that he turned confidentially to Bigland "to find out about [*sic*] the profits of these West African merchants before I madeup [*sic*] my own mind as to whether they had abused their opportunities in the matter of the Ring or not...". Bigland instead went straight to Robert Miller, who urged a meeting with the Colonial Office. This would provide "an opportunity of justifying the policy which we and others have pursued since the

outbreak of the war". Steel-Maitland was annoyed, but had eventually to agree to see a deputation from the A.W.A.M. on 10 October.¹²

Four issues were particularly acute.¹³ Although Steel-Maitland had agreed to meet the Association, he made it clear that the Colonial Office continued to regard the Joint Committee as "the ordinary representatives of the Merchants and other interests concerned in the West African trade". He agreed to consult Law and Lugard over the exemption from export duties of stocks on hand. His officials did not want to concede, as the decline in import duties from spirits "renders it necessary to obtain considerable additional revenue without further delay", but even Harding had to accept that Lugard had set the rates too high and that the merchants would fight hard to avoid paying. Trigge's arguments at the meeting swayed Strachey. Lugard insisted that the backlog of produce was too great and that if all that had been purchased before 7 October were exempted, the revenue from the next six months "will be exceedingly small and will not suffice to meet the anticipated financial deficit". The Office eventually decided that, although in fairness stocks already purchased should be exempted, the duty would be imposed, but at only at half the rate for the first six months.¹⁴ While the deputation shifted the C.O. over the export duties, it was less successful in defending its pricing policy in Nigeria. Robert Miller had presented a six-and-a-half-page typed memorandum trying "to give the Government every assurance that in all that has been done we have kept foremost in our minds the interests of the natives and the welfare of our West African Colonies".¹⁵ This was not found persuasive. All except Trigge had to admit that "in spite of everything [they] had made good profits, especially in 1915". Steel-Maitland wanted to give native producers a share of any price rise if possible, and by October prices were rising again. Lugard said that the firms had to show that their profits were not excessive, as the opposite was believed in Lagos. After the meeting the Association sent in a further memorandum, stressing that the recent good profits were a consequence of "the remarkable and unlooked for rise in the price of kernels at the beginning of 1916...", and were therefore "paid for not by the native, but by the consumer". The firms "have had no hand in forcing up the prices in Europe, and ... have not combined in any way to regulate the prices". As a result, they had often "played into the hands of the English kernel crushers, ... [who] have acted in concert and have on many occasions depressed the market for palm kernels".¹⁶ Lagos Stores independently sent in a detailed

account of their own capital and profits from 1910 to 1915 emphasizing how expensive their business was to work. Steel-Maitland replied that he hoped "you did not think me unsympathetic on the occasion of the Deputation", and that he wished to promote legitimate trade "provided always proper regard is paid to the interests of the natives affected".¹⁷

The fourth issue, which rapidly became explosive, was allowing neutrals to bid for the German properties. The Nigerian Chamber of Mines had been the first to notice this in September, calling attention to the "danger which ... exists of German-Americans purchasing the properties offered, with a view to returning them to the original owners at an early period after the War". They wanted sales limited to British subjects or Allies, with no resale to Germans for at least twenty-one years.¹⁸ This was followed by similar letters from the A.W.A.M. and from the Manchester and London Chambers of Commerce. Harding, as usual, put the worst possible construction on the traders' representations. As the Association was apparently going to buy up the sites and then hold a "knock out" for the benefit of the old gang of merchants, it is no wonder that they don't relish the idea of neutral firms being allowed to bid. The bogey of a transfer to Germany comes in handy for them". Fiddes did not think this was a bogey, the ordinance was carefully drafted to prevent it, and critics would be reassured that "the necessary steps will be taken to prevent such transfers being effected".¹⁹ Confident in these safeguards, the C.O. refused to bar neutral purchasers. The replies, which went out on 6 October, were carefully considered as Steel-Maitland felt this was "just one of the questions which may cause a row". The desirability of attracting fresh British capital into Nigeria was stressed, but on the key point of allowing neutral bids the C.O. would not shift.²⁰

The Association therefore continued its campaign. The Glasgow Chamber of Commerce sent in a protest. A week later the Joint Chambers of Manchester, Liverpool, and London, the body which the Colonial Office did recognize, complained that the advertisements in neutral countries were not "in the national interest and ought not to have been permitted". Because of the heavy taxation, which would persist in Great Britain and in Allied countries for generations, "no source of possible income should be allowed to pass into the hands of those who have already profited enormously as a result of the nation['s] misfortunes". Harding's minute ponderously pointed out that this was not meant to exclude "the Liverpool ring firms who have been making

fat profits out of the shortage of freight...". The decision to advertise internationally had been taken by Burrowes as the agent of the Supreme Court in Nigeria. Lugard had made it clear back in April that "he favoured extensive advertisement in America". This time Fiddes let his subordinate's sarcasm pass, but he did "wish that the Gov. Genl. had consulted us before advertising in America".²¹ Meanwhile Lugard inspired a leader in *The Times* on 20 October. Headed "German Trade in West Africa", it argued that, "The existing British firms cannot be expected to handle all the trade, which is still very imperfectly developed". The auction was "meant to attract fresh British capital and energy".²²

The Times's conclusion was strongly disputed by Moore, writing as the Chairman of the West Africa Section of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. Capital was not lacking. The problem was with shipping and with ill-advised alterations in Customs needed to pay for the war in the Cameroons, which should instead have been covered by a loan. The leader had "emanated from Colonial official sources and is on a par with the advertisement of these properties in neutral countries at a time when all such sources of income are urgently required to provide the basis for taxation in this country, imposed for the war".²³ At the same time the merchants secured political backing. Sir Leslie Scott put down a parliamentary question as to whether the government intended to allow neutrals as well as British and Allied subjects to bid at the auction, which was then scheduled for 31 October.²⁴ As a Liverpool MP (for the Exchange Division) Scott was an obvious choice, but he had other strengths. Along with Cavendish-Bentinck, who was the chairman, he was one of the leading Conservatives on the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society. This linked him with such persons as C.P. Scott, St. Loe Strachey, Noel Buxton, Percy Molteno, and Ramsay MacDonald. Placing him at the front of the agitation would go far to undercut charges of indifference to indigenous interests, which had been so prominent in the debate on 3 August.

The British firms had readily agreed on pressing for the exclusion of neutral bidders.²⁵ How to deal with the German properties was proving more contentious, and ultimately divisive. The Lagos companies wanted the sites to be acquired at the auction and then divided either by ballot or by a further private auction. The Control Committee of the Pool between the Niger Company, the African Association, Miller Brothers, and the Company of African Merchants rejected this on 12 July.

Miller Brothers proposed the creation of a new company to take over and run the businesses. It would be open to all Nigerian interests, which might subscribe in proportion to their existing capital. While this might appear to be creating a "powerful opposition" to the firms in the Pool, in fact "we should have a largely preponderating interest", and "arrangements should be made with such Company to work on somewhat similar lines to the present working arrangement". Millers considered this to be of great urgency as, "The other firms have this matter very seriously under consideration, and the matter will be decided without us unless we are prepared to deal with the proposition promptly".²⁶ The Niger Company demurred. Joint action should be deferred until the merger of the Pool firms had been completed.²⁷ Writing two years later, Trigge explained that because "the firms at Lagos are the Niger Company's strongest competitors in Kano we absolutely refused to countenance such a suggestion, contending that it would be a breach of Agreement, and the project was very reluctantly abandoned".²⁸ Instead, the Company agreed with John Holt to buy jointly the sites in the northern and Niger zones.²⁹ At the same time, on 13 September, it broke off the negotiations for amalgamation. Niger Company records provide little explanation. Ostensibly it was "that certain stipulations, mainly relating to future administration, put forward on behalf of Miller Brothers (of Liverpool) Limited could not be agreed to...".³⁰ This presumably referred to the provisions for replacing directors who died in the first three years of the amalgamation, a problem which had not previously been considered insuperable.³¹ Explanations along these lines were drafted, but at the shareholders' meeting on 27 September nothing was said.³²

Despite the refusal of the Niger Company, the other firms went ahead with a proposal that the properties should be bought by a new all-British company, on which there might be an official representative.³³ The Niger Company strongly dissociated itself "from this proposal which they consider would not be for the benefit of the Colony".³⁴ The Colonial Office did not respond to it. Law was "not prepared to say that it would be in the general interest that all these properties should be acquired by one company".³⁵ A further proposal that the proposed company would submit to a fair price clause for its purchase from "natives" was similarly ignored.³⁶ Law faced Scott's questions on 1 November. They were followed by a further barrage led by Sir Edward Carson who had emerged in 1916 as the focus of much of the discontent and dissatisfaction with the Asquith coalition and its conduct of the war. Rather than replying

to questions, Law accepted that the issue would better be dealt with in a debate.³⁷ He did not think that it would serve any useful purpose, but he would give facilities if there was “any general desire for it...”.³⁸ The C.O. remained committed to allowing neutral bids, and began to build up a case to justify that decision.³⁹ Much of the agitation centred on the danger of purchase by German-Americans intending to return the sites to their previous owners after the war. At the meeting with the A.W.A.M. deputation the officials said that there had not so far been any U.S. interest in the sale.⁴⁰ If an American firm considered buying, no direct evidence of this has yet appeared. The neutral buyer which did concern the C.O. was Anton Jurgens, the Dutch margarine manufacturers. They intended to establish a firm in Nigeria in a very big way, with a capital of five hundred thousand pounds.⁴¹ The Colonial Office entirely approved, agreeing that their hiring Birtwistle as a director would be in the public interest.⁴²

THE QUESTION OF MARGARINE

Sir Charles Wilson, the historian of Unilever, claimed that the British firms were determined to keep Jurgens out of the sale.⁴³ He did not present his evidence for this. In fact, they do not seem to have been unwaveringly hostile. The Dutch margarine manufacturer may have been a potential rival as a buyer, but it was also a present customer. Much of the argument against neutral purchasers was that they had an unfair advantage, as they were not subject to British wartime taxation. This would not be the case if they established themselves in Great Britain. Robert Miller raised this possibility when the A.W.A.M. deputation went to the C.O.⁴⁴ For the Liverpool firms this may just have been a passing idea. The Niger Company took it more seriously. Scarbrough raised it with Lugard, who agreed, as it “would be a great advantage to British trade if any neutral purchaser had to establish in the U.K. as Jurgens proposes to do”. The C.O. rejected the suggestion. Every country had its own system of taxation, and whether, say, American tax was heavier than British “is as irrelevant to the Nigerian Govt. as the relative rates of interest in the two countries”. Lugard seemed to be trying to escape the consequences of his earlier decision to advertise in America, and “It is somewhat exasperating that Sir F.L. shd invite us at the eleventh hour to reverse a policy initiated by him without consulting the S. of S.”. The governor was accordingly rebuked.⁴⁵

In smiling on Jurgens's plans, the C.O. and Lugard were of the same mind. This would involve them in another crisis, quite apart from that looming over the sale of the German properties. As the price of butter rose during the war, reaching 1/6 to 1/8 per pound by early 1916, British households turned increasingly towards margarine, which Van Den Bergh could sell at 1/- with a 20% profit for the retailer. By then consumption had almost doubled.⁴⁶ It has been claimed that wartime margarine "was nutritionally worthless".⁴⁷ Admittedly, artificial vitaminization began only in the 1920s, but the claim is clearly exaggerated. During the war, margarine was considered "a valuable food for our own population and one much in demand at the present time".⁴⁸ Everyone recognized that the Dutch product, especially Van Den Bergh's recently introduced "Blue Band", was of excellent quality and acceptable as a substitute for butter even among the well-to-do. Samuel van den Bergh claimed that it "has now attained such popularity that it has become a household word in ten thousand British families and not also [*sic*] amongst the masses but amongst the classes". Jurgens's "Pheasant" margarine was not so well esteemed. Unlike Van Den Bergh, they had their refinery and factory on different sites, and the oil tended to deteriorate in transit. Indeed it caused a minor riot in a military hospital in Manchester in 1916. By that time Van Den Bergh had overtaken Jurgens in the British market, and each was well ahead of Maypole, the only significant domestic competitor.⁴⁹ Maypole's pre-war success had been based on low prices and aggressive marketing.⁵⁰ During the war, unskilled workers' consumption of margarine did not expand at the rate of semi-skilled and skilled workers,⁵¹ who were more likely to buy the superior Dutch product. Maypole sold its margarine in its own shops. Unlike the Dutch, it did not include any animal fats in its product, which it priced at 7d. Home and Colonial sold Jurgens's margarine at 1/-, but it could sell sugar, of which it was the leading retailer. The Sugar Commission had fixed a maximum price, but in return allowed shops to make the purchase of sugar conditional on that of other items such as margarine. Maypole was not allowed to sell sugar as it had not done so in 1915. A leading member of the Sugar Commission was Sir William Capel Slaughter, who was also chairman of Home and Colonial, and the principal in the firm of solicitors used by Anton Jurgens and Co.⁵²

Watson first complained to the Food Commission in August, but received no reply. In September he wrote to Fiddes, referring to Law's exposure of Dutch manipulation of MPs in the August debate and

calling for protection for his firm. The government had pressed it to expand production, but the effects of the Sugar Commission's

policy, possibly cleverly engineered by the Dutch margarine makers, have been to *reduce* the sales of my Company by over *180 tons weekly* and to *more* than *double* the imports and sales of Dutch margarine besides enabling the Dutch makers thus to make the British public pay an exorbitant price for most of the Dutch margarine they purchase.

He made no personal charge against Capel Slaughter, "so far as I know he is a very able and honourable man", but unless the situation were remedied he would have to divulge the facts to the shareholders. The Colonial Office judged that this was none of its business and that Watson's application had been to Law as a cabinet minister rather than as Colonial Secretary. Nevertheless, it did try to get others to act on it.⁵³

Eventually, at the beginning of November, Watson's letter reached the War Trade Advisory Committee.⁵⁴ This had long been concerned with increasing the domestic supply of margarine, which was urged with particular vigour by Cecil Hurst, the Assistant Legal Adviser to the Foreign Office. The main problem seemed to be the continuing delay over the construction of Jurgens's plant at Purfleet, which was attributed to the Ministry of Munitions's "unfavourable attitude towards this firm which prevented their obtaining material and labour..."⁵⁵ The Committee recognized that British firms were under-producing "due mainly to commercial reasons dependent on the cost of production in the United Kingdom and in Holland and on the current price in this country".⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Maypole's underproduction must have told against it. In this instance the Committee made its decision mainly on the basis of information confidentially communicated by Capel Slaughter. As the licences granted for the export of raw material from the U.K. accounted for only forty percent of the margarine coming in from the Netherlands, "consequently the balance of the raw material must have been brought by Dutch ships to the relief of British tonnage". Maypole had reduced the price of tea to encourage sales of margarine, therefore "the Company's complaint as to unfair competition by their rivals in pushing margarine sales by the sale of sugar was unfounded".⁵⁷

Watson was not the man to take this lying down. Maypole put out a large advertisement: "DON'T BE MIS-LED by the flag on the wrapper...," its product was "BY FAR THE BEST is real BRITISH MADE".

At 2/- its tea was "The Very Best". "Don't pay more."⁵⁸ He had already instigated a campaign in the House of Commons against the prohibition on placing the words "British Made" on his margarine wrapper or on a printed slip.⁵⁹ Now he circulated widely a pamphlet entitled "Sugar Supply Monopoly and Enemy Influence", drawing attention to the fact that Jurgens had six German subsidiaries: Jurgens & Prinsen in Goch, A.L. Mohr in Hamburg, Rositsky & Wirt in Altona, Krog & Ewers also in Altona, Holstein Oelwerke in Hamburg, and Oelwerke Germania in Emmerich.⁶⁰ This would be heavily used by those seeking to bar neutrals from the sale of former German properties as clear evidence that Jurgens was dangerously pro-German. In a letter to the Foreign Securities Commission Watson said that "Mr. McKenna has asked us not to impugn the good faith of this gentleman [Capel Slaughter]... but it is one of the characteristics of an English gentleman that if he desires to be above suspicion he must act above it".⁶¹

While Watson gave his grievances high publicity just as the crisis broke over the Nigerian sales, there is little to suggest that he had these in mind. Maypole had so little connection with the Liverpool firms that they had not included it in a list of margarine manufacturers which they had sent to the Colonial Office.⁶² However, it did have links with Lever Brothers, to whom it had sold an obsolescent plant at Godley in Cheshire shortly after the outbreak of the war. The agreement was that Levers would supply oil for Maypole, while Maypole would in turn instruct Levers in the production of their new margarine "Plate", which they had taken up under government pressure. It was "not outstandingly good" at first. Lever's own maids ate it only under compulsion. Plate never gained a significant share of the market.⁶³ Maypole itself used copra from the Far East rather than kernels from West Africa. In 1915, it established a new firm, Palmine, to buy Senegambian groundnuts.⁶⁴ It had no interest in Nigeria. Moreover, drawing attention to Jurgens's German connections was a high-risk tactic, which may be why Watson delayed so long before using it. Prior to the war both Jurgens and Maypole had each been parts of international commodity chains. Maypole's reliance on copra linked it with Danish firms, particularly the Aarhus Oliefabrik Lim. which in turn owned all the shares in the Ceylon Trading Co. Ltd, the Eastern Pacific Trading Co. Ltd, and the Pacific Trading Co. Ltd. Maypole's purchase of Aarhus Oliefabrik in 1910 had included its subsidiaries Teutonia at Harburg in Germany and the recently established Erith Oil Works in Kent. Maypole had previously

tried to form a joint company with the German firm Schlink, but the latter had declined to get involved in crushing in Great Britain so long as it adhered to free trade. The Aarhus Oliefabrik also preferred production on the continent, but in 1912 Watson “had concluded that sooner or later tariff reform or war was probable, so the building of the Oil Mill in England was commenced...”.⁶⁵ During the war it ran into problems as two of the four Albion presses “of standard Continental design” purchased from the Danish firm Frichs were lost when the Germans took the steamer in which they were being transported.⁶⁶ In a letter written to Fiddes some years later, Steel-Maitland, then in charge of the Department of Overseas Trade, reminisced that Jurgens and Van Den Bergh had been known to the Germans as the Anglo-Dutch Trust, and that there had been agitation against them in Germany in which Watson, who “at the time was interested in a German factory ... took part...”.⁶⁷ Watson claimed that his position was significantly different from that of Jurgens. He had also claimed that his margarine was better than the Dutch product.⁶⁸ Neither claim carried much weight.

CARSON TAKES CHARGE

As the sale of the properties in Nigeria became a matter of wider public concern involving many more parties, the Liverpool firms lost control of the agitation. Scott was eclipsed by Carson, as the question now became one of politics at the highest level. At the beginning of November, Carson was effectively leader of the opposition, and running a parliamentary campaign “to uproot the whole system of politico-commercial penetration which the Germans have been furtively establishing in this country and throughout the Empire for the last twenty or thirty years”. He was vociferously backed not just by Conservatives, but also by Liberals such as Sir Henry Dalziel, who thought the people “were beginning to distrust the Government...,” and Handel Booth, who saw pro-Germans exercising a secret paralysing influence within the administration. The *Times* gave this agitation prominence and opined that “the temper displayed by the House of Commons ... ought to act as a warning to the Government”.⁶⁹ Historians usually link this opposition with protectionism, which had been the strongest force in the pre-war Conservative Party, and had gained strength during the war. As John Turner put it, “The trade warriors of the Conservative Right were on the march”.⁷⁰ In this he largely followed the earlier analysis of

Julian Stubbs, who had been the first to treat the Nigerian question as important in itself. Stubbs considered that two sets of interests were involved: British crushers who wanted protection so that they could modernize their plants, and the Liverpool firms "asserting their desire to maintain a recently gained monopoly position in West African trade".⁷¹ Even though he was writing a book rather than an article, and could have gone into more detail, Turner conflated these points, claiming that the Liverpool merchants wished "to preserve their new-found monopoly behind a tariff barrier".⁷² This was inherently unlikely. They had acquiesced in the recommendation of a differential duty on palm kernels,⁷³ which was no longer much at issue, as it almost certainly would not come into effect until after the war, but as traders they would not benefit from a restriction of their markets. Their agitation did not raise any tariff questions. All the evidence from 1916 suggests that they saw the crushers as adversaries rather than allies, and worried about what seemed like their growing dominance.

Turner also drew attention to a somewhat cryptic passage in the diary of Sir William Bull, private secretary to Walter Long, the embodiment of traditional country conservatism, who had been defeated by Bonar Law for the leadership in 1910, and was now President of the Local Government Board. The entry concerns a meeting on 20 October in which eighteen "more or less millionaires" turned up to be "bled" so as "to [illegible] London in Imperial interests like Liverpool...". Turner identified these interests with the British Empire Producers' Organisation, a protectionist body which was formed in 1916. Although the millionaires were duly bled, and eighty firms eventually backed the Organisation, it seems to have had little impact. Of the names provided by Turner, Hugo Hirst was the chairman of General Electric, and the others were bankers and armaments manufacturers.⁷⁴ Of these only Sir Vincent Caillard played a part in the Nigerian agitation. Writing to Bonar Law on behalf of the Executive of the recently established Confederation of British Industries, he proposed a deputation, which was turned down. His written submission called for the exclusion of neutrals, and preference to Britons, with examination of purchasers which should continue to apply to transfers of property for ten years after the war. This received little more than routine consideration.⁷⁵

Far more prominent was the Empire Resources Development Committee.⁷⁶ This had been inspired by two articles on "Finance After the War" written by Henry Wilson Fox, the Conservative MP for

Tamworth, and published in *The Times* on 28 and 29 September. These argued that state-sponsored programmes of empire development might reduce the debt created by the war and therefore the post-war taxation which would be needed to meet that debt. As Wilson Fox explained a few months later, the lack of self-government in the African colonies meant that “there will be less difficulty in regarding them mainly from the standpoint of estates of the Crown which should be developed for the general benefit of the Empire”.⁷⁷ The articles attracted considerable interest. The Committee itself was formed at a meeting in late October chaired by Viscount Milner. The High Commissioner in South Africa who had engineered and seen through the Boer War, Milner had held no official post since his recall in 1905. Contemptuous of democracy and placing himself above party politics, his identification was with the Empire, which he did not want to see run by “men who have been elected for their competence in dealing with Metropolitan tramways or country pubs”.⁷⁸ He was deeply concerned with social reform and with the patriotic integration of the working class, which linked him with Fabian socialists, but distanced him from most of the Conservatives with whom he usually worked. He had been a die-hard, and therefore a tariff reformer, but had been much more prominent as a defender of Ulster and as an advocate of conscription. As a civilian soldier of the Empire,⁷⁹ he tried to build networks among the younger men who were its emergent rulers. The most recent of these was the Round Table, two of whose prominent members were F.S. Oliver, a businessman who had written a biography of Alexander Hamilton, which gave him a reputation as a theoretician of federalism, and Steel-Maitland, who had been Milner’s secretary on his trip to Canada in 1908.⁸⁰

Many of the E.R.D.C. members had South African connections. Wilson Fox was a director of the British South African Company, which ran what would become Rhodesia. So also was Sir Leander Jameson, who had led his infamous raid into the Transvaal in 1895. North America interested Col. Grant Morland, a Canadian businessman whom Turner considers “shady”, who had also been involved in bringing together the businessmen who were “bled” for the British Empire Producers’ Organisation. More publicly conspicuous was Moreton Frewin, whom Kipling considered “wholly a Sahib”, celebrated as “one of the best gentleman riders in England”, he has been described as combining “elements of Mr. Micawber, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Buffalo Bill”. A protectionist, federalist, and imperialist, his greatest passion

was bimetallism.⁸¹ Back in 1898, his young nephew Winston Churchill, who had suffered from Frewin's editing of one of his early books, described his life as "a failure in the city and elsewhere".⁸² It still was. Also prominent as a spokesman for the E.R.D.C. was Alfred Bigland, who has already loomed large in this story. Speaking on the Paris resolutions in August, he had differentiated his position from that of the tariff reformers. The reconstruction which he wanted "shall be brought about, not by putting the tariff against German manufacturers, but rather by attacking Germany at the very base of her industry, by withholding from her the raw materials of which the British Empire hold a monopoly".⁸³ Other noted members included Halford Mackinder, and W.A.S. Hewins, the first director of the London School of Economic and Political Science, who was also Unionist M.P. for Hereford, a leading theoretician of tariff reform, and chairman of the Unionist Business Committee in the House of Commons. He believed that Germany was winning the war because its students and professors had attended to his lectures a generation earlier "in which I dwelt on these matters of organisation and the relations between military and economic efficiency..."⁸⁴ As Frewin later recalled, the Committee was a mixture of "high and dry Tories with socialists; the Minister of Labour [John Hodge], the chairman of Lloyd's, Dr. Jameson, a polyglot lot with Kipling to sing our songs"⁸⁵ Poor judgement more than anything else linked the leaders of the E.R.D.C. It could evoke the riches and the potential of the empire, but would be less convincing in devising schemes for their exploitation. Nevertheless, it did challenge the orthodoxy that each part of the Empire should be managed as the Colonial Office or its proconsuls divined the interests of its inhabitants. Instead, as a writer to *The Times* put it with reference to the Nigerian sales: "The British Empire for the subjects of the British Empire." He therefore insisted on the exclusion of "subjects of Allied or friendly nations..."⁸⁶

Excluding Allies went beyond what the Liverpool firms had been urging, but was in line with the motion now proposed for the debate on 8 November: "where enemy properties and businesses in Crown Colonies and Protectorates are offered for sale, provision should be made for securing that such properties and businesses should be sold only to natural-born British subjects or companies wholly British".⁸⁷ This had been drafted by a meeting of the Enemy Influence Committee chaired by Carson on 3 November.⁸⁸ While the provisions of the Nigerian Ordinance had initially been modelled on those for the sale of

prize ships, Scott's motion broadly followed those of the Board of Trade for sales within Great Britain and particularly that of the piano firm Bechstein which was about to be held. The Colonial Office believed that these missed the point as they did not bar a subsequent sale of a property to an undesirable firm or person nor their purchase of other properties which might come onto the market elsewhere in the colony. Who might or might not hold property within the Empire was clearly a matter of general policy which could not be settled by attaching conditions to sales of particular properties in Nigeria.⁸⁹ Politically the move from excluding neutrals, who might reasonably be considered suspect, and might be accused of having done well out of the war, to excluding allies as well, was clearly inept, and showed how the agitation would be bungled once Carson took charge of it.

LAW FIGHTS BACK

The key to what happened next was Bonar Law's decision not just to hold his ground but to counter-attack. There were strong voices for concession. Law listened to none of them. Despite having been rebuked for his earlier suggestion, Lugard still thought that "In view of the very strong feeling in the country regarding the sale of enemy real estate in Nigeria it is possible that H.M. Govt may desire to reconsider the question". A pencil note written "in train" sketched out various possibilities. Legislation in Nigeria might prohibit any sales of property to non-British subjects or natives without government approval. Or there might be export duties on shipments to non-British ports. Or the colonial government might buy the properties at a fair valuation and then lease them out.⁹⁰ The train was probably the one taking Lugard on the first stage of his journey back to Nigeria, as he left on 2 November, grumbling that he did

not much look forward to my arrival in Lagos with these pestilential seditious people saying in their press that they hope we shall be beaten in the war and they would prefer German rule because the merchants do not pay highly enough for the produce or they can't get the shipping.⁹¹

If or when Law received these parting suggestions is not clear. He certainly did not respond to them. Like Lugard, *The Times* also shifted ground. As late as 27 October it vigorously defended the leader which

Lugard had inspired a week earlier. "That article was intended to attract British capital and enterprise to Nigeria, for it is obvious that if British firms do not seize the opportunity given to them by the elimination of the German element, others will". On 2 November it sang a different tune. The Colonial Office had to see that the future of Nigeria was not prejudiced. "We should not repeat our former mistake of allowing trade to drift unchecked into alien hands". Now, "An important principle is at stake and the matter is urgent". That principle "reduced to its simplest elements, is whether the sale should be exclusively British or open to neutrals". This was, of course, misleading, as it made no mention of allies, whom the motion would also exclude. Instead of an auction, *The Times* proposed that the properties should be offered to approved purchasers at a fair government valuation.⁹² Several of the properties had already been leased out to non-Ring firms. Tin Areas occupied an important site in Lagos. They would be thrown out if the sites were simply handed over to the proposed all-British company. They wanted them put up for sale, but with neutrals barred. Fiddes considered this "another useful protest, so far as it goes". The letter from African Oil Nuts would have been even more useful. Deprecating anything which might strengthen the Combine, and insisting that "The whole agitation is with a view to profits and under the cloak of patriotism", they wanted the government to lease the properties to sitting tenants like themselves, as they could not hope to outbid the large established firms. Lugard had not objected to this suggestion. However, Oil Nuts were slow in getting it into the Colonial Office, which received it only on the eve of the debate. Law did see it, but did nothing. In the debate Scott could announce Oil Nuts' support of his motion.⁹³

Spurning opportunities for compromise, surprising Carson with his stubbornness, and impressing others with his resolution,⁹⁴ Law began instead to build up his case. In the Colonial Office, Harding thought that he might appeal to commercial treaties with other states as invalidating discrimination against neutrals. These treaties were with Bolivia, Colombia, Greece, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Switzerland, and Uruguay. Even Harding had to concede that these states were "neither powerful nor greatly interested in Nigerian trade—but though these reasons would no doubt be regarded as conclusive by the German Govt. if it thought it convenient to tear up a few more scraps of paper, H.M.G. are not so regardless of Treaty obligations". The legal experts in the Office were not swayed. They preferred to base

themselves on the obligation to get the best price “both in the interests of British & friendly creditors & in regard to our duty as liquidators”.⁹⁵ The Foreign Office took a similar line. Treaties with Bolivia were hardly relevant. The main consideration was the United States, on which Great Britain was “utterly and hopelessly dependent” for raw materials. Washington should not be given “cause to think that we are going to use the belligerent measures which the war compels us to adopt for the purpose of excluding them from British trade after the war”. At a time of steadily worsening Anglo-American relations, and President Wilson’s deepening suspicions of likely British post-war economic policy after the adoption of the Paris resolutions, this was a strong point, but perhaps not one to be trumpeted. Giving prominence to the treaties might also unnecessarily draw attention to Board of Trade practice in the U.K., which was defective in not providing safeguards against resale, while maybe prejudicing the eventual decisions of the Reconstruction Committee on general policy. Instead of hiding behind treaties, Law and Steel-Maitland should give their real reasons, as “The necessity of breaking a pernicious British ring is an argument which will appeal more to the man in the street than technical arguments derived from Commercial Treaties or from principles of high diplomacy”.⁹⁶ Law also wrote privately to F.E. Smith, the Attorney General, explaining that “An agitation has been got up on the ground that the conditions ought (as they do not) to confine the sale to British, or as an alternative allied purchasers”. Would such restrictions infringe any of the commercial treaties? Smith’s reply was brief: they would not, as “The contrary view would involve the conclusion that no private seller could impose such a condition without breach of the treaty obligations of the state”. The question was a political one. “There is no legal difficulty”.⁹⁷

As all the lawyers, both inside and outside the C.O., agreed that the treaties were irrelevant, Law and Steel-Maitland had to concentrate on arguing that what appeared to be a patriotic cause masked instead the greed of a cartel, and that “at a time when new capital and competition are so needed, and British Capital is so much engaged, it would be contrary to the interests of Nigeria to attempt to prohibit friendly foreigners from engaging in trade in Nigeria”.⁹⁸ This was certainly the better approach. The detailed explanations offered by the firms had made little impression, while the price differentials between Lagos and Liverpool appeared damning when compared with what they had been before the war. Even in its new mood, *The Times* after the debate had to concede

that "no one can sympathize with men who try to buttress the claims of a trade combination by appeals to national sentiment...".⁹⁹ Prime Minister Asquith instinctively took the same view; it was "a shocking thing to refuse to allow neutrals to buy ... it was merely the possible purchasers fearing to be outbidden who had raised the issue".¹⁰⁰ In the Steel-Maitland papers there are flimsies of a speech, unfortunately without a date, but evidently directed at Tariff Reformers:

We came to what we thought was the right conclusion, and, believing that it was the right conclusion, we mean to stick to it. It has been a reproach often levelled at some Departments of the Government that they come to a conclusion but that when challenged they run away from it. In this case, though there is great difference of opinion, yet believing our policy to be right, we are sticking to it.

Echoing Joseph Chamberlain, he insisted that "the Tariff Reform policy is to get capital into the British Empire to develop it".¹⁰¹ Law himself and his officials received a deputation of representatives of societies and associations connected with the crown and non-self-governing colonies. This was led by Sir Owen Philipps, who insisted that the development of those colonies would be "of immense benefit, not only to the British communities dwelling within their borders, but to the Mother Country as well, by supplying the raw materials for important industries here". He referred specifically to the decision of Steel-Maitland's committee to impose a differential export duty on palm kernels. In response Law pointed out that the members of the government had very different views on tariff reform. His own views had not changed; indeed, they had been strengthened. But the first concern had to be the preservation of the empire rather than its economic development. There were now two new feelings: that German enemies would "never be allowed to use our resources against ourselves in the way they have done in the past; ... and ... that the help we have got from the Empire has changed the whole aspect of the question of preference...". A committee such as the delegation proposed was unlikely to come up with recommendations before the end of the war, but the Colonial Office was well aware of the need for a definite post-war policy. Even so, one of his officials, H.R. Cowell of the Eastern Department, insisted on restating the orthodox position: "the duty of the C.O. is primarily to watch over the interests of the individual Colonies, & not directly to foster British trade at

their expense".¹⁰² While attending to the voices of those who wanted the Empire to be developed in the interest of the metropole, Law was careful to distance himself from humanitarian pressures. The Anti-Slavery and Aborigines' Protection Society asked to send a deputation to discuss the post-war treatment of native races. Although, the Foreign Office was inclined to say that it was too busy to deal with the question during the war, the C.O. initially was disinclined to snub them. Steel-Maitland minuted that "An hour spent with them now need not mean any commitments, & might prevent them being as hostile as might otherwise be the case". Nevertheless, the reply which went out on 6 November simply endorsed the Foreign Office's suggestion of a memorandum, and omitted paragraphs which had been drafted suggesting a deputation at a later time.¹⁰³ No reasons appear in the file, but the decision could only have been made by Bonar Law, and with the upcoming debate in mind.

