

# LAGOS DIARY

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LAGOS loves ceremonial parades; and this one was going to be especial, for it was to mark the installation of the first Prime Minister of the Federation, Alhaji Abubakir Tafawa Balewa. So that long before dawn, the Lagos racecourse was already thronged with crowds in all colours of costume. But it was not until around nine in the morning that the first two soldiers in gleaming white cuffs marched into sight from the direction of the lagoon where stands Government House. Behind the two leading soldiers, came a detachment of the Queen's Own Nigeria Regiment, shining boots reflecting what little light there was on this dull morning with the threat of rain. Bayonets flashed, chromium and brass dazzled on proud khaki breasts. The crowd which covered the entire racecourse and spread all the way to King's College and beyond, pressed forward eagerly. They had been waiting for this historic moment, some of them since first light. To secure good viewing positions they had invaded near-by buildings and climbed trees fringing the ground.

The Regiment took up its position opposite the House which stands facing the Lagos racecourse. Microphones and ciné-cameras strove to record this fleeting historic moment. Soon the crowd started cheering once more, and a car drew up in front of the House. The Oba of Lagos, Oba Adele, came out and stopped to pose for the cameras which bathed him in momentary light. From then on, the arrival of the Ministers became a kind of automatic process. Long cars (they were mostly American-built) stopped in front of the House of Representatives, doors were opened by gaily dressed orderlies, and out came the new Ministers. Some of the Ministers have a mass appeal evidenced by a kind of spontaneous effusion of the crowd. The new Minister of Commerce and Industries, K. O. Mbadiwe, evoked cheers of "K.O! K.O!" In fact the whole ceremony was a cross between an international motor show and a fashion display among men; but even amidst such glitter, the Honourable Festus Okotie-Eboh, Minister of Finance, still outshone everyone. He was superb in a glossy blue silk jumper, and behind him floated a costly train of some hand-

made cloth which he negligently allowed to trail after him on a wet floor, moistened by an earlier shower.

The great moment was the arrival of the Prime Minister himself, heralded by an escort of two motor-cycles. He got out of his state car (a Silver Cloud Rolls) a slight, tall and rather impassive man, impassive for a man who was even then in the very act of becoming the first Prime Minister of a non-independent Nigeria. The horde of cameramen surrounded him, and he neither smiled nor spoke a word until they had done. Shortly after he had gone into the House, the Governor-General of the Federation, Sir James Robertson, came riding in an open Rolls, arousing enthusiastic cheers from the crowd. Beside him was an African aide-de-camp, and in front a white army officer.

At the end of the inspection of the Guard of Honour formed by a detachment of the Queen's Own Nigeria Regiment in the scarlet coats trimmed with gold and worn over khaki, the detachment presented arms and the national anthem of Britain was played by the Nigeria Police Band. The Governor-General saluted and went into the House, but the crowd still lingered on, breaking the cordon of police and displaying banners in lurid lettering: "ALL TRIBALISTS MUST GO! . . . AWAY WITH TRIBALIST POLITICIANS!"

But now the sitting of the House which began so colourfully and so proudly is over. And what has emerged is the identification of the people's desire for Independence in 1960 with one particular leader. Under the influence of the Prime Minister's fiery dedication to a United Nigeria, there has been a distinct suppression of party and tribal differences and an acceptance of a oneness within the diverse ethnic and religious components that go to build up Nigeria.

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The country is restless in its search for foreign capital and in its desire to develop its overseas trade, telecommunications, public utilities, industries, and foreign relations. Federal and Regional Ministers are touring Europe and the United States in the hope of awakening foreign interest in development projects and of learning new methods to be adapted to Nigeria's needs. Some Ministers have shown concrete results by persuading important personalities to visit Nigeria and carry out tours of inspection, with a view to advising the Ministers concerned. But there is now a growing feeling among the (tax-

paying) public against Ministers described as "Globe-trotters", some of whom view their portfolios as glorified tickets to summer holidays in the South of France, Switzerland and other glamour-spots of Europe. These globe-trotters have been pointedly advised to begin their charity at home by putting their own house in order first. Instead of inspecting the road-system in Holland, one paper says, give us here in Nigeria a permanent road, and half the problem of maintenance will be solved. We are not so advanced as to begin to worry about elaborate road systems yet.

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There has been, incidentally, a distinct change in the weather pattern. The rainy season, which by now should have ended, still weeps on, and the country is suffering one endless spate of floods. Roads are feet deep in water and unusable even by heavy lorries. Bridges are being washed away, and even the Lagos City roads comprise one unrelieved mosaic of pot-holes and pools of floating tar. No better testing ground for the suspension of cars could have been devised by engineers. And now at this time, too, when the colleges and the University should be returning to work, raincoats and rainboots are still being worn.

But the rain did not prevent the student's conference from being a success. Students from all over the world constitute a queer class. Although most of them are out of touch with practical problems, they go to great critical and academic lengths to pass resolutions and suggest solutions to men in the thick of things. The 7th International Students' Conference held at Ibadan was the first one of its type to be held with an African country as host. Ibadan airport saw the landing of students from Canada and Ceylon, Australia and America, Costa Rica and Greece, Malaya and Ghana. South Africa was represented by a black man, Lovemore Mutambanengwe, who is strongly opposed to intellectual segregation; and by Johan Van der Vyver, a white man who believes in racial purity and segregation. The conference is now over and has left behind it in Nigeria a strong feeling among the students of belonging to an all-embracing and powerful world-wide movement, capable in its own unique way of fostering international understanding. Certainly the Nigerian press and radio viewed with importance and respect the proceedings of the conference, and there was no lack of publicity for its deliberations.

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The pattern changes fast. Brisk steps are daily being taken to implement the changes advised at the May London conference. One newspaper, in reporting the departure of Sir Bryan Sherwood-Smith, Governor of the Northern Region, said it marked the end of an era and thanked the retiring Governor for taking the country from the days of the District Officer, who had to improvise everything and was administrator and all other things rolled into one, to the present days of Ministerial Government by Nigerians. The Minorities Commission which was also suggested in the revised constitution, is busy looking into the fears of minority groups within the regions—fears of tribal domination and fears of “godless politicians.”

Change is the keynote of to-day. No two days are exactly alike in events. But what remains uppermost in the minds of Nigerians is that impression of a new and growing unity and a sensitive feeling of keen involvement in the recent misunderstandings of independent Ghana. Much of the country is split into two distinct groups: one is pro-Ghana and can see the sense in Dr. Nkrumah's actions, another remains strongly opposed to his decisions. But above all, Nigeria has supreme confidence in herself and knows that the problem of her own independence is a unique one. No one seriously expects it to follow any predetermined course.

With Independence as an incentive, the country works and condemns waste and plays with full vigour. League football has become a way of life, and overseas pools promise the adventurous staker a dividend of £75,000 (actually fulfilled in the case of several Nigerians). The Federal House has never been happy about the serious ‘drain’ of pool coupons on the country's economy, but though a number of practical solutions have been suggested, none has yet been adopted. And the daily papers are being mushroomed with advertisements promising easy means of making quick fortunes. Unregistered competition organizers bearing charitable names shout boldly ‘WIN £500; First entry 2s.; subsequent entries 1s.’

Money may be the root of all evil. But in to-day's Lagos the motives for making it and the practical results it reveals are too urgent for its effects to be judged with detachment.