

IN REPLY REFER TO

FILE NO.

14



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE FOREIGN SERVICE  
OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICAN CONSULATE GENERAL

Lagos, Nigeria

August 10, 1943

L-287  
p1/3

Dear Family,

In spite of a dearth of real news, I must take advantage of one of my now rare free moments to start relaying the latest events.

Saturday we had cutry lunch all by ourselves, and ate like fiends, as usual. In the evening we went to a funny movie, and then straight home to bed, since the dance was at Ebbuta Metta Club. We are not fond of the place, which is open to the chilly breezes current right now (at least we consider them very chilly), and the ladies john is of the most primitive, a thing that always annoys me unreasonably. The next day we had planned an excursion to the beach, but the bad weather which always waits till Sunday to appear, appeared on shedule. So we had a merry party at home, with Messers Lynch, Ham Ramsey the A.D.C., John Stapleton the retiring Private Seretary (Anita is taking his place, much to everyone's astonishment, she being the first lady to hold such a responsible position in ~~the~~ Government House. Elsa Campbell came also. We has some fine Canadian beer (donated by the Army) and a spanking good curry, which gave me indigestion like mad, but which was perhaps worth it. The movie at the Army was silly, and I'd seen it anyway, so we stayed home and read. I finished the book yesterday. A most interesting and well-written history of Nigeria, by Sir Alan Burns, now Governor of the Gold Coast. It gives you the feeling that this is really a frontier land, really developed only in the last 30 years. ...

The early explorers of Nigeria were apparently people who left home in order to commit suicide, since a good two thirds of them died most unnatural deaths, ~~and~~ quinine didn't appear until around 1860, and mosquito nets were not heard of. They all wanted to find the course of the Niger, and eventually they did. The queer thing was that in the early thirties of the last century a Scot on Grenada Island in the West Indies became interested in the problem, asked his slaves who came from that part of the world as much as he could, and then published a book giving the course of the Niger practically mile for mile, right up to the source in Senegal. No one paid any attention to the book, and it was a good thirty years before it was discovered that a great many brave men had died in vain. The canny Scot did it all from the vantage point of the West Indies, and never saw the Niger.

The arabs in North Africa have been in contact with Kano for some thousand years, and in 1300 and something a delegation from the Emir of Kano went to Tripoli on a diplomatic mission, concerned with Kano's flourishing exports in hides and skins. The southerners, who have been driven down to the low swampy coast by successive waves of stronger peoples, are generally inferior, although at this date they are better educated and more civilized in general due to their longer contact with Europeans. The first Christian missionaries were Portuguese fathers, who came around 1500, then went home in disgust, leaving a couple of alters in Benin City. Mohammedanism is the religion of the greater part of the Nigerians, and every year it makes about ten times as many converts as Christianity. The latter is unsuited to the customs of Africans, whose society is based on polygamy. There, that's the end of my lecture. Sorry, but I find it fascinating.

Last night we went to Andy Lynch's to meet a Miss Bannerman, who is going to Dakar for the O.E.W. A real human gal, American, young, pretty. She was the short-lived sensation of Lagos, since she was single into the bargain. Came home for chop, finished my book, started the composition of my speech before the Discussion Group. I am discussing American problems, which we have discovered is a closed book to most Britishers.



... Tuesday night, August 10th, the army

held a bang-up party again. Such a party as Lagos has never ever seen. Gorgeous decorations, flowers all over, corsages for the ladies, good music, a wonderful spread for supper, free beer (Canadian) coca-cola (first in years) rum, gin, whiskey of all kinds. This time all the ladies had heard about the kind of parties they give, and came in droves, relatively speaking. There must have been a good thirty. Paul Joneses, cutting in, partner dances, and a thoroughly gay spirit that you don't quite seem to get in an English party, why I can't say. I left reluctantly at 12:30, having asked William to drag me away at that hour no matter how much I begged to stay.

Last night I stayed at home to finish writing my speech about America for Sept. 28th, and to put some Kano cloth on a lamp shade. The house looks very decent now, and quite home-like. I only wish I had those THREE large photographs of PHilinda Duane.

I have never, practically, been busier. Work work work, but I enjoy it. John Houser the BEW man came back from Accra to day, and although he composes huge telegrams to be encoded by me, he is still always welcome, because he's a good man. He brought along a pal from Eritrea, deep in the heart of Eritires, who also knows Etheopia. He says the Italians did quite well there, all things considered (I mean in the occupation way, not the military) and that the Ethiopians just don't like ANY foreigners, Italians or British, and are forever taking potshots at white men from behind rocks- not to mention the various provinces that refuse to admit they are in Ethiopia, and prove it by shooting black and white trespassers as they arrive, especially gov't. men from Haile Selassie down.

That's all the news way we get em for to-night, as they say on "Lagos Calling".

Love,