Meanwhile, on 6 November, Law

warned the Cabinet that there might be a H of C. crisis on Thursday on Carson's motion about the sale of Nigerian (German) properties being left open to neutral bidding, but explained that this was done to break a Liverpool ring formed to squeeze the natives over palm kernels & other things. We agreed to his course.

He said that if a majority of his party voted against him he wd. resign the leadership of the Unionist Party— but not necessarily his post in the Cabinet. I [Harcourt] vehemently protested that he was *our* representative & could not resign. Aust. Chamberlain took the same view. I sd. the Unionist members of the Coalition had better have a meeting to 'speak with' Bonar Law & tell him his attitude was ridiculous.¹⁰⁴

In mounting their counter-attack, Law and Steel-Maitland benefitted from the arguments of Van Laun and Duncan. Even though they were defending the rights of smaller British firms to a fair share of shipping rather than calling for the entry of neutral competitors, their denunciation of the Ring reinforced Law's position. Van Laun had responded to the news of the proposed purchase of the properties by an all-British company with an almost apoplectic letter to the C.O., denouncing a "monstrous proposition" and demanding to know whether it was "the business of a British Colony to be run in the interests of seven firms".¹⁰⁵ As there were eight firms in the Lagos Ring, he must have silently dropped the *Compagnie française de l'Afrique occidentale*,

whose position was awkward for each side in the controversy. Van Laun's language was echoed in a letter by Duncan, extracts of which were published in *The Times* on 7 November: "In fact, Nigeria at present is the private estate of the seven combine firms and the steam line operates as if they own it."¹⁰⁶ Van Laun himself was surely "A Merchant" whose front page article "PALM KERNEL TRUST – CROWN COLONIES THAT ARE 'OWNED' BY A COMBINE – THE SEVEN" was published the day of the debate in the *Daily Express*, a paper with whose editor, R.D. Blumenfeld, the Colonial Secretary was in close and frequent contact.¹⁰⁷ It was about to pass under the control of Law's Canadian friend Max Aitken, later Lord Beaverbrook, who was not aware of the Nigerian question until Blumenfeld alerted him to it.¹⁰⁸ On 7 November, the paper drew attention to the next day's debate, which would feature an important speech from the Colonial Secretary, who would convince "those who propose to allow only British purchasers that there is another side to the question". The Colonial Office would not override the wishes of Nigeria itself, and the Allies had also to be considered.¹⁰⁹

Law intended to use the debate to attack the allegedly profiteering firms, but his officials did look carefully at the criticisms of the details of the ordinance and the conditions of sale which the Association of West African Merchants sent in on 6 November. They had to agree that at least one of these was valid. Under the ordinance a corporation under enemy control was defined as one with a majority of enemy directors or shareholders. This was "practically... an invitation to a Company whose shareholders are as to 51% neutral and 49% enemies to bid for the properties and to commence trade in Nigeria". Tennyson immediately recognized that this was a "very glaring defect" which had escaped the notice of the Board of Trade, the Colonial Office, and the Nigerian Attorney General. He apologized to Law for this, explaining that he had been pre-occupied with the many other points raised by the Solicitor to the Board of Trade as the ordinance was pulled about. He proposed changing the provision to bar any enemy directors, but would not go so far with regard to shareholders, as this "would prohibit many perfectly innocuous companies". In fact Steel-Maitland had already received from Bigland the balance sheets of the Niger Company, and the African Association. He also had that of Lever Brothers. He found enemy shareholders in all three. Tennyson suggested setting the limit at ten percent. He considered the other criticisms misconceived or, at best, minor, except that there was nothing to prevent a company coming under

enemy control “subsequent to the sale by the transfer of shares to enemy subjects”. Tennyson promised to “try to think out some way of dealing with the difficulty before tomorrow. It won’t be easy”. In submitting their observations the A.W.A.M. were “still most strongly of opinion that neutrals should not be allowed to bid... and still hopeful that the Government may at the last minute take the same view”.¹¹⁰ To understand why it chose instead to stand firm and to take the Nigerian sales as an issue on which to confront and defeat the opposition we need to consider the highest level of British politics at a key moment in a war which Great Britain appeared to be losing.

NOTES

1. Dransfield & Price to Bonar Law 1 Sept., Harding min. 4 Sept., C.O. to Dransfield & Price 5 Sept., Dransfield & Price to C.O. 9 Sept., Harding min. 13 Sept. 1916, CO583/54/41989,43145.
2. Cooper memo. (copy) 20 Oct. 1916, CO583/49/55579.
3. Hutton to Read 12 Sept., Harding min. 15 Sept. 1916 & marginal note n.d., CO583/53/43832.
4. Harding min., 25 Sept. 1916, *ibid.*, Rose Hewitt to Law 25 Sept. 1916, CO583/54/46053.
5. *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 87, col. 317 (8 Nov. 1916).
6. Harding min., 28 Sept., to Lugard desp. 1365, 3 Oct. 1916, CO583/54/46053.
7. Harding. Min., 20 Sept. 1916, CO583/53/45500.
8. Trigge to Scarbrough 1 Sept. 1916, SP MSS Afr. s. 86; Association of West African Merchants memo. 23 Oct. 1916, CO58353/50893. See also above, p. 115.
9. A.W.A.M. to C.O. 9 Oct., Harding min. 10 Oct., Niger Co. to C.O. 20 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/48013,50228.
10. Burrowes, was now in London for the sale. His memo “Notes on the Trade Combine in Nigeria” was submitted on 6 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/53413.
11. Robert Holt to Read 29 Aug., C.O. mins.: Flood 2 Sept. Harding & Ellis (quotation) 4 Sept., Read 14 Sept. 1916, CO554/32/41764.
12. Bigland to Steel-Maitland 29 Sept., Miller to Bigland 28 Sept. (2nd quotation), Steel-Maitland to Bigland 29 Sept. 1916 (carbon) (1st quotation), SMP GD193/1; Steel-Maitland to A.W.A.M. 29 Sept. 1916, CO583/53/45276.

13. Except where otherwise noted, the information in this paragraph comes from Harding's minute of 11 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/47412. The deputation was headed by Col. W. Nicholl (African Association) & John Holt Jr. (John Holt). The members were A.A. Cowan (Miller Bros.), J. Pickering Jones (Lagos Stores), R.B. Miller (Miller Bros.), G.A. Moore (Company of African Merchants), J. Trigge (Niger Co.), & T. Walkden (John Walkden).
14. Mins. by Harding, Strachey, Read, Fiddes, & Steel-Maitland 10 Oct., Fiddes 11 Oct.; C.O. to Niger Co. 31 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/48013,50228. First quotation from Steel-Maitland to Bigland, who had an option on 30,000 tons of kernels, 6 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/51644. Lugard desp. 791, pressing, 19 Oct. 1916 (2nd quotation), CO583/49/50159.
15. Miller memo. "Produce Trade in Nigeria" 10 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/47412.
16. Arthur B. Leather (Secretary, A.W.A.M.) memo. "Produce Trade in Nigeria" 23 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/50893.
17. Jas. Pickering Jones to Steel-Maitland 14 Oct., Steel-Maitland to Jones 23 Oct. (1st quotation), to A.W.A.M. 3 Nov. 1916 (2nd quotation), CO583/43/50893.
18. Nigerian Chamber of Mines to C.O. 11 Sept. 1916, CO583/53/43777.
19. Manchester Chamber of Commerce to C.O. 26 Sept., London C. of C. to C.O. 5 Oct. 1916, CO582/52/46248,47598, A.W.A.M. to C.O. 20 Sept., Harding min. 25 Sept. 1916, Fiddes marginal note, n.d., CO583/53/45223; C.O. to Glasgow C. of C. 14 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/48756.
20. Steel-Maitland min., 28 Sept., C.O. to Nigerian Chamber of Mines 6 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/43777.
21. Glasgow C. of C. to C.O. 11 Oct., West Africa Section, London C. of C., Africa Sections, Manchester & Liverpool C. of Cs. to C.O. rec'd 19 Oct., Harding min. 20 Oct., Fiddes min. 23 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/48756.
22. *The Times*, 20 Oct., clipping & marginal note in CO583/52/50161.
23. G.A. Moore to *Liverpool Courier*, 20 Oct. (published 21 or 23 Oct.), also in *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1916, clippings in *ibid*.
24. Scott parliamentary question in *ibid*.
25. Though Leslie Couper of the Bank of British West Africa supported the Colonial Office, writing to Steel-Maitland after the debate, praising him for sticking to his guns, and insisting that "new blood is wanted if the territory is to be adequately developed". 9 Nov. 1916, SMP, GD 193/93/1.
26. SubCttee of Control Cttee mins. 12 July (3rd quotation), Robert Miller to Scarbrough 11 July 1916 (1st, 2nd, & 4th quotations), SP MSS Afr. s. 93.
27. Edgar to Scarbrough 14 July 1916, *ibid*.

28. [Trigge] to Travers Braithwaite (Solicitor to Niger Co.) 13 July 1918 (flimsy), *ibid.*
29. Trigge to Scarbrough 1 Sept. 1916, SP MSS Afr. s. 86.
30. Extract from Control Cttee mins. 19 Oct. 1916. *Ibid.* A letter from Miller to Scarbrough & Trigge of 28 Aug., has not been preserved. As noted above, p. 69, as late as 1 Sept. The Niger Co. still considered the amalgamation likely to succeed. No other contemporary documents on the failure have been found in the Scarbrough papers.
31. See above, p. 77.
32. Unsigned pencil drafts, mins. of shareholders' meeting 27 Sept. 1916, SP MSS Afr. s. 86.
33. African Association, John Holt, & Miller Bros. to C.O. 3 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/52806. This is the earliest notification of the offer in the C.O. files. An earlier notification on 20 Oct., which was filed as 50247/16, is so far untraced. Scott raised the possibility in a parliamentary question for 24 Oct. CO583/52/50160.
34. Niger Co. to C.O. 4 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/52990.
35. Reply to Scott's parliamentary question 24 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/50160.
36. Scott parliamentary question for 1 Nov., Harding & Strachey mins., 28 Oct. 1916, Read & Law mins. n.d., CO583/53/51414; African Association, John Holt, & Miller Bros. to C.O. 7 Nov., Harding min. 9 Nov., Fiddes min. 10 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/53560.
37. *HC Debs.* 5 series, vol. 86, col. 1708.
38. This reply was drafted by Law personally, CO583/52/51413.
39. C.O. memo 3 Nov. 1916, CO323/726/51252.
40. Harding min. 11 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/47412.
41. Gerard Jurgens to Burrowes 10 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54564.
42. Jurgens to Birtwistle 22 Sept., Harding min. 11 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54126.
43. Charles Wilson, *The History of Unilever, A Study in Economic Growth and Social Change*, London, Cassell, 1954, vol. 2, p. 159.
44. Harding min. 11 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/47412.
45. Lugard to Fiddes n.d. (registered 24 Oct.) (1st quotation), Harding (2nd quotation) & Strachey mins. 24 Oct., Fiddes min. 24 Nov. [*sic, recte* Oct.] (3rd quotation), Steel-Maitland min. 24 Oct., to Lugard 25 Oct. 1916, CO583/54/50861.
46. Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 2, p. 171; memo by Samuel van den Bergh, in Johnstone (The Hague) desp. 19, transmitted by F.O. to C.O. 28 Jan. 1916, CO323/709/4513. Per capita household consumption of butter by semi-skilled workers fell from 0.36 lb per week in 1904 to 0.13 lb in 1918 while that of margarine rose from 0.01 to 0.16 lb. No other food items showed such dramatic shifts. Ian Gately

- and Andrew Newell, "The First World War and Working Class Food Consumption in Britain", *European Review of Economic History* 17/1 (Feb. 2013), Table 3, p. 79.
47. Barnett, *British Food Policy*, p. 141.
 48. 39 W.T.A.C. 29 June. 1916, remarks of Cecil Hurst, CO323/731/39545.
 49. Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 2, pp. 170–73; memo by Samuel van den Bergh (quotation), in Johnstone (The Hague) desp. 19, transmitted by F.O. to C.O. 28 Jan. 1916, CO323/709/4513.
 50. For the pre-war history, see Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 2, pp. 121–31. Unfortunately, the separate treatment of Maypole promised in volume one (p. 227, n. 1) does not appear in volume 2.
 51. Unskilled workers' margarine consumption rose from 0.06 lbs. of margarine in 1904 to 0.18 in 1918, a 327% increase compared to 1264% for semi-skilled and 945% for skilled workers. Gavely & Newell, "Working Class Food Consumption". These figures must be used with caution as the base year of 1904 was before margarine became a significant item of consumption.
 52. Watson to C.O. 11 Sept. 1916, CO323/73/43566; Peter J. Yearwood & Cameron Hazlehurst, "The Affairs of a Distant Dependency": The Nigeria Debate and the Premiership 1916", *Twentieth Century British History* (T.W.B.C.) 12.4 (2001), p. 420. Reference is made to this article only where I have not myself directly used the primary material on which it is based. For the pre-war composition of Maypole margarine, C.O. memo Misc. 339, 18 June (revised 11 Nov. 1918), on the control of oleaginous produce after the war, CO554/40/60715.
 53. Watson to C.O. 11 Sept. (with copy of Watson to Food Commission 5 Aug.), Macnaghten min. for J.C.C. Davidson (Private Secretary to Bonar Law) 13 Sept., C.O. to Board of Agriculture & Fisheries, Board of Trade, Sugar Commission, & Food Commission, 21 Sept. 1916 CO323/73/43566.
 54. 55 W.T.A.C. 2 Nov. 1916, CO323/732/54154.
 55. 60 W.T.A.C. 7 Dec. 1916, (remarks of Lord Emmott, Director, War Trade Department) CO323/733/60418.
 56. 58 W.T.A.C. 23 Nov. 1916, (remarks of Sir Henry Rew (B.A.F.)) CO323/733/58012.
 57. 55 W.T.A.C. 2 Nov. considering W.T.D. memo presented by Sir Nathaniel Highmore, CO323/732/54154.
 58. *The Times*, 10 Nov. 1916.
 59. *HC Debates*, 5 series, vol. 86, cols. 433–3 (17 Oct.), 763–64 (19 Oct.)
 60. Scott referred to the pamphlet in the Nigeria debate. *HC Deb* 5 series, vol. 87, col. 255 (8 Nov. 1916). The details of Jurgens's German connections are from Maypole to Foreign Securities Commission 10 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54595.

61. Maypole Dairy to Foreign Securities Commission 10 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54595.
62. African Trade Section, Liverpool C. of C. to C.O. 3 Sept. 1915, CO583/25/40937.
63. Wilson, *Unilever*, vol. 1, pp. 227–71, quotation at p. 230.
64. The agent was a Dane with ten years experience in the East. MacMillan, *Red Book*, pp. 287–88.
65. Watson memo. on Aarhus Oliefabrik Lim. 10 Feb., enclosed in W.T.D. to C.O. 14 Feb. 1916, CO273/451/6325. Watson to Law 11 Nov. 1916 (quotation), CO583/53/54326.
66. Harold W. Brace, *History of Seed Crushing in Great Britain*, London, Land Books, 1960, pp. 107–8.
67. Steel-Maitland to Fiddes 18 Mar. 1918, CO554/40/14826.
68. Watson to Food Commission 5 Aug. 1916 (copy), CO323/73/43566.
69. *The Times*, 1 Nov. (1st & 3rd quotations), 3 Nov. 1916 (2nd quotation), Dalziel was MP for Kirkaldy and proprietor of *Reynolds News*. Booth was MP for Pontrefract. They were concerned about a septuagenarian professor translating Persian manuscripts for the India Office. Despite its earlier warning, *The Times* on 6 November predicted that “A quiet Parliamentary week is in prospect”.
70. John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War, Coalition and Conflict 1916–1918*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 116.
71. John Stubbs, “The Impact of the Great War on the Conservative Party” in Gillian Peele & Chris Cook, eds., *The Politics of Reappraisal 1918–1939*, London, Macmillan, 1975, pp. 28–29.
72. Turner, *British Politics*, p. 116.
73. See above, p. 118.
74. Turner, *British Politics*, p. 115 (quotation); David Killingray, “The Empire Resources Development Committee and West Africa 1916–20”, *J.I.C.H.* 10 (1981–82), p. 206, n. 6.
75. Caillard to Law 4 & 6 Nov., Law to Caillard 6 Nov., Federation of British Industries to Law 7 Nov., C.O. to F.B.I. 14 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/53802.
76. Killingray, “Empire Resources Development Committee”, pp. 194–210; Osuntokun, *Nigeria in First World War*, pp. 52–56.
77. Dec. 1916, cited in Killingray, “Empire Resources Development Committee”, p. 197.
78. Quoted in Max Beloff, *Imperial Sunset*, vol. 1, *Britain’s Liberal Empire 1897–1921*, London, Methuen, 1969, p. 129, citing Milner to George Parkin (Secretary, Rhodes Trust) 24 July 1905, Milner Papers.
79. A.P. Thornton, *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies, A Study in British Power*, London, Macmillan, 1966, p. 79.

80. Beloff, *Liberal Empire*, p. 132.
81. Killingray, "Empire Resources Development Committee", pp. 195–96, Turner, *British Politics*, pp. 114–15. For Frewin, Shane Leslie, *Studies in Sublime Failure*, London, Ernest Benn, 1932, pp. 251 (2nd quotation), 279 (3rd quotation), 295 (1st quotation).
82. Winston Churchill to Lady Randolph Churchill (mother) 22 Mar. 1898, in Randolph S. Churchill, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 1, *Youth*, London, Heinemann, 1966, pp. 378–79.
83. *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 85, col. 403 (2 Aug. 1916).
84. W.A.S. Hewins, *The Apologia of an Imperialist, Forty Years of Empire Policy*, London, Constable, 1929, vol. 2, p. 40, diary entry 18 Jun. 1915, For Hewins and the U.B.C., see above, p. 179, below, p. 196.
85. Leslie, *Studies in Sublime Failure*, p. 292.
86. *The Times*, 3 Nov. 1916 (letter of Richard King), clipping in CO583/52/51413.
87. HC early day motion 128, CO323/705/53363. The motion stood in the name of Sir J.D. Rees (Nottingham East). It was headed "Enemy Properties in Crown Colonies". Identical motions came from Carson, Scott, J.G. Butcher, Sir Henry Craik, W. Johnson Hicks, Ronald M'Neill (Unionist, Kent, St Augustine's), and R.J. Neville (Unionist, Wigan). Sir Owen Philipps put down the same motion as "Sale of Enemy Property", and included protectorates as well as colonies. This was the motion proposed by Scott on which the debate was held. In the event Rees voted with the government and Philipps did not vote. Neville was one of those who had championed Maypole on 17 Oct. *HC Debs* 5 series, vol. 86, cols. 422–23.
88. *The Times*, 4, 7 Nov. 1916.
89. C.O. mins. Harding & Tennyson 3 Nov., Grindle & Law [7 Nov.], Davidson to Board of Trade (carbon copy with marginal notes) n.d., Board of Trade, Conditions for sales of enemy property in the U.K., CO583/52/52418. For the Bechstein sale, *The Times*, 8 Nov. 1916, for the conditions, CO323/725/51252.
90. Lugard, "Note in train" n.d. A pencil note dates this to "Post W. War I, 1918 or 19". LP MSS Brit Emp s. 45/76. The attention of the archivist has been drawn to this misdating.
91. Lugard to Lady Lugard 7 Nov. 1916 (flimsy typescript) LP MSS Lugard 4.
92. *The Times*, 27 Oct., & 2 Nov. 1916, clippings in CO583/52/50161, 51413.
93. Tin Areas to C.O. 2 Nov., Fiddes min. 7 Nov., Oil Nuts to Law 7 Nov., Harding min. 11 Nov. 1916 CO583/53/53014, 53803; *HC Debs.*, 5 series, vol. 83, cols. 251–52 (8 Nov. 1916).
94. Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, London, Archon Books, 1968 (1928 & 1932), p. 293, Scott diary 20–22 Nov. 1916

- (conversations with Winston Churchill and John Dillon (leader of the Irish Nationalist Party)) in Trevor Wilson, ed., *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott 1911–1928*, London, Collins, 1970, pp. 235–39.
95. Harding & Tennyson mins. 20 Oct. (1st & 2nd quotations), Risley min. 21 Oct. CO583/52/50161.
 96. Hurst memo for Lord Robert Cecil 7 Nov. (3rd quotation), enclosing memo by Lord Eustace Percy (1st & 2nd quotations) SMP, GD 193/93/1. Law also spoke privately to Cecil, who no doubt gave the same advice. Davidson min. 7 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54125.
 97. Law to Smith 4 Nov., Smith to Law 6 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54125.
 98. CO memo. 3 Nov. 1916, CO323/726/51252.
 99. *The Times*, 9 Nov. 1916.
 100. Yearwood & Hazlehurst, “Distant Dependency”, citing Lady Scott’s diary 8 Nov. 1916, Kennett papers.
 101. “Reasons for Action of Colonial Office on the Question of Sales of Enemy Property in Nigeria”, n.d. As it ends “(Hear hear)”, it would appear to be the transcript of a speech.
 102. Minutes of meeting with Deputation of Representatives of Societies and Associations connected with British Crown and Non Self-Governing Colonies 3 Nov. 1916, CO323/725/53536.
 103. F.O. to C.O. 23 Oct., mins. by Macnaghten, 26 Oct., Harris & Grindle 27 Oct., & Steel-Maitland n.d., C.O. to F.O., 6 Nov. 1916, CO323/716/50761.
 104. Harcourt cabinet diary 6 Nov. 1916, uncatalogued, LHP.
 105. Van Laun to C.O. 20 Oct. 1916, CO583/54/50359. As with Tin Areas and Oil Nuts, Van Laun’s antipathy to the combine was combined with support for restriction of the sale. He wanted an undertaking that any purchaser did not represent a foreign buyer and would not resell to an enemy alien for twenty years after the end of the war.
 106. *The Times*, 7 Nov. 1916.
 107. *The Daily Express*, 8 Nov. 1916. For Law and Blumenfeld, Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 222.
 108. A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1972, p. 99, *Beaverbrook, Politicians and the War*, pp. 289–90.
 109. *Daily Express*, 7 Nov. 1916.
 110. A.W.A.M. to C.O. 6 Nov., Tennyson min. & memo 7 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/53280; Bigland to Steel-Maitland 5 Oct. 1916, and Steel-Maitland’s analyses of the balance sheets, SMP GD 193/93/1.



“Jingo Pot and Tariff Kettle”; the Nigeria Debate and the Sales

THE NIGERIA DEBATE

The debate of 8 November 1916 would be judged “the keenest which ... has taken place for months at Westminster...”.¹ The *Daily Express* headlined “Sensational Debate” and claimed that it contained “Stronger language than has been heard since the war began...”.² Carson wanted not to defend the interests of the Liverpool firms, but rather to bring down a government which many saw as ineffective and dangerously incompetent. The problem was not a lack of ability of its members. No other British cabinet has included so many outstanding men.³ Observing it in March 1916, Hughes of Australia “looked round the table and I thought the members all looked very clever men. That is your trouble. You have got too many clever men”.⁴ They could not agree. Arguments were interminable. The smaller body established in 1915 to deal expeditiously with the most important questions, had inexorably expanded until it too seized up. Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, complained that there was too much delay in getting decisions out of it.⁵ Two days after the Nigeria Debate, Hankey noted in his diary, “These have been really dreadful War Committees.... The War Committee is hopelessly congested...”.⁶ Questions cut in different ways across previous party alignments. All recognized that Asquith alone could hold it together. He saw himself as a “Pontifex”,⁷ but not as a pope with infallible authority. Proud of his classical learning, he went back to the word’s original meaning as a bridge builder. Timely procrastination,

carefully jerry-built compromises, the occasional judicious ruling expressed with great intellectual authority, these were the political arts which served him well for years. Now he was visibly dispirited, especially after the death on the Western Front of his gifted son Raymond in September, and appeared dangerously dependent on alcohol.⁸ More vigour seemed needed as the country entered the crisis of the war. The government had spurned President's Wilson's suggestions of mediation, and gambled all on a decisive victory in the summer of 1916. It had not been achieved on the banks of the Ancre and of the Somme. The Russian offensive south of the Pripyot marshes promised briefly to change the course of the war, but then was halted and reversed. It had brought Romania in on the Allied side. Now that country faced defeat like that of Serbia in 1915. An advance from Salonika was unlikely to save it, especially as the big questions regarding Greek participation in the war remained unsettled. Uboat losses mounted. Relations with America deteriorated. Political strife intensified in November 1916 because everyone could see that national survival was at stake, but could not agree on how to ensure it.

Outwardly Asquith still appeared strong. Insiders had a different view. The Earl of Crawford, who had entered the cabinet in July, noted in his diary:

At cabinets he is calm and urbane – but as for ruling his colleagues or abridging idle or wasteful discussions he is hopeless: I have never heard him say a wise or a strong thing at the Council table, though in the House his mastery of language indicates a decision which I believe to be non-existent.⁹

Austen Chamberlain claimed that “He only once in my experience directly helped us to a rapid decision...”.¹⁰ From a very different political perspective, the Liberal academic and journalist L.T. Hobhouse agreed with C.P. Scott, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*: “The difficulty I admit is to defend Asquith”.¹¹ Nevertheless, an originally shaky coalition had acquired a certain stability, largely because, in each crisis, Asquith considered it his “duty to offer his colleagues a conclusion they can all accept”.¹² While resignations had often been talked of, and even threatened, few had come. Augustine Birrell, the Irish Secretary, and Winston Churchill, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had each paid the price of failure. Sir John Simon, the Home Secretary, had, uniquely for a Liberal,

stood up for principle and resigned over the imposition of conscription in January 1915. He had been replaced by another Liberal, the forty-five year-old Sir Herbert Samuel, whom Asquith always called "the Infant Samuel". The Tory Earl of Selborne, President of the Board of Agriculture, had mistimed his resignation over Ireland in July 1916, and was soon forgotten. Far different in its impact was the resignation of Sir Edward Carson over the failure to help Serbia in November 1915. Over the following year this drew to him the increasing number of those who felt that Asquith's slack conduct of the war could no longer be tolerated.

High browed and hatchet faced, Carson's visage was implacable. Feared as a deadly prosecutor, his most memorable appearance had been for the defence of the Marquess of Queensbury against Oscar Wilde's charge of libel in 1895. British politicians would eventually dismiss him as an incomprehensible Irishman with no administrative ability.¹³ In November 1916 he was the government's most deadly opponent. Nevertheless, his position was difficult. Unlike John Arthur Roebuck in 1855, he would not attack the government directly over the conduct of the war in its main theatre. It had handed this over to the generals, whom Carson supported. His likely followers on the Tory benches backed them even more fervently. He could not attack civilian interference, as he hoped eventually to gain the support of Lloyd George, the civilian most anxious to interfere.¹⁴ The Somme could not be for him what Balaklava had been for Roebuck. He had to find an issue far from the Western Front. Momentarily he looked to Greece. Compton Mackenzie, the British agent in Athens had approached him. Mackenzie had returned to London to urge intervention in favour of the dismissed Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos against King Constantine. He had had long talks with "C", Captain Sir Mansfield Cumming, the Head of Military Intelligence 1c, but, despite Mackenzie's diplomatic cover, Lord Hardinge, the new Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, had declined to see him. Carson boasted of his 153 parliamentary followers. This reminded Mackenzie of the biblical miraculous draught of fishes, but he did not place himself in the net, rightly considering the Greek situation too urgent and too dangerous to wait on the possibility of the overthrow of the government in London.¹⁵

Nigerian questions, which had already attracted so much attention in August, might instead be considered more safely symbolic. Moreover, raising them would target Bonar Law directly as the responsible minister. If indeed Carson had 153 MPs behind him, then he would show

that he was the real leader of the Unionist Party. His miraculous draught comprised the members of the Unionist War Committee, which had been established in January 1916 by Sir Frederick Banbury and Ronald McNeill. It was the most important of the emergent “ginger groups” urging a more vigorous prosecution of the war. Carson had chaired it since March, but the motion was drafted by the much smaller Enemy Influence Committee, which Carson also chaired.¹⁶ The War Committee’s membership overlapped with the smaller and older Unionist Business Committee. Chaired by Hewins, and including most of the leading tariff reformers, it was at the forefront of campaigning for action to meet a German trade war after the end of hostilities.¹⁷ Often seen as complimentary, the committees were also rivals, with very different approaches. Hewins saw his as something along the lines of what we would now call a “think-tank”. While he claimed to have large numbers behind him, the average attendance was 29.¹⁸ The UBC was concerned with policy rather than with the “trivial personal issues” of politics.¹⁹ In so far as he deigned to consider personalities, Hewins respected Asquith’s “great intellectual gifts”, while being acutely aware of Law’s limitations.²⁰ In April he had opposed Carson’s attempt to bring down the government.²¹ He saw Lloyd George only as an intriguer.²² While he claimed not to share “the widespread belief in the pro-Germanism of the Government...”, he warned Asquith early in October that unless the causes of discontent “were removed, he would find his Government in considerable danger”. He considered Asquith’s response “rather huffy”, and thought that the prime minister looked “rather broken”.²³ A month later he convinced the Business Committee that the Government was incapable of decision, and “we must destroy the Government or lose the war”.²⁴ Nevertheless, as he became aware of the political crisis, he would urge Asquith to take a strong line, make the premiership “a real unifying office”, and “reject L.G.’s proposals”. Outside of any loop that counted, he got to deliver this advice only after Asquith had fallen.²⁵

Following Beaverbrook’s analysis, historians have stressed Carson’s skill in choosing an issue which would unite such groups behind him against a government hampered in its conduct of the war by its adherence to, a now outdated, Liberal free-trade orthodoxy.²⁶ Robert Scally, even goes so far as to claim that a fault of the motion was that it was “so sectarian on protectionism that relatively few disaffected Liberals could cross over”.²⁷ In fact the issue was badly chosen and badly presented. Its relevance to the more effective conduct of the war was far from clear.

Instead it would raise many other issues. Many, then and later, linked it to the pre-war controversies over protection. The conditional duty debated in August could be seen, and certainly would be remembered, as a move in that direction.²⁸ It had been intended to direct palm kernels to Great Britain, and therefore to benefit British manufacturers. The trading firms had been lukewarm. They had quickly ensured that it would not come into effect during the war. As their campaign against the proposals of the Empire Resources Development Committee would soon show, they remained committed to free trade.²⁹ Letting them buy up and close down the German properties in Nigeria could hardly help manufacturers in Great Britain, and would serve no protectionist purpose. Bonar Law saw this clearly. It would be the basis of his counter-attack. "What", he would ask repeatedly, "is the principle?"³⁰ Carson's inability to answer ensured that, far from being united against the government, the protectionists would be badly split. While Carson focussed on the elimination of enemy influence and ensuring that the Germans would never regain the sites, Law raised the issue of general economic policy, arguing that imperial preference was intended not to exclude foreigners but rather to provide incentives for them to invest in Great Britain and its empire. Sir Edward protested against Law's use of this dichotomy, but it was then the end of the debate, and the Colonial Secretary had the last word.

Nevertheless, despite its defects, the motion was dangerous. However poorly conceived from a protectionist point of view, it was, as Robert Blake has pointed out, "nicely calculated to aggravate those nationalist, anti-foreign, anti-neutral sentiments which always predominate in time of war".³¹ It was viewed as such, the *Liverpool Post* noting that Carson "is obviously taking himself very seriously as the principal Hun 'hunter'".³² Many Liberals saw it as setting xenophobia against protectionism. While Carson and Law were winding up the debate, the Clerk of the House, Sir Courtenay Ilbert, passed a note to Harcourt on the front bench:

Jingo Pot and Tariff Kettle
 Let them both that quarrel settle
 Tariff Kettle, Jingo Pot
 Which can talk the greatest rot!³³

As many might vote for the resolution simply to express dissatisfaction with the government, the outcome of the debate could not

easily be predicted. Nevertheless, Law recognized that it offered him the best chance of victory against Carson. At first the debate went against him. Scott was considered "very temperate and able in presenting the motion".³⁴ He scored a minor triumph when his statement "I am instructed...", was interrupted by a guffaw from Lord Robert Cecil, only to be completed with "on behalf of the Anti-Slavery Society...". This "was a complete surprise, and the House roared with laughter".³⁵ Thereafter humanitarian arguments did not have the traction which they had had in August. Steel-Maitland's speech was considered "the best piece of argument he has yet put before the House...", but this was tepid praise, as he had not so far "been very successful in his public utterances on behalf of the Colonial Office...", and, while he was not flustered by heckling, he was "occasionally diffuse and beside the point...".³⁶ The one speech which was universally praised was that by Higham for the motion. As "a businessman who knows this market", he spoke with an authority which everyone recognized. He insisted that American firms would be able to outbid British as they would not be subject to British wartime taxation. These companies were really German-American. He drew attention to Herrn Muller and Schoffer in the rapidly expanding trade in hides. In response to a parliamentary question he had been told that one was Swiss and the other was naturalized American, but, according to his informant in Nigeria, "you have only to open your eyes and see their faces and German is written on every lineament". His other main point was that, given the shipping and other charges, the sales margins of the Ring firms were not unreasonable.³⁷ He made a particularly strong impact as he was followed not by a speech for the government but by another for the motion by Hewins. As it was then dinner time, "every member of the Front Bench hurried out of the House, every one of them".³⁸ The *Daily Mail* felt that the debate had gone "wholly against the government".³⁹ Summarizing it for Aitken over dinner, F.E. Smith said that "He had been depressed by the course which it had taken in the afternoon discussion and feared defeat...".⁴⁰

As well as Higham's, one pre-prandial speech for the motion had attracted particular attention. It was by the industrialist Sir Alfred Mond, who was prominent in the relatively small Liberal ginger group equivalent to the Unionist War Committee. He claimed little interest in "a mere bagatelle of £5,000,000 of palm kernels per year". He wanted a new national policy: "the British Empire first, the British trader second, and all other considerations afterwards". The "properties which you

have just captured" should not go to "thinly disguised alien neutrals".⁴¹ Unlike Higham's, Mond's speech was noticed not for its knowledge of the subject, but for its speaker. Mond was himself the son of a German Jew who had immigrated to Great Britain shortly before he was born. He still had traces of the accent. The high Tory *Morning Post* thought that tariff reformers "will not easily get over the shock of seeing Mr. BONAR LAW being taught patriotism by Sir ALFRED MOND".⁴²

By contrast, the speeches against the motion passed largely unnoticed.⁴³ They were nevertheless important, both for what was said and for those who said it. Halford Mackinder argued that the sale of the properties to neutrals was consistent with the conditional duty on kernels which he had so strongly supported in August. As this would direct the flow of kernels to Great Britain, it did not much matter who owned the sites in Nigeria. Under this "policy you will compel those Dutch and Americans to come and manufacture here".⁴⁴ Two prominent members of the Unionist Business Committee also opposed the resolution. Ernest Pollock's speech attracted some attention for its ineptitude.⁴⁵ Stanley Baldwin's speech was unremarked, but should have been noted for its calm moderation. He insisted on taking "a long view and to look forward beyond the War...". The government should not take "any step that might give neutral nations the idea that we are fighting this War solely to benefit ourselves and to keep all other peoples, whether neutral or Allies, from what we consider to be our own preserves".⁴⁶

While the debate was vigorous, few speakers expected it to be pushed to a division. J.M. Henderson, a Scots Liberal much concerned with the spirits trade, felt that "the House is so undecided in some parts how to vote...".⁴⁷ The *Financial Times* believed that "many members who would undoubtedly have voted for the motion on its merits were not prepared to do so at the risk of upsetting the Ministry".⁴⁸ On the other hand, as the resolution had been framed before the government had set out its case, *The Scotsman's* London correspondent considered that "The situation was one such as rarely arises, when the weight of argument tells in spite of party allegiance...".⁴⁹ Many members clearly hoped to avoid "the crisis which faces it at the present moment in the present temper of the House".⁵⁰ Compromise seemed likely. Most backbenchers who spoke, either for or against the motion, urged that the sales should not go ahead, and that the properties might be worked by the government or let to the sitting tenants, proposals which were, of course, against the interests of the Ring, favoured the small firms, and had already

been suggested in the press.⁵¹ Near the end of the debate Sir Hamar Greenwood, the Liberal member for Sunderland, “a lifelong Imperialist and Canadian”, proposed an amendment opening up the sales to Allied subjects and firms.⁵² However, Sir Henry Dalziel, press proprietor and member of the Liberal War Committee, had already noted that the government was “adamant”, but that while they might win the vote, “they certainly do not represent the great mass of the people outside”.⁵³

Shortly before ten o’ clock Carson rose to speak. He quickly made it clear that he was little interested in the details of the Nigerian sales, but was “really anxious to get a Division or a declaration of policy by the Government upon the real substantial question here;... that whatever advantages may accrue to this country and to this Empire and to no one else”. He noted that the decision to allow neutral purchasers had been that of Lugard with his Nigerian vision, but “I think the country will expect us to have a vision somewhat greater than Nigeria”. He asked the government:

Do they know the state of tension in the country at the present moment as regards enemy influence, enemy properties, aye, and enemy interference in this country? Do they know that the country has been told over and over again that the one object of this war is to smash Prussianism and to smash the interference of Germany with our trade throughout the Empire? Yes; and the country is asking, ‘When are you going to begin?’

