

## Despatch from the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ibadan on the economic situation in Western Nigeria (13 March 1961)

**Caption:** On 1 May 1961, the United Kingdom High Commission in Lagos transmits a despatch dated 13 March 1961 from the Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ibadan on the economic situation in Western Nigeria in the first six months after independence to the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Duncan Sandys.

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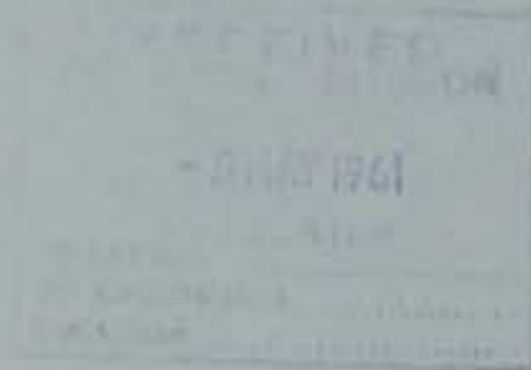


OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER  
FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM  
LAGOS

DESPATCH NO. 7

1st May, 1961

POL. 14/33/1



Sir,

I have the honour to transmit a copy of Despatch No. 4 of 13th March from Mr. R. L. D. Jasper, Deputy High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Ibadan, in which he reviews the economic situation in Western Nigeria in the first six months after Independence.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

With the highest respect,

Your obedient Servant,

*Head*

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The Rt. Hon. Duncan Sandys, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations,  
Commonwealth Relations Office, S.W.1.

SUMMARY of IBADAN DESPATCH NO. 4  
of 13th MARCH, 1961.

THE WESTERN REGION OF NIGERIA.  
ECONOMIC - THE FIRST SIX MONTHS.

The Western Region is a little smaller than the Eastern Region and is thus the smallest Region of Nigeria. It is roughly 300 miles by 200 miles, or 30 million acres. Of this one-sixth is forest reserve. Of the rest half is rain-forest and half is savannah, the first producing the cash crops. The rain-forest area is also the main area of shifting cultivation, with the wasteful system of "bush fallow". Agricultural development must therefore first take place in the savannah area. Land hunger is already near at hand and a settled system of land tenure is urgently required. There are traditional prejudices against this, with which Ministers are trying to deal.

2. Ministers are also faced with the results of their own primary education system. A quarter of a million children a year are coming out of this system, and they are not likely to be content with the old methods. A very large programme of farm settlements and other subsidised farms has been inaugurated, but this cannot be carried through without large scale provision of tsetse free cattle. Without this also diet cannot be satisfactorily altered.

3. Another factor which militates against agricultural progress is the lack of a firm administrative structure. The modern Local Government system here, the most up-to-date in Africa, has not

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proved a success. For political reasons its authors are reluctant to tamper with it, but all concerned are agreed that the standard of Council administration is low. It has already been necessary to cut down their rating powers and to modify the taxation system. Modern developments in the Local Government field must be regarded as a logical development from hatred of the old pre-Regional self-government (1957) system. In breaking the power of the Residents Action Group Ministers have created for themselves a problem precisely like that later solved in Pakistan by the basic democracies.

4. A third strain arises from rapid industrialisation with no sure basis of technical training. On balance the Yoruba seem likely to achieve a satisfactory standard in this respect, but it is unlikely to be better than satisfactory. At the top, however, there are plenty of bright and able young men. What is needed is intelligent direction by foreign firms, and adequate training of Nigerians for management. From the United Kingdom side we must be seen to contribute, both in men and in cash, to the new University.

5. The extent of industrial expansion is remarkable at so early a stage in the development of society. It also carries dangers. For the Federal Government still seems intent on expanding Federal territory to include the main industrial estate, and the Western Region will resist this. Moreover, while Ministers in the Region take a responsible view, Chief Awolowo (the leader of their Party) is taking an irresponsible one in the Federal House. This may upset confidence, as it did in India, and the younger men in the Party are an unknown and violent quantity. Government's share in industry will tend to make it more responsible. They have also to show that domestic firms are getting a reasonable share of the retail trade.

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6. Nevertheless, a formidable social problem is going to arise within three years from now. If there is not adequate foreign investment the blame will be thrown upon the West, as in the sub-continent.

*Handwritten note:*  
The problem is not to be solved  
unless we have the money

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