

navigate the trans-Atlantic trade, American empire, and increased influence of a capitalist economy.

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doi:[10.1017/eso.2019.67](https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2019.67)

Published online February 28, 2020

Peter J. Yearwood. *Nigeria and the Death of Liberal England, Palm Nuts and Prime Ministers 1914–1916*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018. 302 pp. ISBN 978-3-319-90565-5, €93.59 (cloth).

It is well known to students of early twentieth-century British politics that the House of Commons Nigeria debate in November 1916 led directly to the collapse of Asquith's coalition government and the elevation of Lloyd George, then minister of war, to the premiership. Far less well known is why Sir Edward Carson, leader of the unionist faction of the Conservative Party, should have chosen so obscure a topic, the sale of confiscated German property in Nigeria, with which to attack the government and in particular Andrew Bonar Law, the colonial secretary, who was also leader of his own party. Peter Yearwood's important new book *Nigeria and the Death of Liberal England* gives us invaluable insight into this question but also the significance of Nigeria in World War I imperial political economy.

It is a book that Professor Yearwood is well qualified to write, as he spent nearly a decade in Nigeria teaching African history at the University of Jos. It covers three broad themes: the economic development of Nigeria in the years before 1914; the problem of what to do with extensive German holdings in Nigeria's palm kernel trade, which had been seized as enemy property in World War I; and the role of the Nigerian debate in British politics at the end of 1916. Professor Yearwood also explores a number of subsidiary themes. Among the most significant is the rise of a Lagos-based nationalist movement in Nigeria, in part brought on by the Lugard administration's racially superior attitude toward Africans who had acquired European education, something that had not been the case in the late Victorian period.

Before World War I, the Nigerian economy was heavily dependent on exports of palm oil and kernels. This business was broadly divided into German-owned companies, which exported the palm kernels

directly to Germany for crushing into a “hard” vegetable oil used for margarine; a “ring” of large British firms exporting “soft” palm oil to Liverpool, where it was used for soap; and a collection of small British companies and African traders. In 1913, exports were £4.9 million, accounting for about 70 percent of Nigeria’s total. With the onset of war, the trade experienced serious problems, including dramatic fluctuations in price, particularly in shipping rates. This was compounded by the loss of German shipping and the Royal Navy’s requisition of ships from Elder Dempster, the main company that dealt with Nigeria. Moreover, rigid shipping quotas discriminated against the smaller British firms and local traders, who were vocal in their opposition to the big firms. These problems were accentuated by what to do with confiscated German assets. Initially, the position was that controlled holdings were managed by the state for the good of the war effort. The ultimate fate of any seized property would be a matter for the peace treaty when the war ended. This was all well and good if the war was short, but as it lengthened into years, the pressure to dispose of seized property became greater. The big British merchants, backed by their connections in Liverpool, favored a simple sale to British interests. Lugard wanted to open the sale to neutral bidders. He was unwilling to countenance the erection of a British monopoly, which he believed would discriminate against local African trade. Lugard, whose view was that he governed in the interests of Nigeria and not the imperial metropole, was determined upon two things: to encourage American capital investment in the colony and to prevent a return of German business after the war. A further problem was the desire of the Ministry of Munitions to shift the entire trade to the United Kingdom, at a fixed price, so that it could be diverted to glycerine production for shells.

Matters came to a head in late 1916. Sir Edward Carson, then the most significant “opposition” politician in Britain, was looking for a way to attack Asquith’s government as being weak on supposed German influence in high places. The sale of German property presented a convenient, though not ideal, avenue of attack. Bonar Law, the colonial secretary, supported sales to neutral buyers. This is usually assumed to be something foisted on him by doctrinaire-free traders. In fact, it was Lugard’s policy, one he urged on the government with some force so as to prevent the Liverpool ring from gaining complete control of the oil palm trade. Carson hoped that by defeating the government on this issue Asquith could be forced out and a new tougher direction be given to the war. Bonar Law for his own part wanted to infuse Asquith’s government with more energy. Lloyd George wanted a change in leadership but did not want to be held responsible for his prime minister’s fall. Unusually, Carson’s rhetorical skills failed him. Bonar Law was able to present opposition to neutral purchase of German property not

as a principled patriotic cause, but instead as the masked greed of an emergent cartel, something that the smaller British and African firms, fearful of being frozen out of this valuable export trade, had publicly argued for some months. Carson's defeat strengthened Bonar Law's position as Conservative leader, but he failed signally to reinvigorate the coalition and instead found himself working with Lloyd George to sideline Asquith. In Nigeria, the campaign to support sales to neutrals brought to the fore a new group of leaders in the nationalist movement who were all connected to the palm nuts trade.

This is an excellently researched and fluently written book that makes extensive use of underused primary sources, particularly those of the Colonial Office, held at the National Archives at Kew in west London. It will be of immense value to students of British politics, Nigerian nationalism, colonialism and colonial government in West Africa, as well as early twentieth-century African economic development.

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doi:[10.1017/eso.2019.74](https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2019.74)

Published online February 28, 2020

Jocelyn Wills. *Tug of War: Surveillance Capitalism, Military Contracting, and the Rise of the Security State*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017. 500 pp. ISBN 978-0-7735-5047-6, \$39.95 (cloth).

One of the recurring themes in Jocelyn Wills's detailed history of the formation and development of the Canadian company MDA (MacDonald, Dettwiler and Associates) is the push and pull between competing interests of advancing technology and advancing profit and the role that this tension had in shaping the company. *Tug of War* takes the reader from an early "basement" start-up phase to the emergence of MDA as an international company, tracing out the ambitions of its founders, the challenges of growing a company, the complexities of military contracting, and the security interests of the Canadian government. As told by Wills, the story of MDA centers on the figures and personalities of its founders, John MacDonald and Vern Dettwiler and their shared passion for computing rooted in their research at University of British Columbia. This is very much a Silicon Valley start-up narrative set in Vancouver, with the protagonists shaped by a