He ended by begging the House “not to send out a message to our suffering fellow subjects – aye, and to our soldiers in the trenches – that the War is being waged, not for the British Empire, but equally for neutrals”.⁵⁴

Carson’s speech was highly rhetorical, and clearly effective. Some thought that Law had appeared uncomfortable throughout the sitting. Others “were half disposed to fear that [he] was outmatched by so formidable an opponent”.⁵⁵ He was not.⁵⁶ Half a century later his opening paragraph would be set out by a political anthropologist as a paradigm “of the way in which normative themes are used to discredit an opponent and to build up credit for oneself in order to gain support”.⁵⁷ He took the motion as one of want of confidence in the government. He deplored the violence of Carson’s attack, while acknowledging that he “had behind him a very strong volume of sentiment, felt in this House and out of it...”. To that sentiment Law opposed “common sense”. The Colonial

Office was determined to root out German trade. The conditions of sale would be effective. They had been strengthened that very morning. The liquidator's duty was to get the best price. New capital had to be attracted into Nigeria. The Ring wanted to buy the sites cheaply and prevent future competition. The motion's attempt to exclude French firms could not be defended. The French Company certainly intended to bid. (That it would do so as part of the Ring was ignored by speakers on each side of the debate.) He referred back to the principle behind his August pledge that the conditional duty on palm kernels would not be applied against France. What, in any case, was the principle which Carson wished to apply, given that it would cover only these properties but not similar ones sold privately? Tariff reformers had a policy of preference. Carson's was one of prohibition. Joseph Chamberlain had sought to attract foreign capital into the country. Carson, "if his plan is adopted, will prevent anything of that kind".⁵⁸ From the beginning Law showed that he "had the measure of his man". Carson became "Flushed and angry...".⁵⁹ He interrupted repeatedly, but Law "can be excellent in impromptu, and he was far quicker witted than Sir Edward".⁶⁰ In *The Scotsman's* judgement, "the bludgeon was no match for the rapier".⁶¹ No one could doubt that "It was a win for the Colonial Secretary in argument...".⁶² He regretted being at variance with his former friends, but "All that any of us can do is, under a new situation, where we have yet the old party lines to guide us, to do what we believe best for the one object we all have in view". Scott appealed for a free vote. Law hoped that the House would vote freely, but he also was sure that Carson "realises fully the seriousness of the course which he is taking, and is prepared to take the consequences if the Division is successful".⁶³

LAW'S VICTORY

For Sir Edward there would be no miraculous draught of fishes. The combination of an overwhelming majority of Liberals and a sizeable proportion of Conservatives ensured the defeat of the motion. It was lost by 233:119. This figure overstated its real support in the House. For tactical reasons the Irish Nationalists voted for it, as abstention would have revealed that their "declaration of opposition to the Government was mere words and that they were still at its tail".⁶⁴ For long-run political calculations this would be important, as Irish support had given the Liberals their decisive advantage over the Conservatives in the House.

In the short term many savoured the irony of the Nationalists lining up behind Carson. The total also included about ten Liberals, including Higham, Dalziel, Mond, who had each spoken, and Handel Booth and Winston Churchill, who had not.⁶⁵ Only sixty-five Conservatives had backed Carson, while seventy-two had followed Law. Two more had paired against the government, but some twenty-six of those present had abstained, and thirty members of the Unionist War Committee had voted against the motion. Prominent members of the Empire Resources Development Committee and of the Unionist Business Committee—Mackinder, Pollock, and Baldwin—had spoken and voted for the government. Others such as Basil Peto had not spoken, but voted against the motion. Peto went on to resign from the U.W.C.⁶⁶ Two speakers for the motion, J.G. Butcher and Alfred Bigland, had abstained. Sir J.D. Rees, in whose name the resolution had once stood, voted against it. While Hewins had voted for it, he noted in his diary: “Carson’s motion... was badly worded and he made a bad speech. In fact he drove many of our men into the Government lobby”.⁶⁷ As Winston Churchill noted, the effect of Law’s firm stance “had been to divide Carson’s party”.⁶⁸

The *Liverpool Post and Mercury* felt: “Last night’s discussion must have political consequences”. It drew a parallel with Gladstone and Joseph Chamberlain.⁶⁹ *The Times* noted that, even though there was no big issue to unite the various oppositional groups, as conscription had earlier in the year, the House was in an unsettled state. A defeat for the government in the next few weeks would not be surprising, “and then a stocktaking would be inevitable”.⁷⁰ Law’s margin of victory among Unionists had been narrow. Following Beaverbrook, historians have made much of his pledge back in December 1915 that he would resign from the government if he lost the confidence of his party.⁷¹ Contemporary reports do not mention this explicitly. Beaverbrook himself implies that it had largely been forgotten.⁷² As we have seen, Law contemplated resignation from the leadership rather than from the government, but his cabinet colleagues had opposed this.⁷³ Scott’s motion might have been treated as the government whips described it, “a matter of Colonial administration”.⁷⁴ After the speeches by Carson and Law it was clearly an issue of confidence. Pledge or no pledge, Law’s leadership could hardly have survived a clear defeat. With so close a result, several factors might have tipped the balance. Four Unionists turned back from the lobby “when they saw the Irish trooping in”.⁷⁵ Many observers discounted the fifteen “official”

Conservatives who voted with the government. George Terrell, one of Carson's tellers, told Aitken and F.E. Smith that Law's defeat "had only been avoided by the votes of the paid members".⁷⁶ Others, especially the *Morning Post*, claimed that fear of provoking a crisis which would lead to the fall of the government deterred many of those who might otherwise have voted for the motion.⁷⁷ These, and other, considerations might not have acted so strongly had Law's speech been less cogent. The *Yorkshire Observer* felt that "the remorseless logic of his reply had obviously carried the waverers with him and rallied the great bulk of the House behind the Government". The *Scotsman's* correspondent agreed. His "fearlessness in taking his fate in his hands when evasion would have been so easy still further enhanced his position in the House".⁷⁸

This speech re-established Law as the effective leader of the Conservatives. Since agreeing to the coalition he had been in eclipse. As Asquith dealt with his ministers individually, Law's leadership position appeared to be only "titular".⁷⁹ He had been deliberately relegated to a secondary post. Maurice Hankey, as Cabinet Secretary the man best placed to judge, considered him "by common consent the poorest figure in the present War Cttee".⁸⁰ This low opinion was shared by Reginald McKenna, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and by the Secretary for War, Lloyd George, colleagues who agreed on little else. McKenna considered that Law "had a certain limited Parliamentary gift but lacked force of character and grasp of mind".⁸¹ Lloyd George felt that he was "overshadowed by Balfour, Curzon, and even Lansdowne".⁸² In retrospect, he wrote that "his comments expressed crudely the opinions of a sensible and able business man on propositions with which he was imperfectly acquainted". That, "You could barely hear him in Cabinet a yard off",⁸³ made his interventions even more ineffective. Other Conservatives appeared more important in the running of the war. A lively cartoon of December 1915, "The Cabinet's Christmas Carol", reprinted by Trevor Wilson,⁸⁴ shows Chamberlain, Curzon, McKenna, Balfour, Lloyd George and Asquith singing "The Hymn of Too Late". Law does not appear. Even with Carson's support he had failed to get his party to support Lloyd George's Irish settlement.⁸⁵ Consequently, according to Beaverbrook, "his colleagues and friends ... saw him apparently discredited and abandoned by supporter after supporter".⁸⁶ He was well aware that his parliamentary triumph over Carson did not

reflect feeling among Conservatives outside Westminster. More than the numbers, he was concerned about the names. He was deeply hurt that “the men supporting Carson were the men who had backed him for the leadership of the party and had been his steadfast friends”.⁸⁷ Without their support he might well be pushed aside by the more traditional leaders whom he had displaced. He could not bask in what might be an ephemeral success. Now that he had the initiative he had to use it quickly. As the historian Nigel Keohane has recently noted, “he was able to act ahead of the rebels rather than at their behest”.⁸⁸

Many, including Max Aitken, urged Law to force a crisis by resigning from the government. He seems not to have considered this.⁸⁹ The objections were obvious. He would have appeared as the man who had destroyed wartime unity. His party might have been trounced had Asquith responded by calling an election. Moreover, he would have handed Carson a moral victory after having defeated him in debate. He had as well to consider the passionately held views of many who had backed him in the House, not just the other Conservative leaders, who worked well with Asquith, but also men such as Lt. Col. W. Houghton Gastrell, the MP for Lambeth North, who came up from Woolwich Barracks in time for Carson’s speech, which he considered “the most *unfair* attack I ever listened to...”. A rare attender, Gastrell could not

understand the motives underlying a certain section of our party whose sole object seems to be to harass & worry our own Ministers instead of rendering every assistance in their power in these trying times. General Crofton [?] Atkins paid his first visit to the House & told me he could not for the life of him understand what the Unionist Party were about.⁹⁰

In any case, Law still believed that Asquith was indispensable as prime minister. He wanted to energize the coalition, not to destroy it. Soon after the debate he warned Asquith that “a radical change in the Government must be made, and made at once”. Law had no plan of his own. He wanted the prime minister to seize the initiative. No doubt pre-occupied with the struggle between Lloyd George and the generals and the imminent conference at Paris to settle the basic strategy of the war for 1917, Asquith failed to respond. Law said that he would return when he had a definite plan.⁹¹ That plan would come eventually from Lloyd George.

THE ROLE OF LLOYD GEORGE

At this stage Law and Lloyd George were on bad terms. Like most Conservatives, the Colonial Secretary supported Sir William Robertson against the War Secretary's attempt to intervene over strategic questions. Conversely, Law did not figure even in his colleague's political fantasies. Lloyd George's dream committee of three Liberals and three Conservatives to run the war included himself, Asquith, and Grey; Balfour, Carson, and Curzon. He was "disappointed with Bonar".⁹² Having missed the debate, the War Secretary failed to appreciate how far the balance had shifted between the Conservative leader and his opponent. He still thought that "...Carson would smash Bonar Law almost immediately...".⁹³ Even a couple of weeks later, after they had begun to work together, he was inclined to be dismissive, repeating with gusto "a good thing" someone had said, that "...Bonar Law ought to be kept in cold storage and brought out when you want him to make a speech. He makes good speeches, but in Council he is not so good".⁹⁴ Towards Lloyd George, Law felt none of the respect and deference he had for Asquith. He distrusted him, and blamed him rather than the prime minister for his being kept in the second tier.⁹⁵ At first the Nigeria Debate exacerbated this ill feeling. Lloyd George had been absent, apparently without a pair.⁹⁶ When the Liberal whip had tried to summon him, his wife explained that he was dining with Carson. This was incorrect. Lloyd George had earlier met Carson and Milner at the house of Sir Arthur Lee, his former secretary at the Ministry of Munitions. They had discussed "the general situation and the possibilities of co-operation...". Milner had just publicly called for the replacement of the "stereotyped old parties" by "fresh groups, whose members will be bound together by a genuine agreement of opinion on the issues of the new age...".⁹⁷ Lloyd George stayed on to dine with Lee. Lloyd George later claimed that Nigeria had not been discussed.⁹⁸ This is hard to accept.⁹⁹ Law did not accept it. Even as late as 20 November he refused to "believe Lloyd George's Nigerian assurances".¹⁰⁰ Law concluded that Lloyd George was trying to be "at the same time the right hand man to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition". He could not allow this to continue.¹⁰¹

As this suggests, Lloyd George's own position was unclear. He felt Carson's October 1915 resignation as a reproach, and subsequently regretted his own lack of resolution.¹⁰² He repeatedly praised Carson's courage, determination, and judgement.¹⁰³ He deplored the absence of

an opposition in the early part of the war, and admired Carson's leadership once one emerged.¹⁰⁴ He was "in the main in complete sympathy in his criticisms of the conduct of the War".¹⁰⁵ He had been tempted to join it, so that "together we might bring the Government down and replace it by a sounder and more energetic body".¹⁰⁶ He was certainly working with Carson to some degree in early November, but his main concern was with the conduct of the war and with gaining control of it from Robertson.¹⁰⁷ The generals had welcomed Lloyd George at the War Office because they believed that he would galvanize popular support for their war. But Lloyd George did not believe in their strategy of attrition on the Western Front, and refused to be "the butcher's boy who leads in the animals to be slaughtered...".¹⁰⁸ At a meeting of the War Committee on 3 November, held without Robertson, he seemed to have got support for a re-assertion of civilian control over strategy at an inter-allied conference to be held at Paris before the generals met at Chantilly. He hoped that this would "upset the appercart of the military people".¹⁰⁹ Then Robertson would be sent for a further conference in Russia. On 7 November, the C.I.G.S. learned of this from McKenna. He would have none of it. He was "out for a row without kid gloves on". Asquith, feeling that "Ll. G. is so erratic and changeable that too much attention must not be paid to him", began to withdraw his support, and delayed the political conference so that it would be held at the same time as the military one. Lloyd George would not be able to wrest control of strategy from the General Staff.¹¹⁰

The War Secretary had wanted above all to divert resources to the East. Robertson had reassured him that Romania was safe, as "... Hindenburg had not got the men and the passes were impregnable".¹¹¹ On the Allied side, the armies at Salonika were too weak to act, and could not be reinforced in time to mount a major offensive. Events in the second week of November falsified this analysis. Hindenburg had the men and got them through the passes just before winter closed them. An Allied push from Salonika took the Serbian city of Monastir. It seemed a text-book case of too little and too late.¹¹² Lloyd George was close to despair. The diary of Frances Stevenson, his secretary and mistress, repeatedly noted his struggles with depression, and even insomnia, to which he was not prone.¹¹³ Wild plans were repeatedly floated. He would resign and become a "food dictator". He would tour the Empire. He would break McKenna, his great rival in the Liberal Party.¹¹⁴ According to Frances Stevenson, he "is the only person whom D. [Lloyd

George] really detests".¹¹⁵ Years later, in his memoirs, Lloyd George would himself conclude that McKenna's "was the most active personal element in the disintegration of the Asquith Coalition".¹¹⁶

At one level, perhaps the most important, the difference between Lloyd George and McKenna was one of personality and temperament. McKenna's son would put it best: "A mind that saw everything in pictures clashed with one that saw everything in figures; emotion was brought daily to earth by calculation".¹¹⁷ Lloyd George dazzled most observers. Whether feared or admired, he was seen as a leader of vision and vigour. McKenna considered him a fraud. He "had shown great lack of judgement and steadiness of aim and had failed also in administration; had no persistence and no practical capacity...".¹¹⁸ They viewed the war differently. It was not, as is often suggested, that Lloyd George was resolute and McKenna faint-hearted. In May 1915, when the still Liberal cabinet had been told that "Essen might be completely destroyed by poison (i.e. all life there)", it was McKenna, not Lloyd George, who said, "then we ought to do it".¹¹⁹ Rather, McKenna was long-sighted. Great Britain's financial strength would tell in the end. It had to be husbanded, not just against Germany, but also against the United States, which was likely to emerge from the war "with all the money" and would become "the greatest power in the world".¹²⁰ Great Britain's chance of winning the war and maintaining its dominance in the world economy should not be compromised by an excessive and ill-considered diversion of resources into the military. Lloyd George's instinct was different. He was sensitive to public opinion, and concerned that it might not accept a long war. Before the Somme offensive he had insisted: "We have got to win the war and win it quickly. Far better temporarily to sacrifice our trade than to allow the war to drag on".¹²¹ In September, his famous "knock-out blow" interview with an American journalist was intended to forestall any attempt at mediation by President Wilson, who would eventually respond by applying economic pressure.¹²² Even before this happened, McKenna deplored the consequences for the Treasury and for the future. The men who cared for the army "don't want an indefinite war but a reasonable peace".¹²³ Lloyd George himself was beginning to realize that victory might not be swift, and that the country would have to plan for a prolonged war. He now thought that it might last into 1918, and "later on we may have to sacrifice our trade, but I think the time has not yet arrived".¹²⁴ Military and economic realities might eventually have forced the two men to adopt the same policies, but by November 1916 nothing could reconcile their personal antipathy.

As Lloyd George's quarrels with the generals undermined his appeal to those Conservatives who had looked to him as a potential organizer of victory, McKenna's star rose. At first he had seemed to embody much that they disliked in Liberalism. Selborne initially saw him as "a bigoted Cobdenite radical with a narrow technical mind, a manner singularly devoid of charm and the appearance of a cock-sparrow". Better acquaintance changed that impression. Beaverbrook later noted that the more he "infuriates you by his intellectual decision, the more you feel drawn to him personally". He felt that of all the Liberals with whom Bonar Law had to work, McKenna "became his closest and most intimate friend". Selborne's eventual judgement was that he did "his tremendous task pluckily and efficiently and with as small a proportion of blunders as anyone could expect".¹²⁵ His imposition of import duties on certain luxury articles, though justified as a war measure, showed that he was not unduly constrained by the orthodoxies of free trade. Good at flattery,¹²⁶ he began to cultivate the generals. His tightening links with Robertson threatened Lloyd George with political annihilation, especially as the C.I.G.S. was also backed by Lord Northcliffe, the press baron, who defended in *The Times* "the wisdom, and indeed the necessity, of the great attack which was begun in July", pointedly dismissed "the suggestion constantly put forward by intriguing critics that we have paid too high a price for the advantages we have won", and told the War Secretary that he would break him if he continued to interfere with strategy.¹²⁷ However, admiration for Robertson did not lead Northcliffe to support McKenna, whom he considered "neither able nor willing" to wind up quickly the German banks in the U.K., a task which he publicly offered to undertake himself.¹²⁸

Lloyd George in November 1916 had to act out of growing isolation and weakness. As Turner has suggested, he was probably more concerned to force out McKenna and Runciman than to displace Asquith.¹²⁹ Law could act from at least momentarily increased strength. Their intermediary was Max Aitken, who as Canadian military representative had a room in the War Office two doors down from Lloyd George.¹³⁰ He had been largely cut off from British domestic politics. The Nigeria Debate brought him back. He moved quickly to re-establish his position as Law's closest advisor, pushing aside his Parliamentary Private Secretary, Johnny Baird, whom he considered a fool, and Steel-Maitland, who was a personal enemy.¹³¹ In *Politicians and the War*, he emphasized his fear that Law might join Asquith in calling an election to defeat

the opposition. This would have wiped out "the salt of the Tory party, men most desperately anxious to win the war...", and would have established Asquith as a dictator. Only an alignment of Bonar Law with Lloyd George, and therefore with Carson, might foreclose this possibility and preserve the Conservative Party.¹³² Aitken would have been equally concerned with Lloyd George's future. Early on he probably concluded that, as he had agreed to leave the conduct of the war to the C.I.G.S. when he had taken up his position in June, the War Secretary could not win against Robertson backed by Northcliffe. Given the general discontent with the progress of the war, exacerbated by the rapid collapse of Romania in November, and the universal feeling that something had to be seen to be done, Asquith might have appeared a softer target than Robertson. The problem for Aitken was that Law, thinking as the leader of a political party, "desired to retain Asquith's personality as part of the machinery of Government", "believing that from the point of view of the conduct of the war... the control of the political machine was as essential as the preparation of big armies".¹³³ Throughout the crisis the Conservative leader's aim was to get the prime minister to take charge. Otherwise, he warned Asquith, he would "find himself placed in a humiliating position".¹³⁴ Asquith did not respond. After more than eight years at the top, he had become complacent. He had seen off many challenges, and felt sure of mastering this one easily. In the summer he had thought "a great deal" about retiring, "but I doubt our Unionist colleagues *can* form a Govt – I am sure they don't *want* to".¹³⁵ Lloyd George had repeatedly funk'd resignation. Carson's inadequacies were only too evident. Asquith's mistake was to ignore the appeals of one who he felt "had not the brains of a Glasgow baillie",¹³⁶ and "had been a very good iron master who had come into political life late, and had shown no qualities which entitled him to occupy a commanding position".¹³⁷ Law had to conclude: "It was quite evident that Mr. Asquith did not realize the seriousness of the position".¹³⁸

Getting no useful response from the prime minister, Law had to turn to Lloyd George and Carson. Although the latter initially agreed with Law that Asquith was essential to the government,¹³⁹ there is no doubt that he wanted Asquith out. Law was concerned with restoring the effectiveness of the government. By working for this he would recover his natural supporters from Carson, who would then count for little. While Law wanted Asquith to re-assert his authority, Lloyd George wanted him to relinquish it. He would set up "a War Council with autocratic

powers".¹⁴⁰ He did not intend to put Asquith in charge of it. There were arguments, put to him by Hankey in Paris on 14 November, that the prime minister as head of the government could not also preside over a war council which "ought to be in continuous session...".¹⁴¹ Lloyd George himself would eventually recall the precedents of Salisbury, Gladstone, and Liverpool.¹⁴² He forgot them when he became prime minister himself. That the crisis might lead to his own premiership was his in mind from the beginning. After his first meeting with Aitken and Carson he told Frances Stevenson: "Bonar Law thinks of resigning, & they came to ask him if, in the event of this, he would be willing to form a Ministry. He flatly refused".¹⁴³ As the crisis developed his attitude changed. John Grigg rightly points out that Lloyd George was "always more interested in power than in place...".¹⁴⁴ Nevertheless, his focus shifted during the crisis from seeking to enhance the powers of the War Secretary to gaining those of the prime minister. No ambitious politician is entirely indifferent to the premiership. Years later Hankey would tell C.P. Snow that Lloyd George was moved by "the consciousness of his great powers", but also because "he wanted the job".¹⁴⁵

H.A. Gwynne, editor of the High Tory *Morning Post*, a staunch friend and strong defender of the generals, was key to Lloyd George's transition. In mid October, he had thwarted, through the intervention of Asquith and Bonar Law, what he saw as the War Secretary's plot "to get the Army into the hollow of his hand...". He regretted that this had "given pleasure to the men whom I was least inclined to please, namely, McKenna, Runciman, and those whom I call – for lack of a better name – the Pacifist Group of the Cabinet". For all his faults, Gwynne felt that Lloyd George was "out to beat the Boche...", and "has the sense to see that his political career is bound up with victory". He pleaded with him: "why on earth can't you let the Army alone?"¹⁴⁶ Closer to the centre of power, Hankey feared a row leading either to Robertson's resignation, a military disaster, or Lloyd George's, a political one. He kept in touch with both men.¹⁴⁷ While putting a brave face on the Paris conference to his mistress,¹⁴⁸ Lloyd George had to recognize that it was a decisive victory for Robertson. He began "soft-peddalling his opposition to the generals' conduct of the war", thereby gaining the support of the *Morning Post* by 23 November and of the more cautious Robertson himself by 29 November.¹⁴⁹ The C.I.G.S. now contrasted Lloyd George's ability to make quick decisions, even if not always right, with the paralysis of the War Committee. He favoured "some arrangement which gave Mr. Lloyd

George greater power. He did not mean greater power to interfere with military operations, but greater power in the direction of war policy".¹⁵⁰

Robertson and the *Morning Post* changed tack largely because the possibility of a compromise peace had been raised in cabinet by Lord Lansdowne, a Conservative former Foreign Secretary. He had no support. Any peace negotiated at the end of 1916 would have had to recognize a "war map" which greatly favoured Germany, and would not have included the safeguards on which both Asquith and Grey publicly insisted. Nevertheless, McKenna had associated himself with the idea of a "reasonable peace", while Liberal intellectuals such as L.T. Hobhouse felt that Grey "represents a negotiated peace - to which... we shall ultimately be driven".¹⁵¹ Hankey told Lloyd George: "The best I had ever hoped for at any time was a draw in our favour and a favourable peace extracted by economic pressure". The War Secretary was not one of those who thought that economic strength might compensate for military weakness. He replied: "We are going to lose this war".¹⁵² With Woodrow Wilson now re-elected and ready to apply economic pressure against London, the generals rallied behind the advocate of the knock-out blow.¹⁵³ At last Lloyd George had a wind in his sails. To keep the support of Law he had to hold open the possibility that Asquith might accept a war council. Insisting on the inclusion of Carson was almost certainly intended to insure that he would not.¹⁵⁴ As long as Asquith remained in power, and Carson was the acknowledged leader of the Tory dissidents, he had to be neutralized by inclusion in the triumvirate, even though his competence for high office was doubted.¹⁵⁵ As a triumvir he would be Lepidus. A.J.P. Taylor has argued "he was taken for a ride".¹⁵⁶ If the coalition fell, another advocate of thorough might be chosen. This was Milner. He had been in all the cabals to get "the Government of this country into stronger hands". Personally lacking in charisma, he had a wider appeal than Carson. At the core were his men of the *Round Table*: F.S. Oliver, Geoffrey Robinson, Editor of *The Times*, Lionel Hitchens, and Robert Brand, but the dinner he attended on 23 November also included Eustace Percy of the Foreign Office, and Arthur Henderson, the Labour Leader and Paymaster General. His dinner with Oliver on 27 November, which agreed "that Lloyd George should smash, that Bonar Law should come out, and that a real fighting Government should be formed round Lloyd George, Carson, and Milner", also included Carson, General Wilson, Robinson, and the MP Waldorf Astor.¹⁵⁷ Retrospectively, he saw the crisis as a struggle between

“Men and Mandarins”, but felt that Law’s “*unexpected firmness*” which “certainly gave the *coup de grace* to Squiff..., resulted in the return of the old Unionist tail...”, rather than completely sloughing off “the old party skin”.¹⁵⁸ Once Asquith was out of the way, Milner would be brought into the War Cabinet instead of Carson, who would go to the Admiralty. Given these conflicting and changing aims, the negotiations between Law, Lloyd George, and Carson were difficult and prolonged, and considerably complicated by Law’s hesitancy and deference in Asquith’s presence. This is one of the most thoroughly studied topics in modern English political history. To follow it further in any detail, would take us too far from the themes of this book. In the end the decisive factor, as Law told the king, was that “he had come to the conclusion that he must decide between following Mr Asquith and Mr Lloyd George and, as he believed the latter would win the war before the former could do so, he had decided to follow Mr Lloyd George”.¹⁵⁹

THE NIGERIAN SALES

Instead, our concern now must be with the impact of the debate on the question which had sparked it, the impending sale of enemy property in Nigeria. The just drafted ordinance had been intended to provide a model for sales in the other colonies. The Colonial Office began to reconsider this, as “there was a strong feeling in favour of the resolution, and the debate largely turned on the special circumstances of Nigeria”. Adhering to the policy of allowing foreign buyers might lead “to the same outcry arising in regard to other territories...” Tennyson proposed a largely cosmetic change in the circular telegram to be sent to the other colonies. Sales “should only be to British subjects unless in any particular case local conditions make it desirable to include foreigners”. The C.O. was already committed to allowing foreigners to bid for the Sturzenegger properties in Malaya, “and it may not be thought desirable to exclude Americans from the West Indies”. Grindle conceded that neutrals had to be allowed into the Sturzenegger sale, but “they need not be allowed to bid for other properties, even in the S[traits] S[ettlements]”. Steel-Maitland would not accept even that much. The Office ran “the risk of serious trouble” over Sturzenegger. Instead, the colonial government should hold the properties “and *lease* them on the most advantageous terms”.¹⁶⁰

The Under Secretary was in fact deeply worried about his own political position. As a Milnerite he could be accused of having betrayed their

cause. He moved quickly to reassure "His Excellency" and his closest followers, F.S. Oliver and Geoffrey Robinson. He called Carson unfair. Existing rules did not bar an immediate transfer to an alien. The more firms, the more difficult to sustain a ring. Milner should not "think, misled by ignorant or disingenuous speeches that I had ever weakened in the least degree myself". Rather, "day in and day out, I have done every mortal thing I can to strengthen the National position". He had done his best for the Ulster cause; he was pressing for a policy whereby aliens might hold land only under licence; he had forced out from the Gold Coast the Basel Mission, a largely German body which was also a substantial commercial enterprise. Oliver's response was not entirely reassuring. While acknowledging that Steel-Maitland and Law had had the better of the argument, nevertheless "the impression remains with me that sound policy, somehow or other, was on the side of Carson and his followers". The country would take that view, "and I think it will be right". The government was now "weaker 'in itself' (as the charwoman says)...; only it is like a pumpkin – although the inside is rotten the rind looks quite firm until somebody touches it with his foot; but when he does the foot will go through into the mess". A subsequent, more carefully considered letter pointed to pent-up anger and contempt against the "non-government", against "Squiff", against the Unionist leaders "who consent to be mesmerised and paralysed...", and against Law "because he has failed in making action prevail over sloth & sophistry & procrastination...". Although least deserving of censure, Steel-Maitland was the chief victim of this wider distrust of the government. Nevertheless, confidence in him among those who knew, including Carson, was unshaken.¹⁶¹

While Steel-Maitland urged retreat, Law again stood firm. He did not "think it desirable to stop the admission of foreigners to the Sturzenegger sale...". He endorsed the change in the circular telegram proposed by his officials,¹⁶² but the Nigerian sales would go ahead as scheduled on 14–16 November. His major problem was over Jurgens. In the debate Dalziel had revealed that they had been fined for trading with the enemy.¹⁶³ Subsequent investigation showed that this had been for a technical offence in 1915. Since then a British control procedure had been effective and had prevented any recurrence. As already noted, the C.O. had approved their hiring Birtwistle as being in the public interest. However, in the new climate of opinion the Colonial Secretary and his senior officials felt that Jurgens could not be allowed to compete.¹⁶⁴ At Law's suggestion on 14 November Aitken communicated with

Slaughter and May, saw Burrowes, and asked Bell of the Colonial Bank to go to the sale and buy any properties which appeared to be going to foreigners.¹⁶⁵ Thus began his direct involvement in the process which would lead to the change of government.

For blocking Jurgens it would seem to have been a work of supererogation. In the process of plugging the holes, which the Colonial Office had begun on the eve of the debate, it had been decided to set the upper limit of enemy holdings of a bidder's shares at 10%.¹⁶⁶ Much of Jurgens's capital was in the form of shares marked "bearer", the usual practice in the Netherlands. These had initially been sold to four Dutch banks. On the eve of the auction, Jurgens, although practically certain that they had not breached the limit, could not make the definite statement which was required. They had to withdraw. Harding considered this "a pity, as delaying their establishment in Nigeria", but Tennyson felt that in light of the earlier fine they could not have been allowed to compete, whatever arrangement might have been made as to the holding of capital.¹⁶⁷ Anton Jurgens himself remarked that he "never had the slightest doubt but that we were being dealt with fairly by the Government... it is really very bad luck".¹⁶⁸ He could hardly have felt this had his firm's exclusion been brought about by Aitken's last minute intervention.

Jurgens apart, the only excluded purchaser was the Lebanese, Ferris George. He was linked with Overmanns, who were ready to act as his agent. Not even Harding advised allowing "friendly enemies" such as Syrians, Armenians, and Alsations to compete, and Tennyson felt it would "be rather courting attack to make any further amendment of the dft in favour of the enemy". Eventually Burrowes judged that George had to be considered a Turkish subject, and barred his bids.¹⁶⁹ While we know who eventually got the properties, we do not know whom they were bidding against. In September, it had been believed that the Colonial Bank would bid for Lagos properties, but it got none at the auction.¹⁷⁰ At the end of October *The Times* reported that while the sale was likely to be a great success, "it does not seem to have appealed to purely British firms to the extent which was desired".¹⁷¹ This implies that foreign firms were interested. As *The Times* was then actively trying to encourage bids from British firms outside the Ring, and as Jurgens had not yet been excluded, the statement does not by itself show that these were German-American. At the meeting between the Association of West African Merchants and the officials of the C.O. on 10 October, Burrowes had been reported as saying that "so far not a single enquiry

had been received from an American firm".¹⁷² After the sales, *The Times* reported that neutral interests had been strongly represented. The high prices the properties fetched, even without Jurgens's participation, suggest that there may indeed have been German-American bidders, and that they were outbid.¹⁷³ The eleven Lagos sites were sold on the first day for a total of £268,500. Of these, seven, worth £228,750, were bought by Elder Dempster, and the firms of the combine. Only two of the remaining four properties were significant: London and Kano bought the main Gaiser site in Campos Street for £20,500, and the Manchester Co-operative Wholesale Society bought the Witt und Büsch site at the corner of Marina and Tinubu Street for £13,250. The latter was the only major new firm to enter the Nigeria trade as a result of the sales.¹⁷⁴ Of the last two properties, Crombie Steedman, which was already established in the Gold Coast, bought a Gaiser site in Campos Street for £1000, and Peter Thomas bought the Jackel site at the corner of Williams Street and Market Street for £5000. The eight non-Lagos sites worth £30,750 also sold on the first day were all purchased by the combine firms or by the Niger Company. Twenty-one sites were sold on the second day for £70,270, all to Niger Company or to the combine. The remainder of the sites and the trade marks sold on the third day fetched £14,154/10/-. Almost all went to the combine. Only two were worth more than £2000, but one of these, a Gaiser site in Kano, went to Peter Thomas for £2100.

The main problem on the third day was the trade marks. These had been a great concern for the Colonial Office involving it in complicated discussions with the Board of Trade and W. Temple Franks, the Comptroller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks. According to British law trade marks could not be sold independently of the goodwill of the firm or firms with which they were connected. European manufacturing and exporting companies might share rights in the marks with the trading concerns, and, given that the policy was still formally one of liquidation rather than confiscation, those rights might not be ignored. On the other hand, the marks had recognition in Nigeria, where some, but only a few, of them were registered. As well as being valuable in themselves, their possession would enhance the value of the sites. Therefore the Colonial Office wanted to include as many as possible in the sale. It had eventually to concede that marks could not be sold where a company in enemy territory shared the rights in them.¹⁷⁵ However, the most important, Gaiser's "Eagle" mark, involved a firm in Great Britain, Albrechts, which had been run under control, but was now being

liquidated. This mark was estimated to be worth more than £20,000, which made it more valuable than all but a handful of properties in the sale.¹⁷⁶ The C.O. hoped that Burrowes might reach an agreement with the liquidator.¹⁷⁷ Instead, just before the auction began, the liquidator sold Albrechts's British rights in the mark for £150 to John Walkden, a firm which had been closely connected both with Albrechts and with Gaiser. Burrowes agreed with the Patent Office that this sale was "open to grave suspicion". The Colonial Office was outraged. Tennyson minuted that the liquidator had "treated us as though we were a rival business firm...". Law directed that the "Eagle" should be withdrawn from the sale, but it is not clear whether this was in fact done.¹⁷⁸

Only nine trade marks were put up for auction on 16 November. The solicitor for the Liverpool firms and for the Niger Company argued against their inclusion in the sale. Burrowes defended it, but the Liverpool firms did not bid. Instead the marks were divided up between Walkden and G.B. Ollivant for a total price of £330. Clearly there had been some arrangement. Pedler says that this was reached between Arthur Walkden and Thomas Cottrell of Ollivants "while the sale was in progress...".¹⁷⁹ There is no explanation as to why the other firms allowed this to go ahead¹⁸⁰ or made no subsequent protest.

As Harding noted, the auction had been "a 'glorious victory' for the Ring & Elder Dempster & Co. in their attempt to corner the sites & keep out their competitors, but it has been a dear one".¹⁸¹ How dear it was may be shown by the Woermann sites in Lagos which the Colonial Office thought worth £31,000 in 1916, but which sold for three times that sum. Nor was it only Lagos properties which fetched unexpectedly high prices. Oil Nuts, aware that it could not outbid the combine or wealthy neutrals in an open contest, approached the Colonial Office with an offer of £7500 for the Gaiser site in Opobo, which it considered to be £2500 over the value of the property. The C.O. could not consider this.¹⁸² At the auction it went to a combine firm, African Traders, for £12,500. In his report Burrowes concluded that the properties and the marks would have sold for much more if Jurgens had been allowed to bid, nevertheless they "fetched a sum far in excess of that which I had hoped to realize by selling in London".¹⁸³ While individual Ring or combine firms took over most of the properties, they transferred three of the Lagos sites and most of the station plots to a newly formed British Nigeria Company.¹⁸⁴ For the Niger Company this was close to the last straw. A year later Trigge looked back to:

The Enemy Properties fiasco in October 1916 [which] demonstrated how impossible it is to get the West African Trade to work together in unity. The high prices paid for the Properties, the embittering of the wealthy Dutch Margarine Manufacturers against the West African Trade, the pooling of the purchases against Merchants and the formation of the British Nigeria C., Ltd. are now matters to be remembered only as object lessons of what not to do in the future.¹⁸⁵

NOTES

1. *The Outlook*, 11 Nov. 1916. A selection of newspaper cuttings is preserved in the Steel-Maitland papers GD193/93/1. The account of the debate is taken from these and from *HC Debs* 5 series, vol. 87, cols. 249–368. References will be made only for direct quotations. References to *HC Debs* will cite columns only.
2. *Daily Express*, 9 Nov. 1916.
3. At one time or another the Coalition government included four past or future prime ministers (Balfour, Lloyd George, Law, and Churchill), six foreign secretaries (Lansdowne, Balfour, Curzon, Chamberlain, Henderson, and Simon), six chancellors of the exchequer (Chamberlain, Asquith, Lloyd George, Law, Churchill, and Simon), two viceroys of India (Lansdowne and Curzon), and four Nobel Prize winners (Chamberlain, Cecil, Henderson, and Churchill).
4. Diary entry, 10 Mar. 1916, in George, Lord Riddell, *Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914–1918*, London, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, n.d. (1933), p. 162. Lloyd George said much the same thing, Riddell diary, 26 Nov. 1916, *ibid.*, p. 223.
5. Sir Robert Donald (Editor, *Daily Chronicle*) note, 24 Nov. 1916, in H.A. Taylor, *Robert Donald, Being the Authorized Biography of Sir Robert Donald, G.B.E., L.L.D., Journalist, Editor and Friend of Statesmen*, London, Stanley Paul, n.d. [1934], p. 109.
6. Hankey diary 10 Nov. 1916 in *Id.*, *The Supreme Command 1914–1918*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1961, vol. 2, p. 557.
7. Asquith to Sylvia Henley (confidante) 16 Aug. 1916, quoted in Martin Farr, *Reginald McKenna, Financier Among Statesmen, 1863–1916*, New York, Routledge, 2008, p. 332.
8. Michael & Eleanor Brock, eds., *Margot Asquith's Great War Diary 1914–1916, The View from Downing Street*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. cxxxvi.
9. Diary entry, 4 Nov. 1916, in John Vincent (ed.), *The Crawford Papers, The Journals of David Lindsay Twenty-Seventh Earl of Crawford and*

- Tenth Earl of Balcarres 1871–1940 During the Years 1892 to 1940*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1984, p. 353.
10. Chamberlain to Lord Chelmsford 8 Dec. 1916, cited in M & E Brock (eds.), *Margot Asquith's Great War Diary*, p. cxliii.
 11. Hobhouse to Scott 2 Dec. 1916, in Trevor Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott 1911–1928*, London, Collins, 1970, p. 242.
 12. Harcourt cabinet diary, 13 Oct. 1915, uncatalogued LHP.
 13. This was Lloyd George's final judgement, David Lloyd George, *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, vol. 1, London, Odhams Press, n.d. (1938), p. 609. For C.P. Scott's illuminating comparison between Carson and the Irish Nationalist, John Dillon, Scott, diary entry, 13–20 Apr. 1916, Trevor Wilson (ed.), *The Political Diaries of C.P. Scott 1911–1928*, London, Collins, p. 202.
 14. Scott diary, 9–10 May, 13–17 June 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, pp. 205, 220.
 15. Compton Mackenzie, *Greek Memories*, London, Cassell, 1932, pp. 401–02. Mackenzie's interview with Carson had been arranged through the initiative of R.M. Burrows, the Principal of King's College, London.
 16. John Stubbs, "The Impact of the Great War on the Conservative Party", in Gillian Peele & Chris Cooke (eds.), *The Politics of Reappraisal 1918–1939*, p. 27; *The Times*, 4 Nov. 1916.
 17. Andrew Marrison, *British Business and Protection 1903–1932*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996, pp. 223–36; John Turner, *British Politics and the War, Coalition and Conflict 1916–1918*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 84.
 18. Nigel Keohane, *The Party of Patriotism, The Conservative Party and the First World War*, Farnham, Ashgate, 2010, p. 48.
 19. W.A.S. Hewins, *Apologia of an Imperialist, Forty Years of Empire Policy*, London, Constable, vol. 2, pp. 79–80, 94, diary entry, 22 Nov. 1916 (quotation).
 20. *Ibid.*, p. 95, diary entry, 8 Dec. 1916 (quotation), vol. 1, pp. 10–11.
 21. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 69, diary entry, 14 Apr. 1916.
 22. *Ibid.*, pp. 94–95, diary entries 22 Nov. & 4 Dec. 1916.
 23. *Ibid.*, pp. 89–90, diary entry, 6 Oct. 1916.
 24. *Ibid.*, p. 93, diary entry, 3 Nov. 1916.
 25. *Ibid.*, pp. 95–96, diary entry, 8 Dec. 1916.
 26. Lord Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, London, Archon Books, 1968 (1928 & 1932), p. 88, Robert Blake, *The Unknown Prime Minister*, London, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955, p. 298. The one historian who clearly recognizes the weakness of the motion is Stubbs, "Impact of the Great War", p. 29.

27. Robert J. Scally, *The Origins of the Lloyd George Coalition, The Politics of Social Imperialism 1900–1918*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, p. 320.
28. For how it was remembered a generation later by a strong free-trader, W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 2, *Problems of Economic Policy 1918–1939*, part 1, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 115–18.
29. Ibid., pp. 109–10, David Killingray, "The Empire Resources Development Committee and West Africa 1916–20", *J.I.C.H.* 10 (1981–1982), pp. 202–03.
30. Col. 362.
31. Blake, *Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 298.
32. *Liverpool Post and Mercury*, 9 Nov. 1916.
33. "From Sir C. Ilbert to L.H. on Front Bench H[.] of C. During Carson's and Bonar Law's speeches on Nigerian Enemy property sales debate 8–11–16", Harcourt diary 1916, uncatalogued LHP.
34. Cols. 249–59, *Liverpool Post and Mercury*, 9 Nov. 1916.
35. Col. 258, *The Outlook*, 11 Nov. 1916.
36. Cols. 267–78, *Liverpool Post & Mercury*, 9 Nov. 1916. For the heckling, *The Scotsman* and *The Times* s.d.
37. Cols. 297–304, quotations at cols. 297, 299. *The Outlook* claimed that Higham was the only speaker to profess personal knowledge of Nigeria. In fact, Bigland, took "the same credit to myself" (col. 314). He was speaking close to 8:00 p.m. The prandial part of the debate was not well reported.
38. So Carson claimed, col. 350.
39. *Daily Mail*, 9 Nov. 1916.
40. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 294.
41. Cols. 284–91, quotations at cols. 266, 287, 288. For the Liberal War Committee, Peter Yearwood & Cameron Hazlehurst, "Distant Dependency", p. 400.
42. *Morning Post*, 10 Nov. 1916, Yearwood & Hazlehurst, "The Affairs of a Distant Dependency", *The Nigeria Debate and the Premiership 1916 Twentieth Century British History* 12.4 (2001), p. 421. When Lloyd George's government was formed in December, the Palace considered Mond's accent a barrier to his appointment as First Commissioner of Works. John Grigg, *Lloyd George From Peace to War 1912–1916*, London, Methuen, 1985, p. 485.
43. *The Scotsman's* Private London Correspondent even charged that after Steel-Maitland's speech the government did nothing for five hours. *The Scotsman*, 9 Nov. 1916.
44. Cols. 278–84, quotation at col. 284.

45. Cols. 292–97. Sir Henry Dalziel claimed that “not one speaker has ventured to defend the [government’s] policy and... position...”. Someone interjected “Pollock”. Dalziel remarked that “he made his qualifications”. (col. 338).
46. Cols. 332–35, quotations at cols. 333, 334.
47. Col. 309.
48. *Financial Times*, 10 Nov. 1916.
49. *The Scotsman*, 10 & 9 (quotation) 1916.
50. Rt Hon. Charles Hobhouse (Lib., Bristol East), col. 338.
51. This was first mentioned by Mond (col. 288), then was strongly urged by Hewins (col. 306) and backed by Henderson (col. 307), Butcher (Cons., York, cols. 310–11), Mason (Lib., Coventry, col. 312), Bigland (col. 319), Wiles (cols. 327–28), Hobhouse (col. 337), and Greenwood (col. 344); Wilson Fox in *The Times*, 7 Nov., *Daily Mail*, 8 Nov. 1916.
52. Cols. 343–46, quotation at col. 344.
53. Col. 343.
54. Cols. 346–54, quotations at cols. 346, 348, 351, 354.
55. *Yorkshire Observer*, 9 Nov. 1916.
56. Cols. 355–64.
57. F.G. Bailey, *Stratagems and Spoils, A Social Anthropology of Politics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1969, p. 103.
58. Quotations at cols. 355, 355, 354.
59. *Yorkshire Observer*, 9 Nov. 1916.
60. *Liverpool Post & Mercury*, 9 Nov. 1916.
61. 10 Nov. 1916.
62. *Westminster Gazette*, 9 Nov. 1916. Papers such as the *Morning Post* (10 Nov.), *The Financial Times* (10 Nov.), and *The Outlook* (11 Nov.) which deplored the result, did not claim that Carson had won the debate. The best the *Morning Post* could do was to assert that Law lost more in the country than he had gained in the House.
63. Col. 364.
64. Scott diary (discussion with John Dillon) 20–22 Nov. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 239.
65. *The Scotsman* judged that Churchill “has sunk to a condition of political recklessness and is anxious only to irritate his former colleagues”. 9 Nov. 1916. Edgar Wallace, the journalist and popular novelist, said his concern was: “He doesn’t care how he gets back so long as he makes it”. To John Booth 13 Nov. 1916 in Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill*, vol. 3, *Companion*, part 2, *Documents May 1915–December 1916*, London, Heinemann, 1972, p. 1582.
66. Yearwood & Hazlehurst, “Distant Dependency”, pp. 426–27.
67. Hewins diary, 10 Nov. 1916, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 427.

68. Scott diary, 20–22 Nov. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 235.
69. 10 Nov. 1916.
70. 11 Nov. 1916.
71. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 288. Beaverbrook dated this pledge to the formation of the Coalition. He was corrected in Peter Fraser, "Lord Beaverbrook's Fabrications in *Politicians and the War 1914–1916*", *HJ* 25.1 (1982), p. 150.
72. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 289, cf. Blake, *Unknown Prime Minister*, p. 298. Fraser disputes this, calling the debate "an attempt to invoke this pledge" which few backbenchers could have forgotten. "Lord Beaverbrook's Fabrications", p. 151.
73. See above, p. 184.
74. Carson criticized this in the debate, cols. 346–47.
75. Scott diary, 20–22 Nov. 1916 (discussion with Dillon), Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 239.
76. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 294.
77. *Morning Post*, 10 Nov. 1916: "The threat was only too effective".
78. *Yorkshire Observer*, 9 Nov. 1916, *The Scotsman*, s.d.
79. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 333.
80. Hankey diary, 3 Dec. 1916, quoted in Turner, *British Politics and the Great War*, p. 102.
81. Scott diary, 23 Feb. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 184.
82. Riddell diary, 7 Nov. 1915, *War Diary*, p. 135.
83. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, pp. 611 (1st quotation), 605 (2nd quotation). Lloyd George sat next to Law in cabinet, diagram 27 May 1915, Harcourt diary, uncatalogued, LHP.
84. Trevor Wilson, *The Downfall of the Liberal Party 1914–1935*, London, Collins, 1968, illustration 1, following p. 224. The original appeared in the *Sunday Times*.
85. Following Beaverbrook, historians like to recall this as "the first time Bonar Law, Lloyd George and Carson had worked together as a team", *Politicians and the War*, p. 272. It was hardly an auspicious precedent.
86. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
87. Donald note, 1 Dec. 1916, in H.A. Taylor, *Robert Donald*, London, Stanley, Paul, n.d. (1934), p. 115, cf. Law's retrospective account of 29 Dec. 1916 in *ibid.*, p. 124.
88. Nigel Keohane, *The Party of Patriotism, The Conservative Party and the First World War*, Farnham, Surrey, Ashgate, 2010, p. 49, cf. Stubbs, "Impact of the Great War", p. 29.
89. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, pp. 294–96.
90. For the depth of front bench hostility to Carson, Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 366, Lt. Col. W. Houghton Gastrell to

- Steel-Maitland 10 Nov. 1916 (quotation), SMP, GD193/93/1. Gastrell believed that illness alone could explain Carson's actions. Carson was indeed acutely concerned about his health. Scott diary 13–20 Apr. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 201, Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 298.
91. Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 223 (quotation), Cassar, *Asquith as War Leader*, pp. 210–11.
 92. Riddell diary 1 Oct. 1916, *War Diary*, p. 213.
 93. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 314, describing a discussion with Lloyd George on 13 Nov. 1916.
 94. Riddell diary, 26 Nov. 1916, *Lord Riddell's War Diary 1914–1918*, London, Ivor Nicholson & Watson, n.d. (1933), p. 323. Rather than the Nigeria Debate, which he had missed, Lloyd George may have been thinking of the secret session of the House on 25 Apr. 1916. Harcourt, up to this point bitterly hostile to the man who had displaced him at the Colonial Office, recorded Law's speech in considerable detail and noted: "Very loud cheers at the end of B.L.'s speech which is the best I have ever heard him make". His diary's contemptuous comments cease at this point. Harcourt diary, uncatalogued, LHP.
 95. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, pp. 330–33.
 96. At the War Committee meeting of 9 Nov., Lloyd George "volunteered the statement" to Law "that he had been paired". *Ibid.*, p. 302.
 97. *The Times*, 6 Nov. 1916.
 98. *Ibid.*, p. 301. On the proofs of *Politicians and the War*, Lloyd George wrote, "Not a word was said about the Nigerian debate and I knew nothing about it." A.J.P. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1972, p. 110. The belief that Lloyd George dined with Carson before the Nigeria Debate has been curiously persistent. It is restated by Adams, *Bonar Law*, p. 225. Beaverbrook's published account (*Politicians and the War*, p. 301) does say that Lloyd George dined that "night" at Lee's house, where several meetings had already taken place between him Carson, and Milner, and that they had met in the "evening". On Beaverbrook's proof Lloyd George wrote: "I was dining with Sir Arthur Lee. Carson happened to be there" (Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 110). The natural reading of this is that Carson was present in the evening while Lloyd George dined with Lee. However, while Lloyd George missed the debate, Carson did not. The debate began shortly after four. Carson made his first interjection well before five (col. 259). "Evening" must be taken with reference to the sun rather than to the clock, or to mealtime. Lloyd George's statement must be construed that he was due to dine with Lee and that Carson and Milner were present when he arrived. Carson left before dinner. Whether Milner stayed or left is not recorded.

99. Beaverbrook wrote: "Lloyd George has always persistently denied that he refrained of set purpose from taking part in the division". *Politicians and the War*, p. 301. This is exactly how a newspaperman would report something he does not credit. Yearwood & Hazlehurst ("Distant Dependency", p. 430), assert that Lloyd George's "recollected ignorance about the debate is plausible". That he was preoccupied with his struggle with the generals is certain, that Carson never mentioned that he was leaving to steer a debate that he expected to bring down the government is unlikely. I have had to change my mind.
100. Even though they were backed up by Carson, Beaverbrook, *Politicians & the War*, pp. 342–43.
101. Hankey diary, 9 Nov. 1916, in Id., *Supreme Command*, vol. 2, p. 557. Aitken repeated the remark to McKenna shortly afterwards. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 302.
102. John Grigg, *Lloyd George: From Peace to War 1912–1916*, London, Methuen, 1985, p. 317, Riddell diary, 5 Dec. 1915, *War Diary*, p. 142.
103. Stevenson diary, 8 Feb. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, p. 96, Riddell diary, 15 June, 30 July 1916, *War Diary*, pp. 190, 205–06.
104. Riddell diary, 5 Jan., 13 Apr. 1916, *War Diary*, pp. 146, 171.
105. Lloyd George draft memo for Asquith 17 June 1916 in Id., *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 458.
106. Ibid. 15 June 1916, p. 190. Lloyd George chose instead to accept the War Office. While praising Carson's judgement, he did not follow it and "stipulate for full powers".
107. The treatment of this topic largely follows that of David R. Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, Newark, NJ, University of Delaware Press, 1983.
108. Scott diary 20–22 Nov. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 238, Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War* (account of discussion with Lloyd George 13 Nov. 1916, quotation), p. 320.
109. Stevenson diary, 4 Nov. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, p. 121.
110. David R. Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, Newark, NJ, 1983, pp. 118–21, quotations at pp. 120, 121, cf. George H. Cassar, *Asquith as War Leader*, London, Hambledon Press, 1994, pp. 202–04.
111. Riddell diary, 29 Oct. 1916, *War Diary*, p. 217.
112. Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, p. 113.
113. Stevenson diary, 10, 13 Nov. 1916, A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George, A Diary by Frances Stevenson* London, Hutchinson, 1971, pp. 121, 122. Much later Lloyd George told the writer C.P. Snow that he "had been kept awake by a public care only once in his career". Snow lacked the nerve to ask, but suspected "it might have been the political coup in 1916". C.P. Snow, *Variety of Men*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1969 (1967), p. 106.

114. Stevenson diary, 10, 21, & 21 Nov. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, pp. 121, 125, 126; Hankey diary, 11 Nov. 1916 in Id., *Supreme Command*, vol. 2, p. 557.
115. Stevenson diary, 31 Oct. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, p. 120.
116. Lloyd George, *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 447.
117. Stephen McKenna, "Reginald McKenna", in *Dictionary of National Biography 1941–1950*, Oxford, 1959, p. 553.
118. Scott diary, 23 Feb. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 185.
119. Harcourt, cabinet diary 4 May 1915, uncatalogued, LHP.
120. Farr, *McKenna*, citing what McKenna told Repington *The Times's* military correspondent on 19 Oct. 1916, p. 330.
121. Riddell diary 13 Apr. 1916, *War Diary*, p. 172.
122. The interview is reprinted with full commentary in Grigg, *Lloyd George*, pp. 423–34. For a somewhat different analysis, Peter J. Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace, The League of Nations in British Policy 1914–1925*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 29–32.
123. Scott diary, 2–3 Oct. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 228.
124. Riddell diary, 5 Oct. 1916, *War Diary*, p. 214.
125. Selborne memo June 1916 quoted in Farr, *McKenna*, p. 324 (1st & 4th quotations); Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, pp. 149–50 (2nd & 3rd quotations). Beaverbrook's statement about the intimacy between McKenna and Law has been ignored by later historians. Adams has nothing to say at all about McKenna while he was a member of the Asquith coalition. Like Bonar Law, McKenna was an avid and excellent bridge player.
126. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 149.
127. *The Times*, 4 Nov. 1916 (quotations), Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 323, Stevenson diary, 18 Nov. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, p. 125. Stephen Koss (*The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain*, vol. 2, *The Twentieth Century*, London, Hamish Hamilton, 1984, p. 296), claims that on 7 Nov. 1916 *The Times* hailed Lloyd George as "a great driving force and an invaluable leader of democracy in war". This is, in fact, Koss's own summary of an article in the *Düsseldorfer Generalanzeiger* reported by *The Times's* Amsterdam correspondent.
128. Northcliffe to McKenna, 9 Nov., *The Times*, 11 Nov. 1916.
129. Turner, *British Politics*, p. 138.
130. Beaverbrook's *Politicians and the War* is the acknowledged basis of all subsequent histories. Lloyd George pointedly deferred to it in his memoirs. *War Memoirs*, vol. 1, p. 386. The best account from Lloyd George's point of view is Grigg, *Lloyd George*, pp. 435–74. Taylor's *Beaverbrook* is valuable in that it also uses Beaverbrook's original draft and the comments which several of the actors made on it.

131. Yearwood & Hazlehurst, "Distant Dependency", p. 429.
132. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, pp. 309–11, quotation at p. 310.
133. Ibid., pp. 330–31, 333–35, quotations at p. 334.
134. Bonar Law memo 29 Dec. 1916 in Taylor, *Robert Donald*, pp. 128–30.
135. Harcourt cabinet diary, 24 July 1916, uncatalogued, LHP.
136. Asquith had made this remark to Lloyd George shortly before the crisis. Lloyd George prided himself on not repeating it to Law. Stevenson diary, 27 Nov. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, p. 129.
137. Donald note, 7 Dec. 1916, in Taylor, *Robert Donald*, p. 110.
138. Law memo 29 Dec. 1916 in ibid., p. 130.
139. Ibid., p. 129.
140. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, p. 314, account of discussion with Lloyd George on 13 Nov. 1916.
141. Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, p. 122.
142. Scott diary, 2–5 Dec. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 243.
143. Stevenson diary, 14 Nov. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, p. 123. According to his later account, Beaverbrook felt that by that date "it appeared clear that if events took their course Bonar Law would have to resign under the pressure of Carson, and would bring the Government down with him...". *Politicians and the War*, p. 313.
144. Grigg, *Lloyd George*, pp. 441–42.
145. Snow, *Variety of Men*, p. 116.
146. Gwynne to General Sir Henry Rawlinson (Commander, 4th Army) 11 Oct. (1st quotation), & 17 Oct., to Lloyd George 11 Oct. (5th quotation), to Robertson s.d., to Asquith s.d., to Sir Philip Sassoon (private secretary to Sir Douglas Haig) 19 Oct. (2nd & 3rd quotations), to General Sir Henry Wilson (Corps commander on Western Front) 25 Oct. 1916 (4th quotation), in Keith Wilson (ed.), *The Rasp of War, The Letters of H.A. Gwynne to The Countess Bathurst 1914–1918*, London, Sidgwick and Jackson, 1988, pp. 191–98.
147. Hankey diary, 10 Nov. 1916, in Id., *Supreme Command*, p. 557.
148. Stevenson diary, 18 Nov. 1916, Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George*, p. 124.
149. Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, pp. 123–24, 126, quotation at p. 124. For Robertson's caution, to Gwynne 18 Nov. 1916 in Wilson (ed.), *Rasp of War*, p. 201.
150. Donald note, 24 Nov. 1916, in Taylor, *Robert Donald*, p. 110.
151. For McKenna, above pp. 178–79, Hobhouse to Scott 2 Dec. 1916, Wilson (ed.), *Political Diaries*, p. 241.
152. Hankey diary, 9 Nov. 1916 in Id., *Supreme Command*, vol. 2, p. 557.
153. The analysis largely follows that of Woodward, *Lloyd George and the Generals*, pp. 124–26.
154. Wilson, *Downfall of the Liberal Party*, p. 102.

155. For instance, by Hankey. Diary account of lunch with Lloyd George 22 Nov. 1916, in Hankey, *Supreme Command*, vol. 2, p. 564. For Law's perception of his need to neutralize Carson, Donald note, 1 Dec. 1916 in Taylor, *Robert Donald*, p. 115.
156. Taylor, *Beaverbrook*, p. 110.
157. Wilson (ed.), *Rasp of War*, pp. 201–3, Milner to Gwynne 27 Nov. 1916 (1st quotation, a p. 202), 205 (citing General Wilson from Dawson MS, 2nd quotation).
158. Milner to Lady Edward Cecil 8 Dec. 1916 quoted in H. Montgomery Hyde, *Carson, The Life of Sir Edward Carson, Lord Carson of Duncairn*, London, Constable, 1974, p. 412.
159. Quoted in Harold Nicolson, *George V, His Life and Reign*, London, Pan Books, 1967 (1952), p. 379.
160. Mins. by Tennyson 11 Nov. (1st–4th quotations), Grindle 13 Nov. (5th quotation), & Steel-Maitland 15 Nov. 1916 (6th quotation), CO323/726/51252. The amended ordinance was finally sent to Lugard (desp. 14) on 2 Jan. 1917, CO583/53/57806.
161. Steel-Maitland to Milner 9 Nov. (carbon copy, 1st quotation), Oliver to Steel-Maitland 10 Nov. (2nd–4th quotations), & s.d. (5th & 6th quotations), SMP, GD193/93/1.
162. Tennyson min. 23 Nov. 1916, CO323/726/51252. Singapore was eventually told that the Schmidt, Kustermann holdings “should be regarded as an exception from the general rule that only British subjects should be allowed to become purchasers of the permanent assets of enemy firms in liquidation”, to Young tel. 23, 19 Jan. 1917, CO885/25/5/81.
163. *HC Debs* 5 series, vol. 87, col. 342.
164. The documents relating to Jurgens are in CO583/52/54600 (which includes a Board of Trade memo of 14 Nov. 1916), and in CO583/53/54126,54564. The last file includes the War Trade Intelligence Department memo of 13 Nov. 1916. For Birtwistle see above, p. 172.
165. Beaverbrook, *Politicians and the War*, pp. 328–29.
166. See above, pp. 185–86.
167. Jurgens to Burrowes 13 Nov., Harding & Tennyson mins. 14 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54564.
168. Charles Wilson, *The History of Unilever* vol. 2, London, Cassell, 1954, p. 160.
169. Overmann to C.O. 9 Nov., Harding & Tennyson mins. 10 Nov., Harding min. 24 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/53913. George would have been a major bidder, the three properties he wanted were sold for £31,750.

170. Trigge to Scarbrough 1 Sept. 1916, MSS Afr. s. 86, NCP. Instead they leased premises from David Taylor, see above, p. 149.
171. *The Times*, 27 Oct. 1916, clipping in CO583/52/50161.
172. Harding min. 11 Oct. 1916, CO583/53/47412.
173. The details of the sales come from collating five lists: the Schedule of Immovable Property vested in the Receiver attached to the draft Ordinance, CO583/48/41329; the Particulars of Sale as reported by Burrowes 18 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/55481; *The Times*, 15, 16, & 17 Nov. 1916; the auditors' reports on the sales covered by Boyle desp. 30, 6 Jan. 1919, CO583/72/5335, Boyle desp. 76, 22 Jan., Moorhouse desp. 141, 8 Feb. 1919, CO583/73/10043, 13284; and Trigge to Scarbrough 7 Oct. 1918, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86. There are minor discrepancies between these lists, but no doubt at all about any of the major properties. A full list is provided in Appendix III.
174. For the Society's involvement in the British end of the margarine trade, see above pp. 89–90, n. 110.
175. Harding min. 21 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/50309.
176. In the debate Scott said that bids of over £20,000 were expected for some of the trade marks. *HC Debs* 5 series, vol. 87, col. 256. The "Eagle" was "the most valuable of the textile trade marks in Nigeria". Harding min. 14 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54819. Two properties fetched £20,500 and £23,500, but the high prices at the sale must be taken into account when comparing these with Scott's earlier estimate. Four other properties were sold for between £37,000 and £56,000.
177. Harding min. 21 Oct. 1916, CO583/52/50309.
178. The sale had been arranged verbally between Albrechts and Walkden before the liquidation began. Burrowes min. on Temple Franks to Tennyson 15 Nov. (1st quotation), Tennyson min. 14 Nov. (2nd quotation), Tennyson to Temple Franks 14 Nov., Harding min. s.d., Tennyson min. 15 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54750, 54819. According to Harding, Riley, the solicitor for the Liverpool firms, specifically protested against the sale of the "Eagle", which was Gaiser trade mark 62 (lot 90). Unfortunately the trade marks are not included in the Schedule and are listed without description in the Particulars. These show that lot 90 was sold to Walkden for £30. The auditors' subsequent report states that lot 90 was a Gaiser trade mark and that it did go to Walkden for £30. Report on G.L. Gaiser 6 Jan. in Moorhouse desp. 141, 8 Feb. 1919, CO583/73/13284. Pedler, *Lion & Unicorn*, p. 223 states: "The Gaiser cotton marks of the eagle and the lion-and-flag became the property of John Walkden. The ownership of these marks gave to that firm the benefit of Gaiser's goodwill in some of the best-selling textile lines in Nigeria". However, a letter from Leeming,

Ray & Whittle, the Stockport firm which largely monopolized trade mark registration (*ibid.*, p. 222), in a letter received in the C.O. only after the sale, gave the "Eagle" the trade mark number of 67B rather than 62. CO583/54/56161. For Law excluding the "Double Eagle" mark, Tennyson min. for Burrowes 5 Nov. 1916 CO583/53/54750. It is therefore not absolutely certain that the lot 90 which Walkden purchased was indeed the "Eagle".

179. Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa, A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company 1707-1931*, London, Heinemann, 1974, p. 223.
180. Burrowes, Particulars of Sale 18 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/55481.
181. Harding min. 28 Nov. 1916, *ibid.*
182. African Oil Nuts to C.O. 13 Nov., Harding dft reply 14 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/54449. Another example was Gaiser's Marina site which Lugard valued at £25,000. Desp. 614, 26 Oct. 1916, CO583/49/51520. Elder Dempster bought it for £37,000.
183. Burrowes, Particulars, 18 Nov. 1916, CO583/54/55481.
184. Clipping from *West Africa*, 10 Mar. 1917, CO583/63/13135; Oldfields Solicitors to C.O. 20 Mar. 1917, CO583/64/14824.
185. Trigge to Scarbrough 18 Oct. 1917, SP MSS Afr. S86.



CHAPTER 8

Conclusion: Epilogues and Consequences

Questions of Nigerian trade became unexpectedly entangled with British politics in 1916, featuring in two House of Commons debates. The second of these began a process which quickly led not just to the fall of a government but to a fundamental re-adjustment of the British political system and British political culture. This book so far has tried to explain in some detail how this happened. It has done so by looking at the connections and interactions between various British and Nigerian narratives. Most of these have not so far been well told. After 1916, Nigerian questions no longer had an impact on British politics. The book so far has looked at how the collision occurred. Now we must look more briefly at what happened afterwards. The now separate narratives will be carried forward, though in a more summary fashion, to their various conclusions.

THE COURSE OF BRITISH POLITICS

The subsequent course of British politics is well known, and need only be outlined. Lloyd George's coalition was with Bonar Law as the leader of the Conservative Party. They became an effective team. Well-placed and judicious observers credited them with winning the war. A historian, now writing beyond the reach of living memory of this, must respect their contemporary judgement, though placing less weight on increased British efficiency and more on German errors: bringing America into the war through unrestricted submarine warfare and the Zimmermann

telegram in 1917, and abandoning the defensive in 1918 to mount a series of initially impressive but ultimately improperly co-ordinated offensives which ended in defeat *en ras campagne*.¹ He or she must also note that there is a much stronger consensus, both among contemporaries and among later analysts, that a return of Asquith would have been disastrous, than that Lloyd George and Law found the way through that had eluded him. As one of the most careful of recent historians has noted, "it took only twelve months of Lloyd George's medicine to produce the financial and economic crisis which McKenna had foreseen".² The prime minister who in the summer of 1918 pondered how he might define a victory on points,³ had travelled a long way from the War Secretary of 1916 who wanted to fight to a knock-out.

After the war was won, many people expected that coalition politics would continue. Apart from Lloyd George, the Liberal leadership had remained loyal to Asquith, but his fragment of the Liberal party was reduced almost to insignificance after the election of December 1918. While Lloyd George had managed to bring Churchill back into the government as Minister of Munitions in July 1917, his other Liberal followers lacked political weight. They survived electorally largely through Conservative indulgence. Although the prime minister retained the support of the established Conservative leadership to a greater extent even than Asquith had in 1916, by 1922 Lloyd George's soaring rhetoric and frenzied diplomacy could not conceal his failures in domestic and, above all, in foreign policy. Again it was Bonar Law's response to a revolt of Tory backbenchers that brought down the Liberal leader of a coalition. The Conservative Party re-established itself as a party of government. The Liberal Party did not. Re-unification of its shattered fragments, first under Asquith and then Lloyd George, could not restore pre-war politics. Liberals would hold office only as subordinate members of coalitions. Labour replaced it as the alternative party of government.

THE STRUGGLES OF THE COLONIAL OFFICE

The crisis of 1916 shifted Bonar Law to the Exchequer. Sir Walter Long succeeded him at the Colonial Office. Steel-Maitland remained as Parliamentary Under Secretary, the first of many checks to an ultimately disappointing career. Once the shock of the Nigeria debate passed, the C.O. soon returned to its well-set policies. Minutes continued to stress the paramountcy of governing in the interests of indigenous populations.

The ideas of the Empire Resources Development Committee were examined, but rightly considered impracticable, if only because of Treasury parsimony. Long had been a member of the Committee before entering the government, and was more willing than his officials to listen to it,⁴ but he was an ageing man whose minutes seldom suggest more than routine interest in his job. Held in low esteem by Lloyd George,⁵ his instincts were to defend “the traditions of our public services...”. In the C.O. this meant “that we cannot abandon our clear duty wh. is to protect *general* interests of the trade & of the native”. He was hardly the man to try to impose new policies on forceful officials like Harding, Strachey, and Fiddes. Instead, his usual response to their minutes was: “I concur. We must be firm about this”.⁶ When, as still occasionally happened, Ellis of the West Africa Department disagreed with the Niger Department and urged subordination of colonial to imperial interests, Long ignored him.⁷

The Colonial Office remained suspicious of the firms. The firms continued to worry about the Colonial Office and about Steel-Maitland’s expressed intention to “keep his eye on us”.⁸ The C.O. was particularly concerned with the companies’ influence over departments whose main function was to ensure supply to Great Britain and which, in the interest of efficiency, preferred to work with a few persons in London, while neglecting the concerns of small shippers on the coast or of indigenous populations in West Africa. Once in office Lloyd George set up a Ministry of Food and appointed Lord Devonport as Food Controller. A former grocer on the largest scale and chairman of the Port of London Authority, Devonport appeared to be superbly qualified for his position. Instead he floundered.⁹ Rather patronizingly, Long noted that he lacked trained staff and governmental experience, and that it was “our duty to see that he does not fall into unknown (to him) difficulties”.¹⁰ The West Africa firms complained that he approached the question of kernels primarily from the point of view of the price of cattle-cake in the United Kingdom, which he wanted to bring down. Moore likened this to “trying to fill a bucket of water with an egg-spoonful...”. While the merchants professed willingness to co-operate, they refused to agree to a Lagos price of £10, which they considered impossibly low. They would not go below £14, and they thought “that it would be better if we were provided with the tonnage and allowed to go on, and that things would in due course regulate themselves accordingly”.¹¹ The Niger Company was particularly aggrieved: “It was only ... with the appointment of Lord

Devonport ... that the difficulties of the West African Trade became really acute".¹² The Company hoped to develop trade with America, while the Food Controller's mission was to bring the maximum to Great Britain at the lowest price.

Devonport's failure as Food Controller rapidly became apparent. He would resign in May. Even before he did, control over oils and fats had been transferred to the Ministry of Munitions. There they came under Bigland, who had far-reaching plans for regulating imports through licences with the Ministry as the sole purchaser at a fixed price, acting through a small number of brokers in the U.K.¹³ That scheme was abandoned before it could come into force. Speculators were blamed, but the C.O. thought that the hostility of the excluded merchants was also significant. Instead, on 1 May 1917 an Order provided for sales under licence at a fixed price of £26 at Liverpool and £26/10 at Hull and London, which was much higher than the £18 which Devonport had wanted. The Colonial Office was not consulted. It objected on constitutional grounds, that, whereas the Ministry might set prices and control trade domestically, it could not override West African governors by directing produce only to the U.K. While debate over this continued until September, when the C.O. got substantially the rewording which it wanted, the question became largely academic.¹⁴ German resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare quickly created a crisis. British monthly shipping losses, which had been kept under 200,000 tons until January 1917, soared over 500,000 tons in April, while total Allied and neutral losses for that month passed 800,000 tons. As Steel-Maitland noted in June, "it is the provision of ships that really dominates the position now & not licences". While the introduction of convoy brought down British losses, they remained usually over 200,000 tons (and total losses over 300,000 tons) until April 1918.¹⁵ Apart from shipments of oil to America reluctantly conceded for technical purposes, West African palm produce now went only to the U.K.¹⁶ As oil cake had to be kept for British farmers, Dutch margarine manufacturers would receive the oils rather than kernels or copra.¹⁷ Similarly, the ration of oil which allowed Denmark to produce margarine for its own use, while exporting butter to Great Britain was ended, as the Uboats had "radically modified the general tonnage situation and necessitated the employment of the world's tonnage in the most economical manner".¹⁸

Meanwhile, in July 1917, the Oils and Fats Department was shifted from the Ministry of Munitions to the Ministry of Food, and Bigland

was superseded by Alfred Mansfield, “a businessman with a reputation as an ‘organiser’ & with no official experience...”, whom Bigland had brought in as an unpaid volunteer. Initially at least, this created a problem in that the Ministry could not be sure of its powers over palm oil, which was not a foodstuff, but used rather for soap, candles, and technical purposes.¹⁹ Although maintaining the prices and procedures established by the Order of 1 May 1917, the Ministry of Food hankered after more ambitious schemes involving its purchase of all of British West Africa’s exportable surplus at a fixed price f.o.b. on the Coast. While the Colonial Office continued to resist this,²⁰ the Ministry of Shipping could not make good on its promises to lift all West African produce.²¹ Only 218 British ships of 381,742 tons departed Nigerian ports in 1918. Sixty-seven foreign ships of 15,093 tons hardly affected the situation. The C.O. could therefore block the Ministry of Food proposals by insisting that it should buy all produce available on the coast whether it could be shipped or not, a proposal which the Ministry did not take up.²² While Lever Bros. built up its own fleet, which allowed it to clear the MacIver warehouses, the total backlog was not reduced.²³ In June 1917, the Ministry imposed new high commercial rates on the firms while paying only low “Blue Book” rates to the shipping lines. As was now usual, this was done without consulting the C.O., which complained bitterly about the likely impact on native producers, though it was mainly concerned with Gold Coast cocoa, which the Ministry did not want to ship at all.²⁴

The shipping shortfall caused supply problems in Great Britain. By the end of 1917 there were long queues, discontent, and a wave of strikes.²⁵ A War Cabinet committee concluded that imports would have to be cut by six million tons in 1918, and that this would “not only cause grave dislocation to certain trades, but would also involve great hardships and drastic changes in the life of the people”.²⁶ Margarine was a particularly acute worry. Imports from the Netherlands shrank. Four destroyers sent to escort a convoy of margarine-laden ships from Hook of Holland were mined and three sunk on the night of 22–23 December. In March 1918, the Dutch government banned margarine exports. Jurgens still could not get adequate priority for its plant at Purfleet. Maypole’s production did increase in 1917, but then fell back.²⁷ British policy was reconsidered at War Cabinet level. Lord Curzon was put in charge. His eventual recommendation for building fat-splitting plants in Ceylon and elsewhere would certainly take time and could hardly have had much effect,

especially given the absence of local markets for copra cake. Because of a lack of sulphuric acid, splitting in West Africa could not be contemplated, even though it was the nearest source of supply.²⁸ A considerable reduction of the gun programme in February 1918 did alleviate the situation, but the Ministry of Munitions planned an expansion in 1919, and continued to press for soapmaking “even at the expense of margarine, to ensure a glycerine output of not less than 14,000 tons during 1918”. Even so, in retrospect its official history acknowledged that, “it became increasingly clear that all imports of oil and oil seeds would be needed for edible purposes”.²⁹ “Butter” now trumped “guns”. Soap exports almost halved from over 10,000 tons in January to under 6000 in June. Per capita soap production was set to be one third the pre-war level. Then, in August, the position was reversed. America offered to supply 12,000 tons of glycerine a month. This would hit both British soap manufacturers and colonial oil producers. The Ministry of Munitions even suspected that Washington was trying to curtail British exports so as to capture the international market in soap. In a notably alarmist presentation, the Ministry of Food claimed that the household soap ration would have to go down to 9¼ ounces per month. As the Ministry of Munitions would not cut back on imports of whale oil, which was needed for the higher grades, and the Ministry of Food would not dispense with tallow, the consequent cuts in raw material imports would fall most heavily on West Africa. In the Colonial Office, Grindle felt that:

the native producer will have to take his share of the sacrifices now demanded of every part of the Empire, & he can well afford to do so. We can help neither him, nor ourselves nor the war by insisting on his interests beyond measure & to the detriment of more important interests.

Considering Grindle “(of course) imperfectly acquainted with the W. Afr position”, Fiddes simply re-affirmed departmental policy of protecting indigenous interests.³⁰

At the same time, food and raw materials were moving to the centre of British and Allied strategy. Many believed that the war would end in a trade-off between German military conquests in Europe and Allied control of the resources of the rest of the world. In 1917, the talk had been of an “economic offensive”. In 1918, this shifted to “economic defence and development”. Rather than issuing crude threats to Germany, policy

would focus on building up Allied organizations to control shipping, food, and raw materials. These were expected to keep running for a considerable time after the end of the war. Germany would have to make sacrifices to achieve re-integration into the world economy.³¹ In such a context West African concerns would count for little. In again pressing its scheme for its buying all kernels, oil, and groundnuts at a fixed price f.o.b. on the Coast, the Ministry of Food insisted that “in no case has it been admitted that the interests of British or native shippers should be allowed to override the claims of efficiency and expediency in the organisation of a scheme of purchase by the Imperial Government”.³² Although discussions continued well into November, the unexpected, and rapid, military victory, and the immediate and overwhelming pressures for the ending of controls were quickly decisive. Picking up one of these files almost a year later, Dixon minuted that the situation had changed, and:

The ideas which were prevalent at the time of the Imperial War Conference as to the possibility of Inter-Allied control of raw materials for a period of possibly some years after the war have now been abandoned and the tendency has been to get rid of almost all measures of control of raw materials.

Grindle still thought that the pendulum would swing back to control.³³ It did not. British policy in the 1920s and early 1930s would be directed instead to the restoration of the liberal world economy. The differential export duty on palm kernels did eventually come into effect on 20 October 1919, despite Clifford's objections.³⁴ Although in the early post-war years some 90% of kernels went to Great Britain,³⁵ this was not credited to the effect of the duty, which increasingly appeared as a relic of a past way of thinking, and was abandoned on 4 July 1922.³⁶ The Nigerian export duties imposed during the war remained, as they were non-discriminatory and necessary for revenue purposes. As British farmers still preferred linseed and cottonseed cakes,³⁷ the kernels trade did partially return to Germany, which took 53.1% in 1930 and over a third for the rest of the decade up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Oil by contrast began to flow in larger measure to the United States, peaking at 45.4% in 1929.³⁸ The patterns of Nigerian trade were becoming more complex.

THE ROAD TO UNILEVER

While the Niger Company and its associated firms struggled to maintain their agreement after the failure of the negotiations for amalgamation, the tensions between them, which in the past had been followed by the renewal of *pourparlers*, this time ended in final breakdown. Their different responses to Devonport's proposals, coming so soon after the disagreement over the purchase of the German properties, led the Niger Company to withdraw from the newly established Association of West African Merchants.³⁹ As late as 1919–1920 the Company evidently declined to co-operate with the other firms even in the boosterism of the *Red Book of West Africa*. The development of the western railway tempted Miller Bros. to go with the Lagos companies to the North, using the newly established British Nigerian Company, which Trigge believed had been “formed for the purpose of controlling from Lagos all the interior trade”. The Niger Company continued to resist Millers's pressure for entry into the groundnut trade at Kano and Zaria, but this was eventually sanctioned by the Pool's Control Committee in September 1917.⁴⁰ In response the Niger Company opened in Lagos in November, looking to working closely with Peter Thomas, who rejected a takeover bid in 1919.⁴¹ The development of Port Harcourt and the eastern railway threatened to divert trade from the Niger to the coast, and also, according to the Niger Company, strengthened non-pool firms such as John Holt and the C.F.A.O. at the expense of Millers and the African Association. While Sewell was forced to abandon his independent position at Yenagoa in July, the station was then taken over directly by the Niger Company, which went on to buy out the Company of African Merchants, through which it established itself at Port Harcourt. Moore, the chairman of African Merchants, had first hoped to be taken over by the African Association, but it would not agree to preserve his personal position in an amalgamation. The Niger Company proved more accommodating.⁴² In response Miller Brothers and the African Association contemplated a merger with John Holt, but legal advice convinced them that this could not be squared with their still existing agreement with the Niger Company. The African Association went to arbitration to win their point and force the Niger Company to agree to cancel the agreement.⁴³ By March 1918, Trigge was ready to write this off as obsolete. He wanted the Company to pursue a bold forward policy, re-negotiating the agreement to bring all the firms under one effective control, which

would necessarily be that of the Niger Company.⁴⁴ Negotiations never resumed. Instead, on 17 July 1919 the agreement was cancelled with effect from 31 December 1917. Subsequently the backdating was extended to 31 December 1916.⁴⁵

Under the pressures of war the combination which had seemed poised to dominate Nigeria's external trade had broken down. Despite this, the forces for combination were almost irresistible. Small firms were swallowed up. Fearing that the government would not restore the transport service on the Niger which it had closed down during the war, Christian and Stuart Young sold up to the Niger Company, the former for more than £50,000, the latter for £12,200. Christian was kept going, though by 1925 it operated not on the Niger but in Yorubaland. Stuart-Young was wound up, and he had to agree not to return to Nigeria. Trigge rejoiced that "Mr. Young's influence has thus been removed from Onitsha and as a result of eliminating all competition from that place the Company is buying produce there at relatively very low prices".⁴⁶ After his return to England, in October 1919, he married a cousin who was a schoolteacher. We know of some of the details of this marriage from a letter which he wrote some years later to the journalist and writer Frank Harris. According to this they "copulated as often as twentytimes [*sic*] a week" on the ship back to West Africa. Contrasting this with the relative chastity of his homosexual life, Stuart Young claimed to be disgusted by such bestial sensuality. Nellie returned to England after she became pregnant, but had a miscarriage. Although there was no divorce, contact was never resumed. We may distrust some of the lurid details. Harris, the author of *My Life and Loves*, was a notoriously boastful womanizer who, unaware of the change in Oscar Wilde's sexual orientation, had advised him to sue the Marquess of Queensberry for defamation in 1895. Stuart Young hoped to interest him in a broadly autobiographical novel which he expected would leave him "terribly shocked".⁴⁷ What cannot be discounted is that Stuart Young was then back in Nigeria. In Onitsha he is remembered as having arrived in the 1920s.⁴⁸ In the 1925, *Nigeria Handbook* he does not appear as a merchant. In his letter to Harris the same year he refers only to his literary activities. To the last, he remained an enemy of the big firms, appealing in 1930 to Winifried Tete Ansa, the organizer of the West African Co-operative Producers Ltd, to "save the River from becoming the Cemetery of the Native Trader and the Garden of the Merger's Fellow Conspirators".⁴⁹

Stuart Young is rightly remembered among the heroes of Onitsha, exemplifying “the truism in the statement that *nwanne din a mba* (your true brother may be found in a foreign land)”,⁵⁰ but by 1930 “the Merger” had gone far beyond the elimination of small firms like his own. The split from the Niger Company would bring Miller Bros. and the African Association closer together, but first it appeared that Jurgens might take over Millers, which the Colonial Office was ready to approve over opposition from other departments:

In the interests of Nigeria it would be preferable that Millers [*sic*] Bros., should be acquired by a big and progressive firm of margarine manufactures established in this country, even though its capital is mainly Dutch, than that they should be absorbed by one of the group of West African Trading firms of whose practical monopoly in the West African produce trade since the German firms were closed down there have been many complaints.⁵¹

Nothing came of this. Instead, in May 1919 Millers and the African Association merged to form the African and Eastern Trade Corporation, which also included, among others, the venerable Gold Coast firm F. & A. Swanzy, which had been closely associated with Millers, Lagos Stores, Crombie Steedman, a Gold Coast firm which had recently established itself in Nigeria, the Company of African Traders, which operated in the Delta and Calabar, McNeill Scott, which was known as an exporter of logs, and the short-lived British Nigerian Company which had taken over many of the former German properties. The African and Eastern was now the largest concern in British West Africa, but made little attempt to rationalize its holdings. Millers and the African Association were still concerned to preserve existing goodwill. The constituent firms of the new Corporation retained their identities. Rivalries between companies and families “went right up to the board...”.⁵² Outside the new merger, Trigge still had ambitious plans for the Niger Company. He assumed “so many interesting possibilities for profitable business and such certainty of a strong demand for the Company’s raw materials during the next few years that a bold forward policy would appear to be the safest course for the Company to pursue”. This would require new capital.⁵³ In October 1919, the Company received soundings which turned out to be from Lever Bros., which had already bought out John Walkden in 1917.⁵⁴ The negotiations therefore began before Lord Leverhulme

left for America in the third week of November, but he was not able to meet Scarbrough before his departure. Levers said that they would keep the existing board and management, as they had done with other companies which they had acquired, but “there will be no selling of the products, as they will all be utilised in the Soap factories”.⁵⁵ The Niger Company turned down the idea of Levers getting a controlling interest, preferring instead that they should have a considerable minority interest which would give them a first call on oil and oleaginous seeds. The less preferred alternative was for Levers to purchase all the shares, but, confident of the high intrinsic value especially of its mining assets, “the Board could not go to the shareholders unless a very full price were offered for the shares”.⁵⁶ This turned out to be £6/10, for a total payment of more than £8 million to be made on or before 1 July 1920. Lord Leverhulme cabled back from America: “Congratulations. Price high but suicidal if we had let opportunity lapse”.⁵⁷

Leverhulme was a man with “an urge to do things” who “characteristically ignored counsels of financial caution”.⁵⁸ Given his obsession with securing sources of supply of raw materials, in a time of strongly increasing demand and rapidly rising prices, his purchase of the Niger Company would have appeared to him as the bold stroke of a Napoleonic captain of industry. It was one of several, including the complete purchase in October 1919 of the linked firms of Crosfield and Gossage for £4,000,000, and in April 1920 of John Knight’s, the one remaining large private soapmaker, at a price which his rival had to consider irresistible.⁵⁹ However, buying the Niger Company would prove a disaster comparable to Napoleon’s invasion of Russia. The boom ended early in 1920. Prices slumped in the first quarter and crashed in the second.⁶⁰ At the beginning of the year the Niger Company had had over two million pounds worth of produce either in Nigeria, onboard ship, or unsold in Europe.⁶¹ Anticipating a rising market Trigge had continued to buy dear.⁶² He would now have to sell cheap if he could sell at all.⁶³ An attempt to steady prices by heavy buying in the open market made things even worse. Compounding the problem, the insurance to be paid for the Burutu fire of January 1918 continued to be delayed.⁶⁴ The Company’s overdraft soared to over two million pounds. Edgar and Scarbrough had begun to worry in February,⁶⁵ even before the market broke, but Trigge continued to take it “very lightly”.⁶⁶ For a long time, Leverhulme knew nothing of this. In April he was still on balance optimistic, feeling:

confident more capital may be required during 1920 but it may be the position has greatly improved since I left home & I hope this is so as general finances are not at all in an easy state as far as I can judge from such scraps of news as reach us here.⁶⁷

In fact he had no real idea of how to raise the purchase price of eight million, which his broker flatly refused to underwrite. While he did manage to scrape that money together, he could do little about the overdraft, which the Niger Company's bankers were determined to reduce. Its size would be closely and inflexibly monitored. An offer to Niger Company shareholders of three million preferred shares at 8% brought in only a million. The Company's underwriter deprecated offering to the public "what the shareholders rejected though they had over eight million of cash coming to them".⁶⁸ While Leverhulme could provide no money of his own, he could bring in other banks on terms which the Niger Company considered onerous.⁶⁹ His own banks advised him to save his business by selling the Niger Company. He preferred to go in the opposite direction by buying the African and Eastern as well, transferring certain shares to the Niger Company which would take over all of Lever Brothers' West African interests.⁷⁰ This would require major changes in the Niger Company board. While Leverhulme had to abandon this plan, he did bring in a new board for the Niger Company, in an atmosphere of great acrimony,⁷¹ as he now publicly blamed the old management for his problems. To solve these he had eventually to turn to the accountant Francis D'Arcy Cooper, whose firm had a long connection with Levers. By breaking the long-standing policy of not issuing debentures and offering them to Barclay's Bank, Cooper rescued the company and avoided having to sell off the Niger Company, but Lord Leverhulme, who was now nearing seventy, had lost full control of his firm. After his death in 1925 Cooper would succeed him. Moreover, Levers were now tied to their West African suppliers and no longer able to buy in the cheapest market. As Wilson has noted, there was "a darker side to the whole theory of 'vertical integration'".⁷²

The slump of 1920 also had severe consequences for the margarine manufacturers,⁷³ especially for Maypole. With the Purfleet factory at last completed, Jurgens could meet British demand from within the country. They eventually became the largest single supplier. With a refinery at Fulham, but no oil mill, Van Den Berghs were still largely

dependent on shipments from the Netherlands. However, the big change in the 1920s was the revival of butter consumption, probably in response to rising real wages. Dutch margarine could retain its market share as those who switched back to butter were more than offset by those who moved up to the higher quality product. The cheaper brands, Maypole, and Lever Bros.' "Plate" suffered. Eventually, in July 1924 Sir George Watson sold out to Home and Colonial Stores, which effectively meant Jurgens. This poisoned their relations with Van Den Berghs. The Dutch firms were linked by profit-sharing agreements dating back to 1908, though no profits had actually been shared since 1912. Sorting out who owed what to whom proved too much for the firms and for the lawyers who were called into arbitrate the several thousand points in dispute. Eventually, in November 1927, Jurgens and Van Den Bergh chose instead to merge, creating two holding firms, the Dutch Margarine Unie N.V., and the English Margarine Union Ltd., each with the same board.

Amalgamation of the margarine makers in Europe was paralleled by amalgamation of the trading companies in Africa. While the Niger Company struggled back to profitability under D'Arcy Cooper and the new management,⁷⁴ the organizational weakness of the African and Eastern and its payment of 8% dividends between 1922–1927 led to crisis in 1928. The banks and credit houses refused to continue advancing funds. A new man, Sir Robert Waley Cohen, the former manager of Royal Dutch-Shell, was brought in, largely on the recommendation of D'Arcy Cooper, who had himself been approached by one of the credit houses. Together they were largely responsible for the amalgamation which created the United Africa Company in March 1929. Although John Holt, London & Kano, Paterson Zochonis, and G.B. Ollivant remained outside, this new giant controlled "by far the largest proportion of West African trade": 60% of palm oil, 45% of kernels, 60% of groundnuts, and 50% of cocoa.⁷⁵ This amalgamation in Africa was quickly followed by an even greater one in Europe. Levers, the soap maker, had begun margarine production in England during the war, though its "Plate" had never been very successful. Conversely, the Margarine Unie had soap interests in Europe. Negotiations, which at first had aimed at a clear separation of interests between firms which purchased the same raw materials, led instead to a complete amalgamation, with the creation on 2 September 1929 of Unilever,⁷⁶ one of the enduring giants of contemporary world capitalism.

LUGARD IN NIGERIA

Having taken the story of business concentration to its eventual conclusion in Europe, we must now return with Lugard to Nigeria at the end of 1916. His first impression of the debate was that “a good deal of claptrap jingoism had been talked...”. He was particularly resentful of Carson’s attempt to contrast his imperial vision with Lugard’s narrowly Nigerian one. But, while admiring Law’s “quiet self-control”, he now felt himself more in sympathy with his critics. He tried to distance himself from the sales, which he blamed on Burrowes, on the Colonial Office, and even on Law himself: “it was a question of his own most cherished policy and connected with Tariff reform”.⁷⁷ The Governor-General remained a strong Free-Trader, telling his show-piece Nigerian Council in December: “I hold that the very foundations of the British Empire rest on its tolerance and the ‘Open Door’ which it has always afforded to all the world. This alone has disarmed the opposition of other nations to the growth of the British Empire and secured their good-will”. No responsible statesman could “maintain that the industrious and intelligent populations of Germany and Austria numbering some 121,000,000 of people should or could be excluded after the war from the trade and commerce of the world”. This view was contested by Ajasa, who insisted that the “loyalty of the native is not measured by the pounds shillings and pence he can now make, or that he hopes to make after the war, but by the duty he owes to his country and to the Empire he is proud to belong to”. The Open Door “in part initiated this war because Germans wish to dominate the world. It will be driving a great part of the trade of Nigeria into German hands”.⁷⁸

Privately, Lugard’s disgust with the “ungentlemanly and caddish” behaviour of Carson was more than matched by his dislike of the Lagosians, who were “the lowest, the most seditious and disloyal, the most prompted by purely self-seeking money motives of any people I have met”.⁷⁹ Following the ignominious failure of the water rate agitation, he intended to assert the government’s authority. A major uprising in the northern Yoruba towns of Iseyin and Okeiho provided an opportunity. Repression was brutal, with the ruler of Iseyin publicly hanged. The causes of the rising were profoundly local, but Lugard was convinced that it had been caused by a characteristically Yoruba “resentment to any form of authority or subservience to the law...”, and had

been fomented “by seditious and lying counsels emanating from a thoroughly disloyal clique in Lagos led by the ex-convict Macaulay”. Just plausible in nearby places such as Abeokuta, Ijebu, Ekiti, and even Ibadan, which had close links with Lagos, as an explanation of events in the Oke Ogun in the extreme north of Yorubaland this was absurd. The detailed report by Captain W.A. Ross, the Resident, which the governor had, made no mention of Lagosian agitators. Nevertheless, Lugard believed that the Yoruba had now “received a lesson which I am assured has created a most profound effect, and changed the whole attitude of the people from one of insolent bravado to a recognition of the authority of Government”. Ironically, partly because he waited three months before informing London of the rising, Lugard’s despatch spurred Long to take the final step of ending his policy of continuous administration and placing him in the same position as other colonial governors.⁸⁰

Having demonstrated firmness, Lugard now considered conciliation appropriate. The position of Lagos after the amalgamation was clearly anomalous. The administrative system did not work well. To counter the agitation and discord, the governor proposed to appoint a special officer for the Colony “who would be in close sympathy with the people – if possible speaking their language – willing at all times to argue with and convince them – ..., and encourage the better elements... to assert themselves and relegate the less worthy, but more vocal class to their proper sphere”. For this he chose Henry Carr. While he was certainly able—Lugard classed him with Khama the Great of Bechuanaland⁸¹—he was hardly in close sympathy with the people. He was better at arguing than convincing. Nevertheless, he was an African. Lugard would give him authority over white District Officers and Assistant District Officers in the outlying towns of Badagry and Epe. For the British Empire in 1917–1918 this was a bold move. Only with some apprehension did the Colonial Office agree to “let Sir F[.] Lugard try the experiment”.⁸² Through the intervention of “educated Lagos natives”, above all Bishop Oluwole, Lugard also tried to repair relations with Eleko and the white cap chiefs. Eshugbayi “dissociated himself from all the bad advisers who surrounded him last year and made the ‘Palace’ the centre of intrigue against the Government”. Their recognition and their stipends were restored. London trusted “that they will make amends for their conduct and show their sense of the leniency with which they have been treated by being loyal to the Government in future”.⁸³ For a while this policy appeared to work.

Lugard had as well to consider the grievances of the African merchants. On the advice of the Colonial Office, one was placed on the Allocation Committee. Although this was mainly of symbolic importance, as the committee did not meet, and the General Manager of the Railway made the allocations, by 1919 exports through the rail system were divided roughly evenly between ring and non-ring firms.⁸⁴ In February of 1917, the governor publicly confronted "young Duncan". By his own account he successfully taxed him for his error over the principle on which tonnage was allocated and over the large number of native firms allegedly denied justice or fair play which were in fact dummies, and "His Black friends roared with laughter at his discomfiture".⁸⁵ In a later despatch he complained of "frequent applications for the shipment of small quantities from clerks, shopmen and others who are not engaged in the trade, as well as from bona fide traders".⁸⁶ As for the expatriate combine, Lugard's opinion changed in 1917. He came to feel that it had been created "with the single and wholly laudable purpose of preventing a slump...", but "Events turned out very differently to the forecast of the Merchants. Instead of a loss very large profits were made...". Since then markets had re-adjusted and trade was well maintained, for which the firms deserved credit. He was evidently listening less to Burrowes, now citing general opinion instead. As Harding noted, this was "Rather a volte face".⁸⁷ His eventual conclusion, as he left in 1919, was that, because the firms had not informed the government about the formation of the combine, "misunderstandings inevitably arose which eventually operated to the disadvantage of the Merchants". By then he had also moved away from Free Trade, now claiming that "an obligation rests on the British Colonies to see that the United Kingdom is served first and that her necessary supply of tropical produce is assured". He also wanted the "hap-hazard collection" of palm nuts replaced by "a system of organised plantations with local mills to deal with the freshly gathered fruit".⁸⁸ Nevertheless, he remained vehemently opposed to the Empire Resources Development Committee, whose proposals he considered "manifestly opposed to all British tradition...[and] unworthy of serious treatment", probably the only point on which he was in full agreement with his successor Clifford.⁸⁹ He was also strongly backed by Ajasa, whose arguments were passed by Fiddes up to the new parliamentary under secretary. This was W.A.S. Hewins, who, with Long's encouragement, had for much of 1917 seen himself taking over the Unionist Party and becoming prime minister. The under

secretaryship would be the height of his political career. Somewhat maliciously, Fiddes minuted: "It is not surprising that Natives should fail to understand the position of the Empire Resources Ctee".⁹⁰

BOOM AND BUST

In 1917, Lugard also claimed that prices had become reasonable after the re-adjustment, that there were no more complaints from African traders, and that many of these were now entering the market.⁹¹ This was broadly true. Nigerian trade had turned a corner. Some British exporters worried that low prices would lead to diminished output, as the "native producer has his native foods and can at a push live under what are known as 'Bush' conditions...", rather than growing crops to pay for luxuries like cloth, tobacco, and rice which he could no longer afford. This would cause unrest among "what might be called the middle class natives, the petty Traders, clerks and others of that class...".⁹² That did not happen. Lagos kernel prices, which had always been below £11/- from May 1915 and had bottomed at £7/12/4 in June 1916, were back over £11 in November, and thereafter, apart from a dip to £10/1/3 in February 1917, were usually in the £13-£14 range.⁹³ Export volumes rose from 161,439 tons in 1916 to 205,167 tons in 1918. The figures for oil were similar: 67,432 tons in 1916, 86,425 tons in 1918. In both cases pre-war volumes were surpassed. After the collapse in 1915, groundnut exports were steady at over 50,000 tons, while almost doubling in terms of value. The first great surge in cocoa exports had coincided with the outbreak of the war, but these fell sharply in 1918, as a consequence of the policy of the Ministry of Shipping.⁹⁴ Nigerian tin exports continued to rise, and, even after a setback in 1918, were worth close to £2 million. Hides were the other major export, but shifts between markets (Great Britain and the United States), between tanned and untanned, and violent price fluctuations, apparent even from the yearly figures given in the *Red Book*, make these hard to interpret. Nevertheless, if we take 1917, total exports had increased to £8,482,326 from £5,883,594 in 1916. The economy was also diversifying. Palm products were now only slightly over half in value. Tin constituted 18%, hides and skins 11%, groundnuts 8%, cocoa 6%, while a variety of minor items, of which cotton lint was the most important, accounted for 5%.

Observers sometimes noted that prices of oil and kernels were now back to something like pre-war levels. However, this was overshadowed

by the enormous rise in the prices of imports. On most items these had doubled or tripled over the course of the war.⁹⁵ In money terms imports continued to advance from their low of £4,303,654 in 1915 to £7,148,536 in 1918. What this may have meant in real terms would have varied according to the item. Some adjustments in consumption certainly were made. Instead of expensive imported kerosene, Nigerians turned to domestically produced palm oil for lighting.⁹⁶ Spirits were no longer consumed. Imports shrank to less than a tenth of pre-war volumes. Despite repeated raising, the spirits duty no longer formed an important part of the revenue after 1916. As Read noted, it had “for the moment shrunk to nothing and I do not see why the Protte shd. not continue to do without its spirit revenue”.⁹⁷ Its place was taken by the new export duties and by railway receipts now that the Eastern Railway had become an important part of the economy.⁹⁸ While the government avoided a crisis, the terms of trade had turned decisively against the indigenous producer, and would remain adverse throughout the colonial period.⁹⁹

This long-term shift was obscured at the time by the upturn in trade and expectations of its continued expansion. We have already noted some of the new African firms.¹⁰⁰ By 1919, there were 362 shippers from Lagos, almost all of them African.¹⁰¹ New expatriate firms were also created or drawn in. Almost twenty companies which were included in the *Red Book* of 1919–1920 do not appear in Burrowes’s list of 1916. Four were major concerns which would reshape the commerce of Lagos.¹⁰² The Co-operative Wholesale Society has already been mentioned as the purchaser of a former German property. In England it was a strong competitor of Lever Bros. The big American firm of Grace Bros., which had a long history in Latin America, moved in, acquiring in April 1919 the services of “the oldest and most experienced white trader in the country, Mr. F.G. Osborne”. Its entry had been eased by Beaverbrook and the Niger Company.¹⁰³ Jurgens established its subsidiary, Jurgens Colonial Products, early in 1917, though with an initial capital of £50,000 it was only a tenth the size of what had been projected when Jurgens expected to be a major purchaser of German properties.¹⁰⁴ Birtwistle was put in charge, but the company’s impact was felt more in Kano than in Lagos.¹⁰⁵ Most important of all was the Colonial Bank, established in the West Indies in the 1830s, but allowed from 1917 to operate worldwide. It broke the monopoly of the Bank of British West Africa. Two other firms might also be included in this group.¹⁰⁶ The Société commerciale et industrielle de l’Afrique Occidentale was based in Lyons. Its

managing director in Nigeria was Syrian. The *Red Book* noted that it was “one of the latest competitors in the commerce of Nigeria”, and paid particular attention to its interest in kapok. Donald Cameron and Co was a long-established and substantial British firm with a particular interest in oils and waxes. Macmillan does not say when it arrived in Nigeria.

Two firms already operated elsewhere in Nigeria, but now set up in Lagos as well.¹⁰⁷ One was the American hide merchant Ambrosini. The other was Tangelakis, who bought out his former partner Canaris in June 1918, and moved the head office south to the capital. Although Burrowes did list the Niger Company as operating in Lagos in 1916, the subsequent expansion of its activities there suggests that it might also be placed in this list. Five firms expanded from other parts of West Africa.¹⁰⁸ Crombie Steedman and Stavely both came from the Gold Coast. W.H. Sassen arrived from Sierra Leone in 1919, while the Compagnie Bordelaise des comptoirs Africains had also recently expanded from the Ivory Coast. Barker and Camoin had a more complicated history. Barker was a young man who left John Holt in 1918 to become an independent trader in Dahomey. In Cotonou, he had links with Mr. Grizzel, who lived in Marseilles, and in Porto Novo with Mr. Camoin, who lived in New York. In Lagos the firm were commission agents. Another two companies might also be placed in this category.¹⁰⁹ Edwards Brothers were recent in Lagos at the time of the *Red Book*, but they had been long in the West Africa trade and were linked with another Manchester firm, C.H. Werner, which was established in the Gold Coast. In Lagos, Werners also operated as Hendersons, which arrived in February 1919. Three firms were entirely new.¹¹⁰ African Oil Nuts has already been discussed. John Radcliffe resigned from Rylands in 1918, launched his own business, and “succeeded beyond his expectations”, largely through catering to Moslem tastes for “beautiful and costly robes”. The Neapolitan E.A. Lezzi had travelled widely in east Africa. He came to Nigeria in 1915 trading extensively in the North, but established himself in Lagos in August 1919. At the time of the *Red Book* he was compiling an Italian-Hausa dictionary. The last company on our list was very much a special case. In 1917, the Nigerian Dry Dock and Engineering Company shifted its dry dock, of 2700 tons capacity and the only one in West Africa, from Forcados to Lagos.¹¹¹

Of course, established firms were also an important part of the revival. Peter Thomas, as we have seen, was particularly successful.¹¹² Even a smaller man like Charles Ungebauer enjoyed improved fortunes, but

with tragic consequences. As a former German he was always vulnerable. His naturalization in 1914 might be considered a mistake, if not a deception. Maintaining relations with Sachse in 1915 might be viewed as trading with the enemy. He made no secret of his intention to resume that connection after the war.¹¹³ While the Lagos authorities had behaved sensibly and humanely, in England his enemies in the Lagos Chamber of Commerce and in the Association of West African Merchants were listened to. Carson himself may have been sidelined politically, but the Hun-hating xenophobia he expressed could not be ignored. It would culminate in the notorious “Black Book” trial of May 1918.¹¹⁴ One politician was especially prominent in pushing Germanophobia. Gershom Stewart had begun as a businessman in Hong Kong, where he had served on the Council. He was now the Unionist MP for the Wirral and a member of the small Trading with the Enemy Committee. He had Ungebauer very much in his sights as one who was “keeping a German nest warm in West Africa...”¹¹⁵ Repeatedly he raised questions in parliament and lobbied the Colonial Office. Harding was unresponsive. He doubted that it was “really necessary to harry this insignificant old ex-German...”. He thought that so long as Ungebauer had stuck to beads, his rivals had tolerated him, “But when he started exporting produce, they are all after him under the banner of ‘patriotism’”.¹¹⁶ Strachey endorsed Harding’s minutes, and dismissed the evidence that the War Trade Intelligence Department produced of Ungebauer’s “unsatisfactory” correspondence with his brother Rudolph in Las Palmas: expressing sympathy over the death of Sachse’s young daughter and noting that “it is very cold at Home at present”.¹¹⁷ Their superiors, Risley, Read, and Fiddes, took a different view. So did Steel-Maitland, who saw “no harm in stretching a point” to stop Ungebauer trading. Long was similarly firm: “This man must be got rid of. Can’t he be deported?”¹¹⁸ The barrier to this was, of course, that he was now a British subject, at least as far as Lagos was concerned.

In response to further pressure from Stewart, the C.O. asked Lugard for a proposal. This request was strongly reinforced by a semi-official letter from Fiddes stating that Long “feels very strongly about the matter”, and wanted Lugard to give it his “personal and serious consideration”.¹¹⁹ The Governor-General replied suggesting a special ordinance to revoke the naturalization on the grounds that he and the Executive Council had been misled by the Administrator of Lagos. Harding pointed to the obvious injustice of special legislation to deprive one man

of a status which he had been given by a mistake for which he was not responsible. Again his superiors overrode him, pointing to “the very strong feeling ... evinced in Liverpool and elsewhere in this country by people interested in West Africa”. Instead of special legislation, Lugard was instructed to pass a general ordinance under which Ungebauer’s naturalisation might be revoked because of his conduct in 1915.¹²⁰ Lugard moved slowly. At the end of May 1918, Stewart again raised a parliamentary question.¹²¹ By then Lugard had at last put through the ordinance and applied it. A Committee of Inquiry duly found that Ungebauer had failed to break his links with Sachse in 1915. Lagos revoked his naturalization. Ungebauer was now again a German, and would be deported to Great Britain and then to Germany. He asked to be allowed to stay in Nigeria. The offenses were technical, had been committed two and a half years ago, and had been disclosed by evidence which he had himself willingly provided. In Germany he would be in “a cruel position ... having foresworn my allegiance to Germany and written the views I hold of the German methods of warfare[*sic*]”. Lugard said that he had to deport him from Nigeria, but would recommend that he should not be sent on to Germany. As Ungebauer recognized, London need not accept that recommendation.¹²²

Repeatedly Ungebauer had said that he would commit suicide if forced to leave Lagos.¹²³ His friends believed that they had talked him out of this. According to E.A. Kendall, the Niger Company representative at Lagos, he now spoke repeatedly of his “plans about visiting his people in Manchester and Birmingham”. Kendall saw him on the morning of 20 June, the day before he was due to be deported. He found him well but depressed. After lunch he began to vomit. His lawyer Irving visited him at 4:15. He was then so highly strung and nervous that Irving went to warn the Inspector-General of Police of the danger of suicide. They each phoned a doctor who promised to see him, but did not. Ajasa, arriving at 5:00 found him still sick from his earlier vomiting, but “he seemed normal and talked rationally”. His clerk, Gilbert Ige Vincent, left at 5:45 with letters for Kendall, Irving, and Ajasa to be delivered after his departure. R.A. Webb, the Engineer of the Lagos Town Council went round at 6:00 and “endeavoured to cheer him up as he was very depressed”. While convinced of the good intentions of the Lagos government, “he was sure that the Imperial Government would send him to Germany”. Webb heard Ungebauer vomiting again as he left. He was still vomiting when his son-in-law, J.S. Lawson, a trader at Porto Novo

saw him at 6:30. Ungebauer gave him a letter for his daughter. He was “quite natural in his conversation”, and invited Lawson to see him on board the next morning.

Arriving at 6:00 on 21 June, Lawson met Vincent, who had just found Ungebauer dead on the floor upstairs. The Medical Officer who performed the autopsy was unable to state the cause of death, and the Government Chemist found no trace of poison. The verdict of the Coroner’s Inquest was that he had died of unknown causes. The letters to Irving, Ajasa, Pearse, and Kendall, some composed days or weeks before, made it clear that he had committed suicide “as I cannot endure the shame and hard treatment which are in store for me”. He hoped that Pearse and his wife would “keep me in good memory and accept my assurance as a man and Mason that never either in word or deed have I do [*sic*] anything wrong to the British Government”. To Ajasa he ended “Adieu and au revoir in the Grand Lodge above”. His personal effects went to his boy, Baffa. He wanted his estate to go to his brother, but it seems to have ended up with the Public Custodian.¹²⁴

When the Colonial Office first learned of Ungebauer’s suicide, Harding minuted: “Mr. Long may wish to inform Mr. Gershom Stewart M.P. of the result of his intervention”. As he had consistently opposed that intervention, Harding had a moral right to say this. Strachey initialled, as he so often had. So too did H.F. Batterbee, the private secretary, who had played no part in the earlier decisions. Read also initialled, though he had played a part. Fiddes went further, suggesting that, as the death had been reported in the press, “Nothing further need be said to Mr Stewart who presumably will be satisfied with the result of his agitation”. Since Fiddes had done nothing to resist, and much to advance, that agitation, his minute must be considered hypocritically complacent. Steel-Maitland, who had also supported Gershom Stewart, was no longer in the C.O. Long, who had both political and personal responsibility simply appended his initials without further comment.¹²⁵ The suicide of a German merchant in Lagos was one of millions of deaths in the war. It deserves to be remembered as a foreseen consequence of action deliberately taken in the deference to popular Germanophobia which distinguished Lloyd George’s administration from that of Asquith. Soon after the end of the war many Britons came to be ashamed of this episode in their history. This would feed into the post-war conviction that Germany had been badly treated and had legitimate grievances which needed to be redressed. Appeasement in the 1930s would therefore be seen as a

moral cause and, as A.J.P. Taylor famously remarked, a manifestation of “all that was best and most enlightened in British public life”.¹²⁶

The crash of 1920 which had so severely affected the large expatriate firms also hit producers and traders in Nigeria. Export volumes of palm oil fell by almost half, from 100,967 tons in 1919 to 52,771 in 1921.¹²⁷ In the west and centre, exports, even in the boom, had not recovered to pre-war levels, and fell to under half in 1921.¹²⁸ As well as the diversion of oil into domestic uses, cocoa was now well established as an alternative export. While cocoa exports did slump from 25,711 tons in 1919 to 17,044 in 1921, they quickly rose again to unprecedented levels in 1922. By contrast, in the east, the opening up of the interior by the railway and competition from river based African traders brought new producers increasingly into the oil market.¹²⁹ Export volumes in the boom were well above pre-war. They fell by a third in 1921 but returned to 1920 levels the next year. Produced by women rather than men, and with no significant domestic uses, kernel exports fell less dramatically than oil: from 216,913 to 153,354 tons over the same period. There were no significant differences between the eastern and western patterns. The 1919 kernels figures were well surpassed by 1922, while oil exports were slower to recover.

Such differences between and within regions make generalizations about the impact of the slump on peasant producers unhelpful. Although they may not have been as badly hit as the overall figures might at first suggest, produce traders certainly were affected. The *Red Book* reflects the ebullience of 1919. We have much less information about the early 1920s, but few can doubt the conclusion of Gavin and Oyemakinde: “There was a wave of bankruptcies in Lagos and the confident independent businessmen of 1919/20 were back at their desks and canteens in 1921 working as clerks and agents of the now completely predominating European survivors”.¹³⁰ The smaller firms, and those which had recently expanded, could hardly have pulled through. Oil Nuts appears to have been taken over by the Niger Company, and Tin Areas by Lever Brothers, which refused to bail it out.¹³¹ On the African side, Doherty, who was not much involved in produce, survived reasonably well.¹³² Pearse and Thomas were crippled. Just before the crash, Thomas had got £150,000 credit from the Bank of British West Africa, and he had debts of £60,000 in Great Britain. To pay these off he had eventually, in 1924, to sell off most of his Lagos properties. Although he never really recovered from this setback, he kept up a brave front. Along with Pearse

he was one of only two Africans on the Lagos Chamber of Commerce, and served as its President in 1929–1930. He looked forward, perhaps several generations, to when his country would be a centre of industry, its riches owned and produced by prosperous, respected, God-fearing Africans, whose statesmen would govern it.¹³³

THE RISE OF HERBERT MACAULAY

Thomas would be significantly involved in the revival of West African nationalism in Nigeria at the end of the war. Again the initiative came from Casely Hayford in the Gold Coast. The future of the German colonies would have to be decided. British West Africans backed London in insisting that they must not be returned to Berlin. In November 1918, Savage called a meeting which was followed by another in January 1919. Participants included Randle, who became chairman, Ajasa, who quickly dropped out, Thomas, Obasa, Pearse, David Taylor, Doherty, the Vaughan brothers, Adeoye Deniga (sub-editor of the *Lagos Weekly Record*), Patriarch James G. Campbell (of the West African Episcopal Church), and Karimu Koton. Personal rivalries, above all that between Savage and Randle, quickly disrupted the organization. Within a few months only Savage, Deniga, Kotun, and Campbell were left. An attempt by Campbell to bring back Randle failed. A new committee was formed of more obscure persons who tried to establish branches at Ebute Metta, near to Lagos, Ibadan, Buguma, and Calabar, where they brought in Prince Bassey Duke, a considerable trader noted more for honesty and character than for intelligence. Attempts were made to work with Eleko and the white cap chiefs. Savage was for a time prominent in Eshugbayi's counsels as Political Adviser to the House of Dosunmo. Nevertheless, the committee became ineffective. Thomas withdrew "on the ground that Lagos politics were too full of intrigues to encourage him to take active part in political affairs but assured the Committee that he would watch with interest the progress of the movement".¹³⁴

The difficulties in Lagos delayed the first meeting of the National Congress of British West Africa, in Accra, until March 1920. Even so, the Nigerian delegation was small and unimpressive: Campbell, Deniga, Adeniyi Olugbile (from Ebute Metta), Bassey Duke, and Essien Offiong Essien. None of the Lagos businessmen who had been so prominent in the earlier stages of the movement attended. A branch of the Congress was eventually established at Lagos in June 1920, but was again quickly

rendered ineffective by clashes between Savage and Randle, who again pulled out to form a Reform Club with the backing of Ajasa's *Nigerian Pioneer*. In November, the *Lagos Weekly Record* provided a vividly depressing summation:

Chairman came after chairman, officers in galore as lieutenants in the Hytian (sic) army..., methods calculated, yes calculated, to dis-member the formation were resorted to, the usual egregious and egotistic aggrandisement of brooking no rival near the throne sets in and some men who would have been useful to the Congress were thereby eliminated from the Movement.¹³⁵

Unable itself to participate in the Congress's delegation to London in October 1920, the Lagos branch had to ask Oluwa and Shyngle, who were already in London over the land case, to represent them. For the rest of the decade the NCBWA in Nigeria would continue to depend on the charity of Herbert Macaulay, whose interest in it was barely tepid.¹³⁶

While the NCBWA conspicuously failed to retain its initial support, popular politics in Lagos was convulsed by the question of Eleko. Rather than listening to those who had paved the way for his restoration, Eshugbayi turned again to the Jamat Party. In September 1919, he placed its members in chieftaincy positions already held by the Lemomu's supporters, including Alli Balogun. Boyle, in charge in the interim between Lugard and Clifford, followed the advice of Henry Carr, who was strongly hostile to the Jamat, and again withdrew Eleko's recognition and stipend. Arriving shortly afterwards, determined to follow very different policies from his predecessor, and distrustful of Carr's advice, Clifford reversed this decision as soon as Eleko restored the pro-Lemomu chiefs. The Colonial Office considered this very ill-advised.¹³⁷

Meanwhile the land question and the rights of the white cap chiefs had become a matter for the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, the highest court of the Empire. These were the causes taken up by Herbert Macaulay, whom the Colonial Office recognized as "a dangerous man – as likely as anybody in Nigeria to be a leader of an anti-European movement on American-negro lines".¹³⁸ In London he acted as Oluwa's secretary, though also carrying Eleko's staff of office. While Macaulay always dressed as a European, exotically garbed Africans such as Oluwa, whose Yoruba dress was praised by *The Outfitter*,

attracted attention in England. They provided good copy for the press. Macaulay was alert to the opportunity, giving several interviews, of which the most important was with the *Daily Mail*. He presented Eleko as “the chief Negro in a possession three times the size of the United Kingdom...”, who “is acclaimed by the 17 million Nigerians, as the titular King of Lagos...”. He was receiving “less pay than the lowest-paid European gardener there...”, although under the treaty by which Docemo had ceded Lagos, he was entitled to “a pension equal to the net revenue...”, which now amounted to £4,000,000.¹³⁹ Sheerchutzpah soon brought Oluwa, Shyngle, and Macaulay even more success. On 31 July 1920, the magazine *West Africa* published a photograph of “The King shaking hand with Chief Oluwa of Lagos, with whom His Majesty had a chat at Buckingham Palace last week. Mr. Herbert Macauley [*sic*] is in the centre”. The write-up explained that Oluwa “was ‘snapped’ as he gave one of his rare smiles when the King shook him warmly by the hand”, and that Macaulay “bears the staff given by Queen Victoria to the King of Lagos, in 1852, on the abolition of slavery”. The Colonial Office was aghast. The Palace stonewalled. Whatever explanation it eventually gave does not appear in the C.O. files.¹⁴⁰

In Lagos, the authorities were careful never to mention the photograph, but it explains what many historians have found perplexing, their obsession with Macaulay’s possession of the staff. Eleko was illiterate, but he felt he understood the implication of the photograph. He could safely ignore the colonial government, as it would not “be supported by His Majesty’s Government or by Public Opinion in England”. While dismissive of Carr’s partisan analysis, Clifford noted the:

almost superstitious belief in [Macaulay’s] ... supposed power and influence ... entertained by some of the more ignorant and seditious sections of the indigenous population of Lagos ...; [many of whom] seriously expected ...that he would presently return in triumph from England armed with a mandate for the expulsion of the Colonial Government, and with authority to proclaim Eleko King of Lagos if not of Nigeria.

He called on Eshugbayi to disavow Macaulay and to proclaim this throughout the city in the most effective and convincing way for a largely illiterate population, by sending his bellman round. Henry Carr went to the palace to speak with Savage, who was a personal friend, only to find that Eleko had just repudiated him, even though he had advised against

sending the bellman. Because Eleko refused so publicly to support the government, on 1 Dec. 1920 official recognition was withdrawn and his stipend terminated, as had been done in similar circumstances in 1916.¹⁴¹ This time there would be no re-instatement. The repercussions would dominate Lagosian politics for the rest of the inter-war period. “Makoli” became a popular hero in Lagos. When electoral politics were introduced into the city his Nigerian National Democratic Party, established in June 1923, quickly became dominant, strongly supported as it was by the majority both of chiefs and of Muslims and by the well organized market-women. It easily defeated Thomas in the elections to the Legislative Council.¹⁴² Thomas instead became prominent internationally. At the 1921 Pan-African Congress in London, he spoke as one of the “people who had been taught to look at things from a Western point of view...”, opposing both residential segregation and indirect rule. He also spoke at the 1931 Congress, calling for African economic independence.¹⁴³ While Lagos and London always acknowledged Macaulay’s ability, they regarded the Oluwa with contempt as “a person of no real importance either personally or in virtue of his position”. Nevertheless, his “bevy of black lawyers”¹⁴⁴ won their case. *Amodu Tijani v Secretary Southern Nigeria* of 11 July 1921 would “become the *locus classicus* on the whole subject of Crown ownership of colonial lands”.¹⁴⁵ Many years later the Oluwa would persuade Eshugbayi’s successor to demand from Macaulay the return of the staff, an order which the court enforced. Those who had once revered Macaulay now mocked him: “‘*Makoli di ye ye E ma fun le ja mo*’ (Macaulay is now a plaything, do not give him fish any more)”.¹⁴⁶ Lagos, and Nigeria, would soon be ready for new men and new politics. But Macaulay had been its first successful democratic politician. Those who are inclined to deplore the man and his career might reflect that in England that role had been played by John Wilkes. We may fittingly end with him and the Oluwa having a last laugh in the presence of the British king.

NOTES

1. This conclusion largely follows the argument in David Stevenson, *With Our Backs to the Wall, Victory and Defeat in 1918*, London, Penguin, 2011.
2. John Turner, *British Politics and the Great War, Coalition and Conflict 1916–1918*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1992, p. 75.
3. 458 War Cabinet (31 Imperial War Cabinet) 14 Aug. 1918, CAB23/7.

4. C.O. mins. 30 Dec. 1916–17 Feb. 1918, CO323/726/61941.
5. Stevenson diary 17 Feb. 1917, A.J.P. Taylor (ed.), *Lloyd George, a Diary by Frances Stevenson*, London, Hutchinson, 1971, p. 145.
6. Long mins. 14 Feb. 1918 (1st quotation), CO554/40/6097, 25 Jan. 1917 (2nd quotation), CO554/33/3790, 19 Oct. 1917 (3rd quotation), CO554/36/50524.
7. Harding min. 14 Sept., Ellis min. 17 Sept., Long min. 21 Sept. 1917, CO554/35/4011.
8. A.W.A.M. Advisory Committee (to Lord Devonport) mins. 22 Jan., communicated by Niger Co. 25 Jan. 1917, remarks of Col. William Nicholl (African Association), chairman, CO554/36/4840.
9. John Grigg, *Lloyd George, War Leader 1916–1918*, London, Penguin, 2002, pp. 134–36.
10. Long min. 31 Jan. 1917, CO554/36/4841.
11. Advisory Committee 22 Jan. 1917, CO554/36/4840.
12. Trigge memo. 18 Oct. 1917, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86.
13. Ministry of Munitions to C.O. 23 Feb. 1917, CO323/760/10368; Harding min. 14 Sept. 1917, CO554/35/47011. This provides a convenient summary to that point.
14. The main documents are in CO323/762/28142 and CO323/758/22866, and are summarized in Harding's memo of 14 Sept. 1917, CO554/35/47011. For Devonport, Devonport to Steel-Maitland 31 Jan. 1917, CO554/36/4841.
15. Sir Arthur Salter, *Allied Shipping Control, An Experiment in International Administration*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1921, Table 6, pp. 355–59; Steel-Maitland min. 28 June 1917, CO323/762/28142.
16. Dixon to King (Ministry of Shipping) 30 Aug. 1917, CO323/751/41498; C.O. to Lugard 17 Sept., to Ministry of Food 30 Nov. 1917, CO/583/59/42278, 56353. Harding min. 31 Aug. 1918, CO554/40/41785.
17. War Trade Department to F.O. 8 June (c. C.O. 13 June) 1917, CO323/762/30020.
18. F.O. to Danish Trade Office (flimsy) 16 June 1917, CO323/750/30933.
19. Mansfield to Dixon 4 July, Harding min. 28 Aug. 1917, CO323/762/28142; Harding min. 5 May 1917 (quotation), CO323/758/22866. Mansfield's background was as an electrical engineer. Trigge to Scarbrough 18 Oct. 1917, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86.
20. Ministry of Food to C.O. 2 Feb., C.O. mins. 11–14 Feb., to Ministry of Food 19 Feb. 1918, CO554/36/6097.
21. Harding min. 16 Oct. 1917, CO554/36/50524, Strachey min. 5 July 1918, CO554/38/28949.

22. C.O. to Ministry of Food 19 Feb. 1918, CO554/39/6097.
23. Charles Wilson, *The History of Unilever*, vol. 1, London, Cassell, 1954, pp. 237–39. On 31 Dec. 1917 the Niger Co. had a backlog of 33,000 tons at Burutu alone, though half of this would be destroyed in a disastrous fire on 16 Jan. 1918. Trigge memos. 7 Oct. 1918, 7 Oct. 1919, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86.
24. Elder Dempster notice 5 June, Harding min. 28 Aug. 1917, CO554/36/41932, Harding min. 20 Mar. 1918, CO554/38/13761, Ministry of Shipping to C.O. 14 May, Harding min. 4 June, to Ministry of Shipping 17 June, Min. of Shipping to C.O. 3 May, Harding min. 4 June, C.O. to Min. of Shipping 14 June 1918, CO554/39/23671, 21899. Blue Book rates were about a sixth of commercial rates. Salter, *Allied Shipping Control*, p. 111.
25. L. Margaret Barnett, *British Food Policy During the First World War*, Boston, Allen & Unwin, 1985, pp. 141–43.
26. Interim report of the committee on the restriction of imports 1 Dec. 1917, War Cabinet 292, CAB23/4.
27. Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 1, pp. 169–70, 174–75. For the destroyers, War Cabinet 305, 24 Dec. 1917, CAB 23/4.
28. WC 292, 5 Dec. 1917, CAB 23/4; WC 320, 11 Jan., WC 347, 15 Feb. 1918, CAB 23/5, WC 387, 9 Apr., WC 392, 16 Apr. 1918, CAB 23/6; Ministry of Munitions memo. n.d., GT 4032, CAB 24/6, Notes by Food Controller 3 Apr. 1918, GT 4114, CAB 24/7, Curzon note 11 Apr. 1918, GT 4204, CAB 24/8.
29. Ministry of Munitions memo. n.d., (1st quotation) GT 4032, CAB 24/7, Imperial War Museum, *The Official History of the Ministry of Munitions*, Uckfield, East Sussex, The Naval and Military Press, 2014, vol. 7, part 1, p. 54, part 4, pp. 4–6, 80–81 (quotation at p. 81).
30. Mins. of interdepartmental meeting (C.O., Min. of Shipping, B. of T., D.M.O.T., Min. of Food, Finance, Explosive Dep't) 23 Aug., [? Min. of Munitions] note on the glycerine position 23 Aug. 1918, Harding min. and memo. 3 Aug., min. 6 Sept., Grindle min. 9 Sept., Fiddes min. 10 Sept., Long to Maclay (Minister of Shipping) 18 Sept. 1918, CO554/40/41765.
31. For a recent discussion, Yearwood, *Guarantee of Peace*, pp. 49–57. The analysis is based on that of Georges-Henri Soutou, *L'or et le sang, Les buts de Guerre économiques de la Première Guerre mondiale*, Paris, Fayard, 1989.
32. Min. of Food to C.O. 12 Oct. 1918, CO554/40/49399.
33. Dixon min. 6 Sept., Grindle min. 6 Dec. 1919, CO554/40/47653.
34. Clifford desp. 719, 19 Dec. 1918, CO554/37/4068.

35. Eno J. Usoro, *The Nigerian Oil Palm Industry, Government Policy and Export Production, 1906–1965*, Ibadan, Ibadan University Press, 1964, p. 29, Table 2.15, the percentage for oil was similar, p. 26, Table 2.14.
36. W.K. Hancock, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 2, *Problems of Economic Policy 1918–1930*, part 1, London, Oxford University Press, 1940, pp. 116–18.
37. Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 2, p. 247.
38. Usoro, *Oil Palm Industry*, pp. 28–29, Tables 2.14 & 2.15.
39. Harding min. 17 Oct. 1917, CO554/36/50059.
40. Trigge to Scarbrough 21 May, to Braithwaite 13 July (quotation), to Scarbrough 18 Oct. 1917 (review of the year), SP, MSS Afr. s. 93, 86.
41. Trigge memo. 7 Oct. 1919, *ibid.*, s. 86; Anthony Hopkins, “Peter Thomas (1873–1947 un commerçant nigérien à l’épreuve d’une économie colonial en crise”, in Charles-André Julien, et al. (eds.), *Les Africains*, Paris, Editions J.A., 1977, vol. 9, p. 327.
42. In addition to the sources cited in ns. 35 & 36, Frederick Pedler, *The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa, A History of the Origins of the United Africa Company 1707–1931*, London, Heinemann, 1974, p. 171. The Liverpool firms submitted a memorandum for arbitration claiming that at a preliminary meeting of the Control Committee Moore voted for them over their attempt to establish themselves in Kano and Zaria, but switched to the Niger Company at the final meeting on 9 Sept. after the buy-out). Trigge flatly denied this, claiming that Moore voted with the Niger Company on both occasions (to Braithwaite 13 July 1918 (flimsy)). As the vote was 5:3 against the Niger Company each time, this would appear to be correct. SP, MSS Afr. s. 99.
43. “Case for Opinion of Counsel on behalf of African Association”, opinion of F.H. Maugham (Hill Dickinson) 7 Nov. 1917, with undated, unsigned pencil notes (quotation), John Holt papers [JHP], MSS Afr. s. 1526/5/2, Rhodes House.
44. Trigge to Scarbrough 19 Mar. 1918, SP, MSS Afr. s. 100.
45. Trigge memo. 7 Oct. 1919, *ibid.*, s. 86 and correspondence between Travers, Smith, Braithwaite and Hill Dickinson, May–June 1919, *ibid.*, s. 93.
46. Boyle, Conf. A25, enclosing copy J. Percival (Director, Nigeria Marine) 14 Apr. 1919, CO583/74/28914; Pool Control Cttee mins. 21 Nov., 16 & 19 Dec. 1918, Trigge memo. 7 Oct. 1919 (quotation), SP, MSS Afr. s. 93, 96; *Nigeria Handbook*, 1925. Although he had shipped with the Niger Company, Thomas Welsh suffered from repeated delays at Burutu, which he thought were intended to induce him to sell up as well. Welsh to C.O. 5 Sept. 1919, CO583/83/51086.

47. Stephanie Newell, *The Forger's Tale, The Search for Odeziaku*, Athens, Ohio, Ohio University Press, 2006, pp. 94–97, quotations from reproduction of Stuart-Young to Harris 11 Apr. 1925 on p. 95.
48. Chike Akosa, *Heroes and Heroines of Onitsha*, Onitsha, Etukokwu Press (Nig) Ltd., 1987, p. 65.
49. Circular of 11 Mar. 1930 quoted in J. Ayodele Langley, *Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa 1900–1945*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973, p. 231.
50. Akosa, *Heroes of Onitsha*, p. iii.
51. Long to Charles Addison (Minister of Reconstruction) 23 Mar. 1918, CO554/39/14826.
52. Pedler, *Lion & Unicorn*, pp. 226–28, 250 (McNeill Scott), 257 (quotation).
53. Trigge memo. 7 Oct. 1919, SP, MSS Afr. s. 86.
54. Secondary accounts in Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 1, pp. 252–59, and W.P. Jolly, *Lord Leverhulme, A Biography*, London, Constable, 1976, pp. 189–90, 197–98 need to be set against the Niger Co. documents in SP, MSS Afr. s. 100. These form the basis of the next two paragraphs.
55. Hon. Algernon G. Mills (Glyn Mills, Currie & Co., the Niger Company's bankers) to Scarbrough 14 Oct. (the first sounding), & 7 Nov. 1919 the first document stating that the approach was from Levers, and suggesting a meeting with Leverhulme (quotation). Mills was the intermediary at the beginning of the negotiations. There is nothing in the Scarbrough papers to confirm Wilson's claim (p. 250) that the Niger Company had hinted that it wanted to be taken over. SP, MSS Afr. s. 100. Lever had gained his peerage in June 1917.
56. NC memo 10 Jan. 1920, *ibid.*
57. Quoted in Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 1, p. 252.
58. *Ibid.*, pp. 245 (1st quotation), 228 (2nd quotation).
59. *Ibid.*, pp. 246–47.
60. Hancock, *Survey of Commonwealth Affairs*, vol. 2, part 1, appendix C, tables pp. 340–41.
61. Produce in Sight 31 Dec. 1919, SP, MSS Afr. s. 100.
62. Emmott to Scarbrough 16 July 1920, *ibid.* Lord Emmott had become a director in 1918.
63. Trigge to Scarbrough 13 Aug. 1920, SP, MSS Afr. s. 100.
64. Trigge to Elder Dempster 17 Aug. 1920, *ibid.*
65. Edgar to Scarbrough 13 Feb. 1920, *ibid.*
66. Edgar to Scarbrough 12 Mar. 1920, *ibid.*
67. Leverhulme to Scarbrough (aboard R.M.S. *Saxon*) 20 Apr. 1920, *ibid.* Leverhulme had returned from America in late January or early February, but then travelled to the Hebrides, returning to London by 14 Feb.

68. Coates (underwriter) to Trigge (flimsy) 1 Oct. 1920, *ibid.*
69. Trigge to Scarbrough conf. 9 Sept. 1920, *ibid.*
70. Leverhulme to Scarbrough 24 Sept. 1920, *ibid.*
71. Emmott to Leverhulme 1 Oct. 1920, *ibid.*
72. Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 1, p. 264.
73. This paragraph is based on Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 2, pp. 195–98, 206–7, 253–63, 271–82.
74. Pedler, *Lion & Unicorn*, pp. 184–92.
75. *Ibid.*, pp. 233–38, 297–300, Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 1, pp. 304–5 (quotation at p. 305).
76. Wilson, *History of Unilever*, vol. 2, pp. 301–7.
77. Lugard to Lady Lugard 15 Nov. (1st quotation), 6 Dec. (2nd quotation), 8 Dec. 1916 (4th quotation), 21 Jan. 1917 (3rd quotation), LP, MSS Lugard 4.
78. Nigerian Council 29 Dec. 1916, in Lugard desp. 68, 5 Feb. 1917, CO583/55/10736.
79. Lugard to Lady Lugard 21 Jan. 1917 (1st quotation), 9 Dec. 1916 (2nd quotation), LP MSS Lugard 4.
80. Lugard desp. conf. 4 Feb. 1917 (quotations), Ross report 30 Nov. 1916, Strachey min. 16 Mar., Reed min. 19 Mar., to Lugard, conf. 10 Apr. 1917, CO583/55/10824. Long min. 31 Mar., to Lugard 16 Apr. 1917, CO583/33/27195/15. For the rising, J.A. Atanda, “The Iseyin-Okeiho Rising of 1916: An Example of Socio-Political Conflict in Colonial Africa”, *JHSN* 4.4 (June, 1969), pp. 497–514.
81. Lugard desp. conf. A, 25 Sept. 1917.
82. Lugard desp. conf. 24 Mar., Harding min. (1st & 2nd quotations), to Lugard 19 Apr. 1918 (3rd quotation), CO 583/65/18485.
83. Lugard desp. conf. 31 Jan., covering Moorhouse to Lugard 2 Jan. (quotations); to Lugard 3 Apr. 1918, CO583/65/11411.
84. To Lugard desp. 1365, 3 Oct. 1916, CO583/54/46053; to Lugard desp. 1674, 2 Dec. 1916, CO583/49/55579; Strachey to United Kingdom-West Africa Shipowners Advisory Committee 18 Nov. 1917 (flimsy), CO 583/61/1898; Ayodeji Olukoju, “Elder Dempster and the Shipping Trade of Nigeria”, *J.A.H.* 33(1992), p. 269.
85. Lugard to Lady Lugard 15 Feb. 1917, *ibid.*, also in Margery Perham, *Lugard, The Years of Authority, 1898–1945*, London, Collins, 1960, p. 601.
86. Lugard desp. 402, 11 June 1917, CO583/58/35915.
87. Lugard desp. 722, 21 Oct. 1917 & Harding marginal note, n.d., CO554/33/56388.
88. Lugard report on the amalgamation and progress of Nigeria 9 Apr. 1919, CO583/83/22447.

89. Clifford to Lugard 7 Feb., Lugard to Clifford 21 May 1918, LP MSS Brit. Emp. S75/45.
90. Nigeria Council mins., 28, 29 Dec. 1917, Fiddes min. 16 Apr. 1918, W.A.S. Hewins, *The Apologia of an Imperialist, Forty Years of Empire Policy*, London, Constable, 1929, vol. 2, pp. 118–19, 159, diary entries 12 Feb., 4 Aug. 1917. Hewins had become parliamentary under secretary in September 1917.
91. Lugard desps. 402, 11 June, CO583/58/35915; 772, 21 Oct. 1917, CO554/33/56388.
92. Behn to Lloyd George 18 Dec. 1917, CO554/36/62728.
93. Prices from Sept.–Dec. 1916 are from CO554/33/6563, from Jan.–Sept. 1917 from Harding min. 4 July 1918, CO554/38/28949.
94. CO to Boyle 4 Mar. 1919, desp. 312, CO583/68/59435. See also above, p. 197.
95. Burrowes min. 4 Sept. (flimsy) in Boyle conf. desp. 20 Dec. 1918, African Section. Liverpool Chamber of Commerce 18 Mar. 1918, CO554/37/5409, 38/14107.
96. Lugard desp. conf. 24 Apr. 1919, CO583/83/25717.
97. From 3,509,344 to 260,448 gallons. In 1917 spirits duties contributed £88,719 to total customs revenues of £1,201,331. Ayodeji Olukoju, *The "Liverpool" of West Africa: The Dynamics and Impact of Maritime Trade in Lagos, 1900–1950*, Trenton, NJ, Africa World Press, 2004, p. 61, Table 11. Read min. 9 Dec. 1918 (quotation), CO323/786/60285.
98. 1917 Estimates in Lugard desp. 991, 9 Dec. 1916, CO583/50/842.
99. Gerald K. Helleiner, *Peasant Agriculture and Economic Growth in Nigeria*, Homewood, IL, Richard D. Irwin, 1966, Tables II-6-2,3. See also above p. 28 & n. 123.
100. See above, pp. 151–52.
101. Olukoju, "Elder Dempster", p. 269.
102. *Red Book*: Co-operative Wholesale Society, pp. 300–1 Grace Bros., p. 69 (quotation), Jurgens Colonial Products, p. 75, Colonial Bank, pp. 302–3.
103. Harding min. 30 May 1917, CO583/63/28076.
104. Jurgens to C.O. 19 Jan. 1917, CO583/64/3853, cf. Jurgens to Burrowes 10 Nov. 1916, CO583/53/5464.
105. Pedler, *Lion & Unicorn*, p. 195.
106. *Red Book*: S.C.I.A.O., p. 77, Donald Cameron & Co., p. 93.
107. Ibid.: Ambrosini, pp. 73–74, Tangalakis, p. 76.
108. *Red Book*: Crombie Steedman, p. 81, Stavely, p. 86, Sassen, & Compagnie bordelaise, p. 87, Barker & Camoin, p. 89.
109. Ibid.: Edwards Bros., p. 87, C.H. Werner, pp. 189–90, Hendersons, pp. 79–80.

110. Ibid., Oil Nuts, p. 84, (see also above, p. 118), John Radcliffe, pp. 83–84 (quotations), Lezzi, pp. 89–90.
111. Ibid., p. 93.
112. See above, pp. 19–20, 142, 215.
113. Ungebauer to W.J. Bush (Essence Distillers) 19 June, in Bush to W.T.I.D. 4 Aug. 1916, CO583/49/37478.
114. An excellent recent account of the development of political Germanophobia in wartime England is Antony Lentin, *Banker, Traitor, Scapegoat, Spy? The Troublesome Case of Sir Edgar Speyer, An Episode of the Great War*, London, Haus Publishing, 2013. A fuller account of the “black book” trial is Philip Hoare, *Wilde’s Last Stand: Scandal, Decadence and Conspiracy During the Great War*, London, Duckworth, 1997, which is marred by the author’s almost complete lack of understanding of politics.
115. Stewart to Sir William Bull (Long’s P.P.S.) 14 Jan. 1918, CO583/69/2890.
116. Harding min. 18 Aug. 1917 (2nd quotation), CO583/62/4069, 12 Jan. 1918 (1st quotation), CO583/69/1768.
117. W.T.I.D. 1 Mar., covering copies of letters sent through Frank Clements (quotation from that of 3 Apr. 1917), Strachey & Risley mins. 4 Mar. 1918. The C.O. had asked for these letters on 21 Feb. 1918, CO583/70/10658,729.
118. Steel-Maitland & Long mins. 18 July 1917, CO583/62/35836.
119. Stewart to Steel-Maitland 14 Aug. (with copies of letters from A.W.A.M.), & 1 Sept., C.O. to Lugard desp. Conf. 9 Oct., Fiddes to Lugard private (carbon copy) 8 Oct. 1917, CO583/64/40649,43939.
120. Lugard desp. Conf. 19 Nov., C.O. mins.: Harding 19 Dec., Risley 20 Dec. (quotation), Read 21 Dec., Long 22 Dec. 1917, to Lugard 15 Jan. 1918, CO583/61/62015.
121. Stewart parliamentary question for Monday 30 May 1918, CO583/69/25964.
122. Report of Committee of Inquiry 20 May, Lugard desp. 19 June, w. copies Ungebauer to Central Secretary, Lagos 2 June (quotation), to Irving (his lawyer) 7 June 1918, CO583/66/34961.
123. This paragraph and the next are based on the copy of the Inquest in H.C. Moorhouse (Ag Gov.) desp. 143, 8 Feb. 1919. Testimonies used are those of 21 June: Irving, Webb, K.K. Grieve (Medical Officer); 25 June: Lawson, & W. Ralston (Chemist); & 27 June 1918: Kendall, Ajasa, & Pearse. Ajasa received two letters: 27 May & 20 June (quotation). The letter to Pearse is dated 15 June 1918. CO 583/73/13285.
124. C.O. to F.O. 16 Dec. 1919, CO583/79/69425.

125. C.O. mins. & initials: Harding 24 June, Strachey, Batterbee, & Read 25 June, Fiddes & Long 29 June 1918, CO583/64/43939.
126. A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, New York, Fawcett Publications, 1963 (1961), p. 184.
127. Usoro, *Oil Palm Industry*, p. 26, Table 2.12.
128. In the rest of this paragraph, global export figures come from a Department of Trade memo. on factors affecting British trade in West Africa sent to the Colonial Office on 16 Mar. 1925 (CO554/67/12302), while figures comparing eastern and western exports come from Susan Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest, an Economic History of the Ngwa Redion, South-Eastern Nigeria 1800–1980*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, p. 151, Table 6.
129. Martin, *Palm Oil and Protest*, pp. 92–93.
130. R.J. Gavin & Wale Oyemakinde, “Economic Development in Nigeria since 1900”, in Obaro Ikeme (ed.), *Groundwork of Nigerian History*, Ibadan, Heinemann Educational Books (Nigeria), 1980, p. 505.
131. In September 1920, Trigge intended to see Liverpool bankers about the Company of African Merchants and about Oil Nuts. Trigge to Scarbrough 6 Sept. 1920, SP, MSS Afr. s. 100. This suggests they were both then subsidiaries. Oil Nuts certainly was by 1928. For Tin Areas, unsigned note “Finance” n.d. [late Nov. 1920] and Scarbrough min. 22 Nov. 1920, SP, MSS Afr. s. 100, and Jan Hogendorn, *Nigerian Groundnut Exports, Origins and Early Development*, Zaria, Ahmadu Bello University Press, 1978, p. 140.
132. Anthony Hopkins, *An Economic History of West Africa*, London, Longman, 1975, pp. 240–41.
133. Hopkins, “Peter Thomas”, pp. 309–18. His aspirations were set out in his will of 1919 (p. 320).
134. This account is largely based on C.O. Olusanya, “The Lagos Branch of the National Congress of British West Africa”, *J.S.H.N.* 4/2, June 1968, pp. 324–26 (quotation p. 326). For Savage, P.D. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites in the Politics of Lagos*, p. 128. For Deniga, Langley, *Pan Africanism*, pp. 190–91 and Fred I.A. Omu, *Press and Politics in Nigeria, 1880–1937*, Bristol, Longman. 1978. pp. 58–60, for Campbell, Langley, *Pan Africanism*, pp. 191–93. For Bassey Duke, Boyle to Lugard 12 May 1913, CO520/130/19439.
135. Olusanya, “Lagos Branch”, pp. 326–31, quotation (from J.B. Adebayo, *Lagos Weekly Record* 27 Nov. 1920), p. 331. There is a photograph of the full Congress in the *Red Book*, p. 140.
136. Olusanya, “Lagos Branch”, p. 332, Langley, *Pan Africanism*, p. 187.

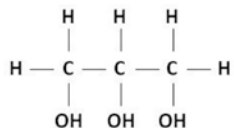
137. Clifford desp. conf. 12 Dec. 1920, Harding min. 11 Jan. 1921, CO583/94/63713, H.O. Danmole, "The Crisis of the Lagos Muslim Community 1915–1947", in Ade Adefuye, Babatunde Agiri, & Jide Osuntokun (eds.), *History of the Peoples of Lagos State*, Ikeja, Lagos State, Lantern Books, 1987, pp. 299–301, Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, pp. 101–3.
138. Harding min. 11 Jan. 1921, CO583/94/63713.
139. *Daily Mail*, 8 July 1920.
140. *West Africa* 31 July (clipping), Harding min. 6 Aug., and correspondence between H.C. Thornton (Private Secretary, C.O.), Lord Stamfordham (Private Secretary to the King) Crichton (Comptroller, Ceremonial Dep't St. James's Palace) 13–18 Aug. 1920, CO583/96/40999.
141. Clifford conf. 63713, 12 Dec. 1920 (quotation), CO583/94/63713, Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, pp. 127–31. Cole struggles to explain Savage's conduct and the eventual decision. He may have been trying to establish his independence of Carr, but this is speculation. The merchant, C.O. Blaize considered him guilty of duplicity. For Savage's friendship with Carr, see also Herbert Heelas Macaulay C.E., *Henry Rawlinson Carr*, E.B., Alayande Publishing Company, 1983 (originally published as *Transfer or Retirement. Henry Carr Must Go. An Open Comment*, Lagos, 1924), pp. 50, 52.
142. Richard Sklar, *Nigerian Political Parties, Power in an Emergent African Nation*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1963, pp. 46–47, Hopkins, "Peter Thomas", p. 328. Hopkins says that Macaulay defeated Thomas, but, as Macaulay had a criminal conviction which barred him from standing, the party must be meant rather than the man.
143. Langley, *Pan Africanism*, pp. 73, 76 (quotation), Hopkins, "Peter Thomas", p. 328.
144. Harding min. 6 Aug. 1920, (both quotations) CO583/96/40999.
145. T.O. Elias, *Nigerian Land Law*, London, Sweet & Maxwell, 1971 (1951), p. 10.
146. Cole, *Modern and Traditional Elites*, pp. 178–79.

APPENDIX

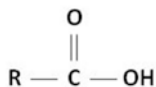
APPENDIX A

The Chemistry of Oils and Fats

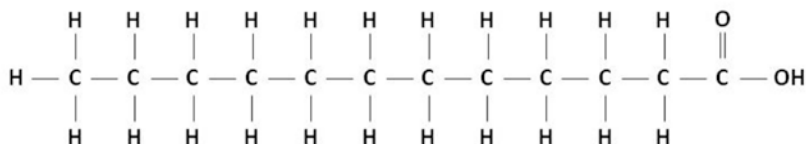
The main features of the chemistry of oils and fats can be simply explained. Two aspects are involved: an alcohol as a foundation to which chains of fatty acids are attached. The alcohol is in fact a triple one—glycerol, though the commercial product, which may contain small impurities, is known as glycerine. It has this structure:



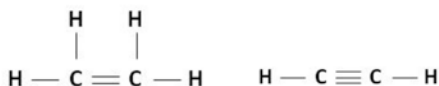
Fatty acids are carbon chains (represented by the letter R) having the general formula:



These chains may be of considerable length. The shortest one with which we are concerned is lauric acid, which has 11 carbon atoms in the R chain. Its chemical formula is $\text{CH}_3(\text{CH}_2)_{10}\text{CO}_2\text{H}$:

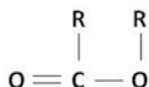


It will be noted that the carbon atoms in the chain are linked by single bonds to the hydrogen atoms and to the other carbon atoms, the total number of bonds from each carbon atom being four. These acids are called saturated. Carbon atoms can also form double or even triple bonds with other carbon atoms, always provided that the total number of bonds from each carbon atom remains four:



Chains with such bonds are called unsaturated. Unsaturated acids may be made saturated by hydrogenation, which was beginning to be developed by the First World War. This would make the various fats and oils more interchangeable than they previously had been.

Fats and oils are esters, with the general formula:



Fatty acids attach themselves to glycerine by displacing the hydrogen in the hydroxyl (OH) radical. The acids with which we are concerned are lauric, myristic ($\text{CH}_3(\text{CH}_2)_{12}\text{CO}_2\text{H}$) and palmitic ($\text{CH}_3(\text{CH}_2)_{14}\text{CO}_2\text{H}$), which are saturated, and oleic $\text{CH}_3\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{30}\text{CO}_2\text{H}$, which has a double carbon bond, and is unsaturated. The longer the R chain the higher the melting point of the acid: for lauric 44°C , for myristic 55°C , and for palmitic 63°C . Unsaturated acids have much lower melting points: for oleic 13.4°C . Kernel oil is roughly 50% lauric, 16% myristic, and 16% oleic. Coconut oil is roughly 45% lauric, 16% myristic, and 9% palmitic. The strong preponderance of saturated acids renders these oils solid outside of the tropics. Palm oil is roughly 42% palmitic, but the percentage of oleic is about the same, rendering it usually liquid.

Making margarine does not involve fundamental chemical changes in the ester. The fatty acids remain attached to the triglyceride. In soap-making, sodium hydroxide (NaOH) is used to detach the fatty acid chains and bind them to the sodium. Glycerine therefore emerges as a by-product. If food production is the priority, margarine is preferred to soap. If explosives and propellants are the priority, soap is preferred to margarine. With fats and oils the wartime choice is very much between guns and butter.

In my initial research, using the Colonial Office files, I was surprised at how little this question came up. However, the glycerine conditions were imposed on merchant firms rather than on producers. The burden upon them was the same whether they sold to soapmakers or margarine makers.

APPENDIX B

Lagos and Liverpool Kernel Prices 1914–1916

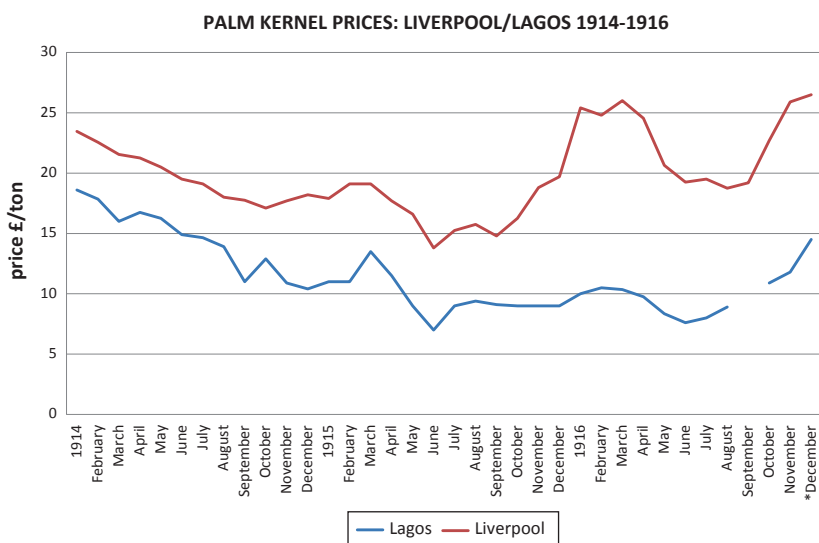
<i>Year</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Lagos price £/ton</i>	<i>Liverpool price £/ton</i>	<i>Difference £/ton</i>
1914	1	18/11/8	23/8/9	4/17/1
	2	17/16/8	22/11/3	4/15/7
	3	16/-/-	21/11/3	5/11/3
	4	16/15/-	21/5/-	4/10/-
	5	16/2/6	20/10/-	4/7/6
	6	14/18/4	19/5/-	4/7/4
	7	14/13/4	19/2/6	4/9/2
	8	13/17/6	18/-/-	4/2/6
	9	11/-/-	17/15/-	6/15/-
	10	12/17/6	17/2/6	4/5/-
	11	10/17/6	17/12/6	6/5/-
	12	10/7/6	18/3/9	7/16/9
1915	1	11/-/-	17/18/9	7/18/9
	2	11/-/-	19/2/6	8/2/6
	3	13/10/-	19/2/6	5/12/6
	4	11/10/-	17/13/9	6/3/9
	5	9/-/-	16/11/3	7/11/3
	6	7/-/-	13/16/3	6/16/3
	7	9/-/-	15/5/-	6/5/-
	8	9/7/6	15/15/-	6/7/6
	9	9/2/6	14/16/3	5/13/9
	10	9/-/-	16/5/-	7/5/-

(continued)

Appendix B (continued)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Lagos price £/ton</i>	<i>Liverpool price £/ton</i>	<i>Difference £/ton</i>
1916	11	9/-/-	18/16/3	9/16/3
	12	9/-/-	19/12/6	10/12/6
	1	10/-/-	25/3/9	15/3/9
	2	10/10/-	24/16/3	14/6/3
	3	10/7/-	26/-/-	15/13/-
	4	9/15/-	24/11/3	14/16/3
	5	8/7/4	20/13/-	12/5/8
	6	7/12/4	19/5/-	11/12/8
	7	8/-/-	19/10/-	11/10/-
	8	8/18/10	18/15/4	9/16/6
	9	Not reported	19/3/9	
	10	10/17/8	22/14/4	11/16/8
	11	11/16/6	25/18/1	14/1/7
	12	14/10/-1st ½	26/10/10	12/10/10

Prices Jan. 1914–Aug. 1916 from SMP, GD 193/93/1; Sept.–Dec. 1916 from CO554/33/6563. Difference figures have been recalculated.



*The figure is for the first half of December 1916

APPENDIX C

Sale of German Property in Nigeria 14–16 November 1916

<i>German Owner</i>	<i>Site Location</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Buyer</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
G.L. Gaiser	Lagos, Marina	£37,000	Elder Dempster	
G.L. Gaiser	Lagos, 7 Campos St.	£1000	Crombie Steedman	
G.L. Gaiser	Lagos, Ebute Ero	£23,500	Miller Bros.	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Lagos, Apapa	£20,500	London & Kano	
Jackel	Lagos, Williams & Market	£5000	Fischer	For Thomas
Witt und Büsch	Lagos, Marina	£13,250	Wholesale Co-op Society	
Witt und Büsch	Lagos, Tinubu St.	£46,500	African Association	
Witt und Büsch	Lagos, Offin 88	£16,500	Lagos Stores	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
Witt und Büsch	Lagos, Offin 90	£10,250	Lagos Stores	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
Woermann	Lagos, Marina	£56,000	Elder Dempster	
Woermann	Lagos, Apapa	£39,000	Elder Dempster	
German	Calabar, Prospect Beach	£2750	African Association	
W.A.T.C.				
Bey u. Zimmer	Gana Gana	£2300	Niger Co.	
Bey u. Zimmer	Koko	£4500	MacIver/Levers	
Bey u. Zimmer	Patani	£6100	John Holt	
Bey u. Zimmer	Warri	£8250	African Traders	
Bey u. Zimmer	Sapele	£2800	McNeil Scott	
Bey u. Zimmer	Siluko	£2000	African Association	
Behrens u. W	Sapele	£2050	Miller Bros.	
Pagenstecher	Warri			Sold Lagos Apr. 1917, MacIver £700
Pagenstecher	Ogrugru			Sold Lagos Apr. 1917, Niger Co. £590
Pagenstecher	Omerun			Sold Lagos Apr. 1917, Niger Co. £170

(continued)

Appendix C (continued)

<i>German Owner</i>	<i>Site Location</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Buyer</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Pagenstecher	Onitsha Market	£550	Niger Co.	
Pagenstecher	Onitsha	£10,250	Niger Co.	
	Waterside			
German	Calabar	£700	African	
W.A.T.C.			Association	
German	Ikang	£2200	Miller Bros.	
W.A.T.C.				
Deutsche	Oron	£5000	African	Later recorded
Kamerun			Association	as Miller Bros.
Gschaft.				
Deutsche	Calabar,	£6100	African	
Kamerun	Henshaw		Association	
Gschaft.	Beach			
Deutsche	Calabar, Duke	£2400	African Traders	
Kamerun	Town			
Gschaft.				
Niger-Benue	Warri	£10,100	MacIver/Levers	
Trans.				
Mertens	Koko	£2300	Holt & Moore	Later recorded
				as African
				Association
Pagenstecher	Ajaokuta	£2250	John Holt	Later recorded
				as Niger Co.
Pagenstecher	Etobe	£800	Niger Co.	
Pagenstecher	Lokoja, Camp	£3500	Niger Co.	Later recorded
	Rd			as Hassan
Pagenstecher	Lokoja,	£1800	John Holt	Later recorded
	Frontage			as Niger Co.
Pagenstecher	Egbom			Sold Lagos Apr.
				1917 Niger
				Co. £1090
Pagenstecher	Gerynia			Sold Lagos Apr.
				1917 Niger
				Co. £130
Pagenstecher	Umaisha			Sold Lagos Apr.
				1917 Niger
				Co. £50
Pagenstecher	Bagana			No bids
Pagenstecher	Ogudu			Sold Lagos Apr.
				1917 Thomas
				£1200

(continued)

Appendix C (continued)

<i>German Owner</i>	<i>Site Location</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Buyer</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
Pagenstecher	Zaria, Railway	£250	R. Hassan	
Meyer	Kano, Railway	£100	G.B. Ollivant	
G.L. Gaiser	Opobo	£12,250	African Traders	
G.L. Gaiser	Abeokuta, Ibara			To be sold locally, no record
G.L. Gaiser	Abeokuta, Itori	£420		Later recorded as Niger Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Ibadan, Iddo Gate	£4500	MacIver/Levers	
Witt und Büsch	Ibadan, Iddo Gate	£2900	John Holt	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Ijoko, Station Plot	£170	Lagos Stores	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Olomu, Stat. Plot	£155		To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Agbesi, SP	£125		To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Wasimi, SP	£170	African Association	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Iwowo, SP	£135	G.B. Ollivant	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Alagada, SP	£320	L.S. Woolf	Later recorded as Produce of W.A. Ltd
G.L. Gaiser	Sanusi, SP	£27	G.B. Ollivant	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Opeji, SP	£135	G.B. Ollivant	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Eruwa Rd, SP	£135	G.B. Ollivant	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Ogunshileh, SP	£112/10/-	G.B. Ollivant	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Adio, SP	£155	John Holt	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Olodo, SP	£435	African Association	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Lalaupon, SP1	£180	Lagos Stores	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Lalaupon, SP3	£125	Duncan	
G.L. Gaiser	Iwo, SP	£210		To Brit. Nigeria Co.

(continued)

Appendix C (continued)

<i>German Owner</i>	<i>Site Location</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Buyer</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
G.L. Gaiser	Ileigbo, SP	£180 or £160	Crombie Steedman	Later recorded as Thomas
G.L. Gaiser	Ede, SP	£285	African Association	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Oshogbo, SP	£1675	Lagos Stores	Probably sold with Witt und Büsch
G.L. Gaiser	Ikirun, SP	£320		Oshogbo, SP To Brit. Nigeria Co.
G.L. Gaiser	Okuku, SP	£180	G.B. Ollivant	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
Witt und Büsch	Ogunshileh, SP	£90	G.B. Ollivant	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
Witt und Büsch	Adio, SP	£210	Lagos Stores	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
Witt und Büsch	Lalupon, SP			
Witt und Büsch	Ede, SP	£300	John Holt	To Brit. Nigeria Co.
Witt und Büsch	Oshogbo, SP			Probably sold w. Gaiser
G.L. Gaiser	Abeokuta, SP	£2000		Oshogbo SP To Brit. Nigeria Co. This may be linked with Gaiser Ibara.
G.L. Gaiser	Oshogbo, Railway Plot			May be linked with the Oshogbo SP.
G.L. Gaiser	Oshogbo Railway Plot			Probably as above
G.L. Gaiser	Bode Sadu	£200	Niger Co.	
G.L. Gaiser	Ilorin	£600	G.B. Ollivant	
G.L. Gaiser	Zaria	£550	G.B. Ollivant	
G.L. Gaiser	Kano 8 & 8A	£2300	Paterson	
			Zochonis	
G.L. Gaiser	Kano 24	£2100	Scriven Bros.	Later recorded as Thomas

(continued)

Appendix C (continued)

<i>German Owner</i>	<i>Site Location</i>	<i>Price</i>	<i>Buyer</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
G.L. Gaiser	Palma			Sold Lagos Apr. 1917, GBO £100
G.L. Gaiser	Leckie			Sold Lagos Apr. 1917, GBO £200

Burrowes had already sold to the government for £180 whatever remained of the sovereign rights acquired by Gaiser at Mahin Beach during the “Scramble for Africa”.

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INDEX

Note: Page numbers followed by *n* indicate an endnote with relevant number.

A

- Aarhus Oliefabrik, 175–6
Achtert, Gustav, 60
Ademola, Prince Ladapo, 145
Admiralty, requisition of ships, 79
African Association
 amalgamation negotiations, 74–7, 236–7
 coast and western areas, 26, 27
 Combine member, 70, 71
 enemy shareholders, 185
 post-war, 238
 relations with British firms, 31–3
 sale of German property, 6–7
African and Eastern Trade Corporation, 238, 240, 241
African merchants
 Duncan's London trip, 7, 152, 165–6
 improved conditions, 245
 Lagos élite, 19–22, 23, 58, 143
 Manifesto on shipping problems, 146–51, 156, 165
 shipping grievances, 139–43
African middlemen, 14–16, 65
African Oil Nuts, 138–9, 181, 216, 247, 251
African Ranches Ltd., 74
African Traders, 27, 216
Agbaje, Salami, 147, 149
Agege Planters Union, 147, 149, 150
Aitken, Max. *See* Beaverbrook, Lord (Max Aitken)
Ajasa, Kitoyi
 background, 143–4
 on Empire Resources Development Committee, 244–5
 land allocation, 24
 leading lawyer, 23, 25, 150
 nationalist committee, 252
 Nigerian Pioneer, 55, 143, 253
 and Ungebauer, 61, 249–50
 water rate, 154, 155
Akerele, David Evaristo, 151
Albrechts, 35, 87*n*85, 112, 216
alcohol imports, 36–7
Ambrosini, L., 30, 73, 247
Amodu Tijani v Secretary Southern Nigeria (1921), 255
Anderson, Sir John, 57, 99, 103

Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society, [20](#), [170](#), [184](#), [198](#)
 Asquith, Herbert Henry
 Australian shipping, [135](#)
 Harcourt's influence, [99](#), [101](#)
 and Law, [102](#)
 neutrals and German properties, [183](#)
 political crisis, [209–212](#)
 prime minister, [7](#), [8](#), [193–4](#), [196](#), [204](#)
 report on kernel trade, [116](#)
 Association of West African Merchants (A.W.A.M.)
 British concerns, [167–8](#)
 creation, [106–7](#)
 German properties campaign, [169](#), [170–72](#), [185–6](#)
 Astor, Waldorf, [211](#)
 Australia, [134](#), [135](#)
 Azikiwe, Nnamdi, [28](#), [144](#)

B

Baird, Johnny, [208](#)
 Baldwin, Stanley, [199](#), [202](#)
 Balfour, A.J., [79](#), [102](#), [135](#)
 Balogun, Alli, [24](#), [26](#), [65](#), [153](#), [253](#)
 Bamgbose and Brothers, [151–2](#)
 Banbury, Sir Frederick, [196](#)
 Bank of British West Africa, [34](#), [55](#), [70](#), [113](#), [166](#)
 Barker and Camoin, [247](#)
 Barth, Ernest, [73](#)
 Batterbee, H.F., [250](#)
 bead trade, [37](#), [61](#), [62](#)
 Beaverbrook, Lord (Max Aitken), [185](#), [196](#), [202](#), [203–4](#), [208–9](#)
 Behrens und Wehner, [26](#), [59](#)
 Belgium, enemy property, [110–111](#), [112](#)

Bey und Zimmer, [26](#), [59](#)
 Bibby & Sons, [139](#)
 Bigland, Alfred
 African merchants, [166](#)
 E.R.D.C. spokesman, [179](#)
 Germany properties, [202](#)
 glycerine conditions, [131–2](#), [135](#), [136](#), [137–8](#)
 palm kernels levy, [119](#), [120](#)
 shipping, [142](#)
 Birtwistle, C.A., [172](#), [213](#), [246](#)
 Blake, Robert, [197](#)
 Blumenfeld, R.D., [185](#)
 Board of Agriculture, [113–14](#)
 Board of Trade, [113–14](#), [137](#)
 Bonetta, Sarah, [153](#)
 Booth, Handel, [176](#), [202](#)
 Borno, [16](#)
 Boyle, A.G., [56](#), [145](#), [150](#), [154–5](#), [166](#), [253](#)
 Braimah, Lemomu (Imam), [25–6](#), [153](#), [155](#), [253](#)
 Branco, Joachim, [150](#)
 Brand, Robert, [211](#)
 British and African Produce Supply Company, [146–7](#)
 British Cotton Growing Association, [61](#), [150](#), [165](#)
 British Nigeria Company, [216](#), [217](#), [238](#)
 British 'Ring' companies
 amalgamation negotiations, [74–7](#)
 Burrowes' dislike of, [3](#), [72](#), [78](#), [167](#)
 Colonial Office concerns, [2](#), [78](#), [167–8](#), [169](#), [184–5](#), [231](#)
 effect on prices, [71–2](#), [80](#)
 emergence, [5](#), [70–74](#)
 German property purchases, [215](#), [216–17](#)
 Lugard's apprehension, [77](#), [78](#)
 Lugard's change of opinion, [244](#)

- response to German property proposals, 2, 6–7
- shipping allocation, 140–41, 148, 166–7
- shipping monopoly, 78. *See also* Association of West African Merchants (A.W.A.M.)
- Brünger, Willy, 55, 59
- Buckmaster, Lord, 64
- Bull, Sir William, 177
- Burrowes, Thomas F.
 - German properties, 106, 111, 112, 113, 170
 - and German traders, 59
 - hostility to the Ring, 3, 72, 78, 167
 - kernels export duty suggestion, 67
 - producer prices, 15
 - Receiver of liquidated enemy property, 3, 57–8, 64–5
 - and Ungebauer, 62
- Butcher, J.G., 202
- C
- Caillard, Sir Vincent, 177
- Calabar, 26, 27, 58
- Cameron, Donald, and Co, 247
- Camoin, Mr., 247
- Campbell, James G., Patriarch, 146, 252
- Canaris, Basil John, 62–3, 247
- Canaris and Tangelakis, 63, 247
- Capel Slaughter, Sir William, 173–4, 175
- Cardoso, L.A., 151
- Carr, Henry, 23, 243, 253, 254–5
- Carson, Sir Edward
 - Attorney General, 65
 - dissatisfaction with Asquith coalition, 2, 3, 7–8, 171, 176, 193
- German properties, 7–8, 179–80, 184, 191ⁿ87
- German properties Commons debate, 200–201
- German properties Commons motion, 179–80, 196–7
- Germanophobia, 248
- and Lloyd George, 205–6
- Lloyd George government, 209–210, 211–12
- Oscar Wilde’s libel defence, 195
- parliamentary supporters, 195–6
- Serbia resignation, 195
- cattle cake, 4, 68–9, 114, 231
- Cavendish-Bentinck, Lord Henry, 119, 120, 121, 170
- Cecil, Lord Robert, 135–6, 198
- C.F.A.O. (Compagnie française de l’Afrique occidentale), 19, 31, 70, 139
- Chamberlain, Austen, 102, 194
- Chamberlain, Joseph, 201
- Chamberlain, Neville, 107
- Chambers of Commerce, Joint Committee, 114–15, 167, 168, 169
- Christian, G.W., 28, 47ⁿ106, 71, 237
- Churchill, Winston, 101, 179, 194, 202, 230
- Clements, Frank, 62, 72
- Clifford, Sir Hugh, 155–6, 235, 244, 253, 254
- Co-operative Wholesale Society, 215, 246
- cocoa
 - expansion, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20
 - export tax suggestion, 104–5
 - exports, 73, 149, 245
 - West Indies, 109
- coconut oil, 132–3, 138. *See also* copra; glycerine

- Coker, Africanus, 14–15, 22
 Coker, Jacob K., 147, 149, 150–51
 Coker, Moses, 149
 Cole, Patrick, 25
 Colonial Bank, 149, 214, 246
 Colonial Office
 and British ‘Ring’ concerns, 2, 78, 167–8, 169, 184–5, 231
 committee on the liquidation of enemy firms, 105–6, 125*n*59
 on Elder Dempster’s influence, 34
 enemy properties, 3, 6, 180, 212
 on German deportees, 61
 glycerine conditions, 132–3, 134, 136, 137, 138
 on Lagos elite, 23
 neutral bidders for German properties, 169, 172
 Ottoman subjects, 63
 palm kernels, 67
 palm kernels committee, 114–15
 palm kernels export levy, 117–18
 policy against plantations, 12
 relations with Lugard, 97–9, 102–5
 shipping, 141–2
 small firms’ complaints, 142–3
 suspension of German trade, 57
 trade mark sale, 216
 Ungebauer case, 248–9, 250
 water rate telegrams, 153–4
 West Africa photograph, 254.
 See also Fiddes, Sir George;
 Harding, A.J.; Steel-Maitland,
 Sir Arthur
 colonial policy
 African resistance, 58–60
 indirect rule, 23, 80, 97
 Lugard’s continuous administration policy, 99, 102, 243
 protection of indigenous interests, 6, 12, 121, 168, 183–4, 230, 234
 Combine. *See* British ‘Ring’ companies
 commercial community
 British Empire Producers’ Organisation, 177
 Chambers of Commerce Joint Committee, 114–15, 167, 168
 eastern Nigeria, 26–7, 29
 effect of crash of 1920, 251–2
 Empire Resources Development Committee, 177–9, 197, 202, 230, 244–5
 north Nigeria, 29–31
 post-war revival, 246–7
 small firms, 8, 9
 western Nigeria, 17–20. *See also*
 African merchants; Association
 of West African Merchants
 (A.W.A.M.); British ‘Ring’
 companies; German firms
 Compagnie Bordelaise des comptoirs
 Africains, 247
 Compagnie française de l’Afrique occi-
 dentale (C.F.A.O.), 19, 31, 70,
 139, 184–5, 201
 Company of African Merchants, 31–3,
 70, 74–7, 118, 236
 Company of African Traders, 70, 141
 Conference of British West Africa, 146
 Cooper, A.S., 149, 150, 165
 copra
 as cattle feed, 68–9
 glycerine conditions, 133
 for margarine, 11
 Maypole Dairy use, 175
 transport difficulties, 35
 US imports, 6
 Cotterell, Harry, 75
 cotton
 Nigerian exports, 30, 73
 shipping, 150
 textile imports, 20, 35
 Cowell, H.R., 183–4
 Crewe, Lord, 2

criminal code, 153–4, 154
 Crosfield and Gossage, 239
 Crowther, Samuel Ajayi, Bishop, 22
 Cumming, Sir Mansfield, 195
 Curzon, Lord, 233–4
 Cuthbert, D.A., 152

D

da Rocha, Candidu, 150
Daily Express, 7, 185
Daily Mail, 198, 254
 Dalziel, Sir Henry, 176, 200, 202
 D'Arcy Cooper, Francis, 240, 241
 Davidson, J.C.C., 99
 Davies, James Bright (journalist), 45*n*86, 145, 152
 Davies, James (businessman), 153
 Dawodu, T.B., 149–50, 151
 Dawodu, W.A., 36
 De Bruyn crushing plant, 75
 Deniga, Adeoye, 252
 Denmark, 133, 175–6
 Dennett, R.E., 69
 deportation, German residents, 60–61
 Deutsche Kamerun Gesellschaft, 27
 Devonport, Lord, 231–2, 236
 Docemo (Dosunmu), Oba, 18
 doctors, 23–4, 145–6
 Doherty, Josiah H., 20, 145, 146, 147, 149, 151, 251, 252
 Dosumu, Delo, 151
 Dransfield and Price, 152, 165
 Duke, Prince Bassey, 252
 Duncan, Samuel W.
 background, 146–7
 denunciation of British Ring, 184–5
 London trip, 7, 152, 165–6
 Manifesto signatory, 149, 151, 152
 Duncan, W.T., 146
 Dyer and Wintle, 139–40

E

Edgar, Clifford, 76, 239
 education policy, 103
 Edwards Brothers, 247
 Egba Province, 26, 59, 104
 Elder Dempster
 conflicting demands from Ring and small merchants, 139–40
 deportation of Germans, 60
 freight charges, 78–9
 German property purchases, 215, 216
 inventory of Nigerian imports, 35–6
 Manifesto of African merchants, 148
 monopoly after outbreak of war, 5
 palm oil and kernels, 137
 partial monopoly, 33–4
 relations with British firms, 31
 wartime difficulties, 72–3, 93*n*158
 wartime monopoly, 72
 Eleko. *See* Eshugbayi, Oba (Eleko)
 Elias, Michael, 30
 Ellis, W.D., 106–7, 117, 118, 137, 140
 Empire Resources Development Committee (E.R.D.C.), 177–9, 197, 202, 230, 244–5
 Enemy Influence Committee, 179, 196
 enemy properties
 Colonial Office committee, 105–6, 125*n*59
 exclusion of allies from bidding, 179–80
 Far East, 107–110, 212
 Nigeria ordinance as model for other colonies, 212. *See also* German properties
 Eshugbayi, Oba (Eleko)
 flees from palace, 25
 government marginalization, 17–18

- government recognition/with-
drawal, 243, 253, 255
- Jamat Party, 253
- land allocation rights, 24
- Macaulay and his staff of office, 253,
254, 255
- nationalism, 252
- popular hero, 255
- stipend, 17–18, 243, 253, 254
- water rate opposition, 25, 153, 154,
155
- Essien, Essien Offiong, 252
- Evans, Fred, 21–2
- export duties, 104–5, 167, 168, 235.
See also palm kernels duty
- exports
- cocoa, 73, 245
 - Gaiser, 42*n*49
 - glycerine conditions, 6
 - groundnuts, 30–31, 73, 245
 - hides, 30, 73, 198, 245
 - palm kernels, 11–12, 14, 18, 27,
245
 - palm oil, 4, 11–12, 14, 26, 27
 - tin, 73, 245
 - wartime diversification, 73
- F**
- Fiddes, Sir George
- background, 99
 - Colonial Office official, 98–9
 - on export taxes, 104
 - German properties, 57, 63, 106,
181
 - native revenues, 103
 - neutral bidders for German proper-
ties, 169–70, 170
 - palm kernels, 114–15, 116, 118
 - protection of indigenous interests,
234
 - Ungebauer case, 248, 250
 - view of Liverpool firms, 78
 - water rate, 154
- Financial Times*, 199
- Fischer & Co., 142
- fish imports, 37
- Flood, J.E.W., 34, 111
- Food and Drugs Act (1897), 117
- France
- glycerine conditions, 132, 133
 - groundnuts, 132
 - palm kernels duty exemption, 120,
201
 - palm oil shipments, 141
 - trade, 142, 143
- Frewin, Moreton, 178–9
- Fritsch, Albert, 54
- Furse, Sir Ralph, 98
- G**
- Gaiser, G.L.
- exports, 42*n*49
 - imports, 35–6
 - lack of ownership documentation,
111
 - local currency usage, 15
 - northern challenge to Niger
Company, 31
 - palm kernel exports, 18
 - property sale, 215, 216
 - suspicion of wartime intrigue, 59
 - trade mark, 87*n*85, 112, 215–16
 - wartime closure activity, 65
- Gastrell, W. Houghton, 204
- Gavin, R.J., 251
- George V, King, 254
- George, Ferris, 31, 214
- German firms
- liquidation, 61
 - settlement of debts, 63–5
 - suspected of inciting disturbances,
59

- suspension of wartime trading, 56–8
 - trade successes, 37
 - trading companies, 18, 26, 27, 29, 36–7
 - wartime “unfair” competition, 37
 - wireless communications, 58
 - German properties
 - auction publicity, 106, 113
 - British policy, 5–8
 - Colonial Office committee, 105–6, 125*n*59
 - Commons debate, 196–201, 242
 - Commons debate preparations, 180–86
 - Commons motion, 196–7, 242
 - Commons vote, 201–3
 - definition of corporation under enemy control, 185–6
 - disposal discussions, 170–71
 - excluded purchasers, 214
 - fears of German retaliation, 108–9
 - high sale prices, 215, 216–17
 - Jurgens interest, 172, 175
 - Jurgens withdrawal from sale, 214
 - Lugard’s suggestions, 180
 - neutral bidders, 113, 169–70, 177
 - Nigerian Ordinance, 110–113, 169, 185–6
 - ownership title records, 111–12
 - personal property exclusion, 110
 - position of the allies, 181
 - possible US interest, 80–81, 105–6, 113, 170, 172, 198
 - post-war considerations, 111
 - potential discrimination against neutral allies, 181
 - prices and buyers, 269–73
 - purchaser declaration of non-enemy status, 109, 112
 - treaty considerations, 181–2. *See also* enemy properties
 - German residents
 - deportation, 60–61
 - internment, 54–5, 58, 60
 - Germanophobia, 248, 250
 - Germany
 - African traders’ sympathy, 152, 180
 - appeasement, 250–51
 - imports, 11, 18, 31, 66, 131
 - palm kernel imports, 4, 235
 - shipping industry, 33–4
 - Gezo, King, 153
 - Glasgow Chamber of Commerce, 169
 - Gloede, Fritz, 54, 59
 - Gloye, Ferdinand, 54
 - glycerine
 - American supplies, 234
 - by-product of soap manufacture, 131, 132, 234
 - chemistry, 267
 - for cordite manufacture, 131
 - export conditions imposed, 132–6
 - Ministry of Munitions conditions, 6
 - prices, 132
 - review of conditions, 136–8
 - Gold Coast, 18, 36
 - Goldie, George, 75–6
 - Grace Bros., 246
 - Greenwood, Sir Hamar, 200
 - Grey, Sir Edward, 101
 - Grigg, John, 210
 - Grindle, George, 3, 109–110, 212, 234, 235
 - Grizzel, Mr., 247
 - groundnuts, 12, 30–31, 73, 78, 98, 114, 245
 - Gwynne, H.A., 210
- ## H
- Hankey, Maurice, 193, 203, 210, 211
 - Harcourt, Sir Lewis (Loulou)
 - cattle cake, 68
 - Colonial Secretary, 99–100

- Germans on parole, 59–60
 Irish question, 100–101
 kernel crushing, 113, 114
 reaction to outbreak of war, 53–4
 relations with Lugard, 101–2
 Schönfeld's death, 60
 suspension of German trade, 57
- Harding, A.J.
 background, 98
 on British 'Ring' firms, 78, 244
 Colonial Office official, 98
 customs duties, 104
 Elder Dempster, 72
 German properties, 105, 111, 113, 214
 on German residents, 61
 neutral bidders for German properties, 169–70
 palm kernels, 66
 shipping Manifesto, 165, 166
 small firms' complaints, 142–3
 on superintendents of native revenues, 103
 treaty obligations, 181–2
 Ungebauer case, 248, 250
- Harris, Frank, 237
 Harris, John H., 118
 Hassan & Co., 29–30, 73
 Hayford, J.E. Casely, 146, 252
 Hebron, W.F., 139
 Henderson, Arthur, 211
 Henderson, J.M., 199
 Hendersons, 247
 Hewins, W.A.S., 179, 196, 202, 244–5
 Hichens, Lionel, 211
 hides and skins, 29, 30, 66, 73, 78–9, 198, 245. *See also* leather
 Higham, John, 35–6, 56, 198, 202
 Hirst, Hugo, 177
 Hobhouse, L.T., 211
- Holt Brothers, 27, 70
 Holt, John
 Combine member, 70, 71–2
 competitors, 26, 28, 76
 establishment, 73
 internal trading, 14–15
 Kano, 31
 post-war, 241
 sale of German property, 7
 shipping, 33–4, 71, 141
 wide area of operation, 5, 18
 Woermann claims, 139
- Home and Colonial Stores, 117, 173, 241
 Horsfield and Co., 149, 151
 House of Commons
 enemy property motion, 179–80, 196–7
 Nigeria debate, 196–201
 Nigeria vote, 201–3
 palm kernel levy debate, 118–21, 197
- Hughes, William Morris, 134–5
 Hull, 69
 Hunt, Major Rowland, 119
 Hurst, Cecil, 174
 Hutton, J.A., 61, 165
- I**
 Ibn Saleh, Mohammad, 29
 Igbo, 26
 Ilbert, Sir Courtenay, 197
 imports, Nigerian, 14, 20, 29, 35–7, 246
 India Office, 114
 internment
 German residents, 54–5, 58, 60
 Ottoman subjects, 62–3
 Irving, Robert, 25, 249, 250
 Islington, Lord, 68, 113–14
 Italy, glycerine conditions, 133
 ivory trade, 19

J

- Jackson, Thomas Horatius, 144–5, 146
- Jamat Party, 155, 253
- James, F.S., 154
- Jameson, Sir Leander, 178
- Johnson, Christopher Josephus, 144
- Johnson, Obadiah, 21–2
- Johnson, Samuel, *The History of the Yorubas*, 21, 24
- Johnstone, T.B., 152
- Jurgens
 - in Britain, 172–3, 174, 233, 240
 - enemy trading, 213
 - German subsidiaries, 175
 - interest in Nigerian property, 172
 - opposition to export duty, 6
 - Pheasant brand, 173
 - response to margarine levy proposals, 117–18
 - Van Den Bergh merger, 241
 - Van Den Bergh rivalry, 35, 173, 241
 - withdrawal from property sale, 214
- Jurgens Colonial Products, 246

K

- Kamerun campaign, 97, 98, 101
- Kano, 30, 31
- Kendall, E.A., 249
- Keohane, Nigel, 204
- King, R. & W., 57
- Knight, John, 239
- kola nuts, 36
- Kotun, Karimu, 149, 151, 156, 252
- Kramer, Alan, 131

L

- Lagos
 - African bourgeoisie, 19–22, 23, 58
 - British elite, 20–21

- difficult port, 72–3
- dominance of German firms, 4
- Lugard's dislike, 180, 242
- population, 17
- trading centre, 17–19
- traditional leaders, 8
- Lagos Chamber of Commerce, 252
- Lagos Standard*, 144, 153
- Lagos Stores, 19, 31, 70, 149, 168–9
- Lagos Weekly Record*, 144–5, 253
- Lambert, H.C.M., 111
- land allocation, 24–5, 253, 255
- Law, Andrew Bonar
 - coalition minister, 7
 - Colonial Secretary, 65, 102, 103
 - Commons debate on German properties, 197–8, 200–204
 - German properties, 7–8, 171–2, 213
 - and Lloyd George, 205
 - Nigerian policy, 1–2, 3
 - palm kernels levy, 118, 119, 120, 121
 - political crisis, 209–210
 - refusal to compromise on German properties, 180–86
 - shipping, 79
 - successful wartime coalition, 229–30
- Lawanson, T.A., 149, 151
- Lawson, J.S., 249–50
- lawyers, 145
- leather, 19, 73. *See also* hides and skins
- Lee, Sir Arthur, 205
- Lemomu. *See* Braimah, Lemomu (Imam)
- Lever Brothers
 - amalgamation as Unilever, 241
 - enemy shareholders, 185
 - and MacIver, 5, 32
 - Maypole Dairy links, 175
 - post-war expansion efforts, 238–40, 251

shipping fleet, 233
 soapmakers, 11, 12
 Lever, William Hesketh (first Viscount
 Leverhulme), 32, 68, 69, 114,
 238–40
 Lezzi, E.A., 247
 Liverpool, 34, 56, 57, 66, 69, 70–71,
 177
 Liverpool Chamber of Commerce,
 113, 142, 169–70
Liverpool Post, 197, 202, 203
 Lloyd George, David
 on Bonar Law, 203
 and Carson, 205–6
 McKenna rivalry, 206–7
 misses Nigeria Commons debate,
 205
 political crisis leads to premiership,
 209–212
 prime minister, 229–30
 rivalry with Harcourt, 101, 102
 war policy, 196
 War Secretary, 7, 8, 206, 207
 London Chamber of Commerce, 113
 London and Kano, 30, 141, 215, 241
 Long, Sir Walter, 230, 231, 243, 248,
 250
 Lugard, Edward, 22
 Lugard, Sir Frederick
 background, 97
 British ‘Ring’ concerns, 77–8, 244
 champion of natives, 119, 121–2
 on Commons debate, 242
 continuous administration policy,
 99, 102, 243
 critics of his policies, 145, 153
 direct tax proposals, 80, 101, 103–4
 dislike of Lagosians, 180, 242–3
 education policy, 103
 elite opposition, 4
 on German firms, 37

German liabilities to British credi-
 tors, 63
 German property sales, 3, 5–6, 180,
 242
 German wartime trade, 57
 groundnuts, 31
 High Commissioner, 30
 indirect rule, 23, 80, 97
 Irish question, 100–101
 and local uprisings, 58–9
 palm kernels, 70
 residential segregation programmes,
 22
 response to amalgamation proposals,
 77
 and shipping problems, 73, 78–9
 special officer for the Colony, 243
 strained relations with Colonial
 Office, 97–9, 102–5
 support for palm kernels levy, 121–2
 Ungebauer case, 248–9
 water rate, 23, 153, 154
 Yorubaland protests, 242–3
 Lumpkin, Charles, 22–3
 Lumpkin, W.F., 145, 146

M

Macaulay, Herbert
 background, 25
 and the Eleko’s staff of office, 253,
 254, 255
 minimal interest in NCBWA, 253
 nationalism, 9, 253–4
 pan-Africanism, 10, 255
 people’s champion, 25, 156, 255
 perjury charge, 25
 MacDonald, Ramsay, 119, 120, 121,
 170
 MacIver, W.B., 5, 18, 19, 27, 31, 32,
 70, 141

- McKenna, Reginald, 135, 203, 206–7, 208, 211
- Mackenzie, Compton, 195
- Mackinder, Halford, 119, 179, 199, 202
- MacMillan, Allister, 144. *See also* *Red Book of West Africa*
- McNeill, Ronald, 196
- McNeill, Scott, 70
- Manchester, 35–6, 56, 64, 65
- Manchester Chamber of Commerce, 107
- manilla (trade currency), 15
- Mansfield, Alfred, 233
- margarine
- brands, 173, 175
 - British/Dutch rivalry, 117–18, 173–5
 - Netherlands manufacture, 6, 34–5
 - palm kernel export duty proposals, 6
 - post-war slump, 240–41
 - prices, 173
 - shipping losses, 232, 233
 - substitute for butter, 173
 - US production, 6
 - vegetable oil, 11
 - wrappers, 117, 174–5
- Margarine Unie N.V., 241
- Margarine Union Ltd., 241
- Martin, Susan, 15–16
- Maypole Dairy, 35, 117, 173, 174–6, 233, 240, 241
- Meadow and Pearks, 117
- Miller Bros.
- amalgamation negotiations, 74–7
 - arrival, 18
 - coastal area, 26, 27
 - Combine member, 70, 73–4
 - on German wartime trading, 57
 - post-war, 236, 238
 - relations with British firms, 5, 31–3
 - sale of German property, 6–7
 - shipping, 142, 150
 - trade mark, 18
 - US markets, 67
- Miller, Robert, 32, 75, 76–7, 118, 167–8
- Milner, Viscount, 178, 205, 211, 212, 213
- mining industry, 30, 31, 33
- Ministry of Food, 231–2, 232–3, 235
- Ministry of Munitions
- French shipments, 141
 - glycerine conditions, 6, 133–6
 - glycerine conditions reviewed, 136–8
 - glycerine prices, 132
 - import licence proposals, 232
 - Jurgens plant, 174
 - perceived bias towards Ring firms, 142
 - post-war policy, 234
- Ministry of Shipping, 233
- Molteno, Percy, 118, 119, 121, 170
- Mond, Sir Alfred, 115, 198–9, 202
- Moore, G.A., 33, 77, 118, 170, 231, 236
- Morel, E.D., 12–13
- Morland, Col. Grant, 178
- Morning Post*, 210–211
- Muslim community
- divisions, 25–6, 155
 - in wartime, 62–3. *See also* Braimah, Lemomu (Imam)
- N
- National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA), 252–3
- National Democratic Party, 255

nationalism

ineffective post-war committees, 252

Macaulay, 9, 253–5

Nigerians, 145–6

shortlived Conference of British

West Africa, 146

Stuart-Young influence, 10, 28

Netherlands

glycerine supplies, 132

margarine exports, 233

palm kernel imports for Germany, 66

palm oil imports, 4, 27

spirit exports, 49*n*138. *See also*

Jurgens; Van Den Bergh

Netherlands Overseas Trust, 66

newspapers, 143–5

Nicolson, Harold, 59–60

Niger-Benue Transport Company, 26, 55

Niger Company

amalgamation negotiations, 74–7

competitors, 28, 71–2

crash of 1920, 239–40

difficulties under Lord Devonport, 231–2

enemy shareholders, 185

European appointments, 23

expansion, 236–7, 247

German property purchases, 215

Kano, 31

kola nuts, 36

Lever Bros. takeover, 238–40

mining interests, 30, 33

Onitsha, 27–8

palm kernels, 67, 137

pooling agreement, 73–4

post-war, 236–7, 238–40, 241

prices and profits, 71

relations with British firms, 5, 31–3

sale of German property, 7, 171

shipping arrangements, 140–41

US markets, 67

Niger-Benue Transport Company, 55

Nigeria Delta Palm Nut Cracking Co., 74

Nigerian Chamber of Mines, 113, 169

Nigerian Chronicle, 144, 146

Nigerian Dry Dock and Engineering Company, 247

Nigerian Ordinance, 110–113, 169, 185–6

Nigerian Pioneer, 55, 143–4, 253

Nigerian Shipping Corporation, 145

Norway, glycerine conditions, 133

O

Qbanikoro, Chief, 155

Qbasa, Dr. Qrĩsadipe, 23–4, 25, 145, 146, 155–6, 252

Oil Nuts, 138–9, 181, 216, 247, 251

Okwe, Omu, 29

Oliver, F.S., 211, 213

Ollivant, G.B., 18, 30, 70, 216, 241

Olugbile, Adeniyi, 252

Olukotun, Thomas, 151

Oluwa, Chief, 24–5, 253–5

Oluwõle, Isaac, Bishop, 24, 243

Onitsha, 27–8, 29, 71–2

Opobo, 26, 27, 216

Oppenheimer, Sir Francis, 108

Osborne, F.G., 246

ostrich feathers, 29, 73

Osuntokun, Akinjide, 151

O'Swald, William & Co., 18

Ottoman subjects, internment, 62–3

Overmann and Co., 151

Oyemakinde, Wale, 251

P

Pagenstecher, 26, 29, 31, 59

palm kernels

Britain/Nigeria price differentials, 72, 120–21

cattle cake, 4

collection, 244

crushing plants, 6, 32, 68–9, 74, 89*n*110, 177

duty. *See* palm kernels duty

effect of glycerine conditions, 136, 137–8

exports, 11–12, 14, 18, 27, 245

German post-war trade, 235

less affected by crash of 1920, 251

Liverpool-Lagos price differentials, 138, 166, 167

post-war policies, 235

prices, 48*n*123, 62, 67, 69, 74, 168, 267–8

production process, 13–14

stockpiling and price rises, 117

uses, 4, 11, 34–5

wartime price reductions, 66, 118

wartime trade diversions, 66

palm kernels duty

Commons debate, 118–21, 197

critics, 116, 118–21

to encourage British crushing, 115–16

imposition and abandonment, 235

not applicable to France, 120, 201

only to be imposed post-war, 118, 177

proposals, 6, 67, 104–5, 115–16, 136, 177

palm oil

affected by crash of 1920, 251

chemistry, 266

export conditions, 132–3

export duty proposals, 104–5

exports, 4, 11–12, 14, 26, 27

prices, 48*n*123, 71

production, 26

production process, 13, 34–5

shipments to non-British destinations, 141

uses, 4, 11, 34–5, 67

Pan-African Congresses, 146, 255

Paterson Zochonis, 19, 27, 31, 62–3, 70, 77, 241

Pearse, Samuel H., 19, 20, 25, 61, 145, 153, 251–2, 252

People's Union, 23, 26, 156

Percy, Eustace, 211

Peto, Basil, 202

Philipps, Sir Owen, 68, 69, 70, 73, 113, 119, 140, 183

plantations, 11–12, 32

Pollock, Ernest, 199, 202

Pretymann, Ernest, 132

prices

competitive for Nigerian producers, 32

effects of British 'Ring',

71–2, 80

glycerine, 132

margarine, 173

and middlemen, 15

palm oil and kernels, 48*n*123, 62, 67, 69, 74, 120–21, 168, 267–8

wartime increase for European residents, 54

and wartime shipping, 72

Privy Council, Judicial Committee, 253, 255

property sales. *See* enemy properties; German properties

protests

northern Yoruba, 242–3

over direct taxation, 104

wartime, 58–9

water rate riots, 8, 154–6

Provincial Courts Ordinance, 153

R

Raccah, Saul, 29–30, 73

racism, 22–3

Radcliffe, John, 247

railways

effect on trade routes, 5

and European firms, 26

extension, 5, 12, 16, 30, 74

receipts, 246

Randle, Dr. J.K.

clashes with Savage, 252–3

loyalty to Crown, 58

nationalism, 145, 152, 252

water rate opposition, 23–4, 25,
154, 155–6

wife, 146

Randle, Victoria, 153

Read, H.J., 104, 165–6, 246, 248,
250

Reconstruction Committee, 109, 110,
111, 182

Red Book of West Africa, 19, 20, 144,
145, 147, 151–2

Rees, Sir J.D., 202

Ring. *See* British ‘Ring’ companies

Riots. *See* protests

Robertson, Sir William, 193, 205,
206, 208, 209, 210–211

Robinson, Geoffrey, 211, 213

Roman Catholic Mission, 61

Rose, Hewitt, 166

Ross, W.A., 243

rubber, 12, 14

Runciman, Walter, 110, 112

Russell, H.B.W., 19, 70, 146–7

S

Sachse and Company, 61, 72

salt, 14, 15, 36

Samuel, Sir Herbert, 195

Sassen, W.H., 247

Savage, Dr. Richard Akiwande, 145–6,
252–3, 254–5

Scarborough, Lord, 32, 75, 76, 239

Scheerer, Paul, 109–110

Schleevogt, Curt, 62

Schönfeld, Johan, 60

Scotsman, 199, 203

Scott, Sir Leslie, 170, 176, 181, 198

Selborne, Lord, 195, 208

Sewell, Mr., 74, 236

shipping

Admiralty requisitions, 79

African firms, 246

Allocation Committee, 244

British supply problems, 233–4

dominated by two companies, 33–4

freight charges, 70, 78–9

Germany efficiency, 36

Manifesto of African merchants,
146–51, 156, 165

seizure of ships on Niger and Benue
rivers, 55

sixty/forty per cent allocation,
140–41, 148, 166–7, 244

US-Lagos, 66

vessels, 34

wartime problems, 70–71, 72–3,
232, 233. *See also* Elder

Dempster; Woermann Linie

Shyngle, J. Egerton, 145, 146, 153,
253, 254

Sierra Leone, US trade, 66, 89*n*101

Simon, Sir John, 64, 194–5

Smith, F.E., 65, 182, 198, 203

soap

chemistry, 267

from coconut oil, 133, 138

from palm oil, 4, 11, 27

glycerine a by-product, 131, 132,
234

internal trade, 15

rationing and reduced exports, 234

- Société commerciale et industrielle de l'Afrique Occidentale, 246–7
- Sokoto Caliphate, 16
- Solf, Wilhelm, 53
- spirits import duties, 79–80, 104, 168, 246
- spirits trade, 36–7, 49*n*138
- Steedman, Crombie, 215
- Steel-Maitland, Sir Arthur
- Australian copra shipping, 134, 135
 - background, 102
 - Beaverbrook opinion, 208
 - Colonial Office minister, 65, 103, 230
 - concern for native producers, 168–9
 - concern over the Ring, 78, 167–8
 - German properties, 105, 113, 182–6
 - German properties debate, 198
 - glycerine conditions, 136, 137–8
 - palm kernels committee, 116, 118
 - palm kernels levy, 118, 119, 120, 121, 139
 - political aftermath of Commons debate, 212–13
 - Ungebauer case, 248, 250
- Stein & Co., 149
- Stevenson, Frances, 206–7, 210
- Stewart, Gershom, 248, 249, 250
- Strachey, Charles, 68, 98, 103, 104, 250
- Stuart-Young, J.M.
- champion of independent trade, 10, 28, 238
 - competition from British 'Ring', 71–2
 - on German firms, 37
 - lifestyle, 28
 - memoirs (as Jack O'Dazi), 28
 - nationalism, 10, 28
 - poem on Onitsha's trading shares, 29
 - post-war, 237
 - prices, 71
- Stubbs, Julian, 177
- Sturzenegger, Robert, 107–110, 212
- Sugar Commission, 173–4
- Syrian traders, 62–3
- T**
- Tangalakis, G.B., 62, 247
- taxation
- alcohol, 36–7
 - customs revenues, 79–80, 104
 - direct taxation, 80, 101, 103–4
 - electric light, 24
 - export duties, 104–5, 167, 168, 235
 - spirits import duties, 79–80, 104, 168, 246. *See also* palm kernels duty; water rate
- Taylor & Co., 141–2, 143
- Taylor, A.J.P., 211
- Taylor, David, 146, 149, 151, 153, 252
- tea, 174, 175
- Tennyson, Charles, 63, 108, 185–6, 214
- Terrell, George, 203
- Thomas and Co., 19–20
- Thomas, A.W., 145, 153
- Thomas, Peter
- African nationalism, 252, 255
 - altruism, 20–21
 - crash of 1920, 251
 - German property purchase, 215
 - Lagos Chamber of Commerce, 252
 - Legislative election defeat, 255
 - Pan-African Congress, 255
 - rejects takeover bid, 236
 - shipping agents, 142
 - successful African merchant, 10, 19–21, 247
- Thomas, Stephen, 19

Tijani, Amodu (Chief of Oluwa family), 24–5, 253–5

Times, 170, 176, 178, 179, 180–81, 182–3, 202, 208, 214–15

Times of Nigeria, 145

Tin Areas of Nigeria, 31, 141–2, 181, 251

tin exports, 73, 245

tin levy, 116

tin mining, 12

Toulmin, Sir G., 119

trade

African middlemen, 14–16, 65

commercial treaties, 181–2

local markets, 14

local trade, 14–15

local trade currencies, 15

suspension of German trade, 56–8

tariff reform, 1, 2, 116, 121, 183–4, 199, 201, 242. *See also* exports

trade marks, 18, 87*n*85, 112, 215–16

Trading with the Enemy Act, 56, 107

Trigge, John

crash of 1920, 239–40

German properties, 216–17

Lever Bros. takeover, 238–9

Niger Company Managing Director, 73, 77

oils and fats policy, 135

palm kernel shipping, 137

pooling arrangement negotiations, 76–7, 171

profits, 168

spirits import duty, 168

takeovers, 236–7

Tunncliffe, John, 76

Turner, John, 176–7

U

Ungebauer, Charles

continues trading in Lagos, 61–2

deportation threat, 249

expanded business, 248–9

German businessman, 9–10

naturalization, 61, 248

naturalization revoked, 248–9

shipping difficulties, 72

suicide, 249–50

Unilever, 9, 241

Unionist Business Committee, 196, 202

Unionist War Committee, 196, 202

United Africa Company, 9, 33, 241

United African Native Church, 144

United States

copra imports, 6, 133, 134

German properties, 80–81, 105–6, 113, 170, 172, 198

glycerine conditions, 6, 132, 133, 134, 135–8

glycerine supplies, 234

little demand for palm produce, 66–7

palm oil imports, 27

suspensions of British post-war trade policy, 107

uprisings. *See* protests

Usines J.E. de Bruyn, 33

V

Van Den Bergh

Blue Band brand, 173

Jurgens merger, 241

Jurgens rivalry, 35, 173, 241

kernel oil use, 117

opposition to export duty, 6

post-war, 240–41

response to margarine levy proposals, 117–18

van den Bergh, Donald, 118

van den Bergh, Samuel, 173

Van Laun, H.T., 166–7, 184–5

Vaughan Brothers, 146, 252
 Victoria, Queen, 153, 254
 Vincent, Gilbert Ige, 249, 250

W

Walkden, Arthur, 216
 Walkden, John, 216, 238
 War Committee, 135, 193, 196, 206
 War Trade Advisory Committee, 107, 174
 water rate
 opposition, 23–4, 25–6
 petition, 153
 riots, 8, 154–6
 telegrams to Colonial Office, 153–4
 Watson, Sir George, 117, 173–6, 241
 Webb, R.A., 249
 Welsh, Thomas, 28, 70, 71
 Werner, C.H., 247
West Africa, 254
 West African Lands Committee, 24, 25
 West African Trading Company, 27

White, J.T.A., 151
 Wiles, Thomas, 115, 116, 117, 120
 Wilhelm II, Kaiser, 53
 Williams, Frederick, 147, 149, 150–51
 Williams, George, 144, 153
 Williams, S. & B., 149, 151
 Wilson, Sir Charles, 172
 Wilson Fox, Henry, 177–8
 Witt und Büsch, 18, 31, 215
 Woermann Linie, 5, 33–4, 36, 54, 72, 139, 147, 216

women

 palm kernel work, 4, 11, 13–14
 traders, 14–15, 29
 Women's War, 104

Y

Yorkshire Observer, 203
 Yorubas, 17, 21, 24, 242–3

Z

Zochonis. *See* Paterson Zochonis

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