

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVESTMENT

By a Special Correspondent

IN a world short of capital, an emerging country such as Nigeria has to do more than show itself to be sound in order to attract the over-courted investor: it must seem positively seductive. For an African country this must be today an almost impossible task, since investors as a class are only too prone to make sweeping "decisions of policy" such as to lump the whole of a continent together and decree it to be unsafe. The scope of this article cannot include consideration of these broad generalities, but the basic facts about Nigeria can always bear repetition: it contains a third of the population of

reasonable rates, and the use of natural gas and the eventual harnessing of the Niger will provide an abundance. Water is plentiful all over the South, and the various authorities are usually helpful about making it available. Communications still leave much to be desired, but they are being constantly improved. The ports are very efficiently managed. The country is well served by banks, but there is a shortage of competent accountants and solicitors. In the past two years some advance has been made with more sophisticated services, and capital issues can be handled.

new large-scale local investment. But the market that exists now is one thing: the future market in a poor and predominantly agricultural country is quite another. For example, the universal peasant's tool is the machete, and there is not even a horizontal blade on a vertical stick for cutting grass. The smallest advance in methods of cultivation, coupled with a slight increase in purchasing power, would argue a brand-new market in tools and implements, although their complete manufacture locally might not be practicable at present.

Nigeria's economic future depends on the maintenance of a balanced advance on the part of both agriculture,

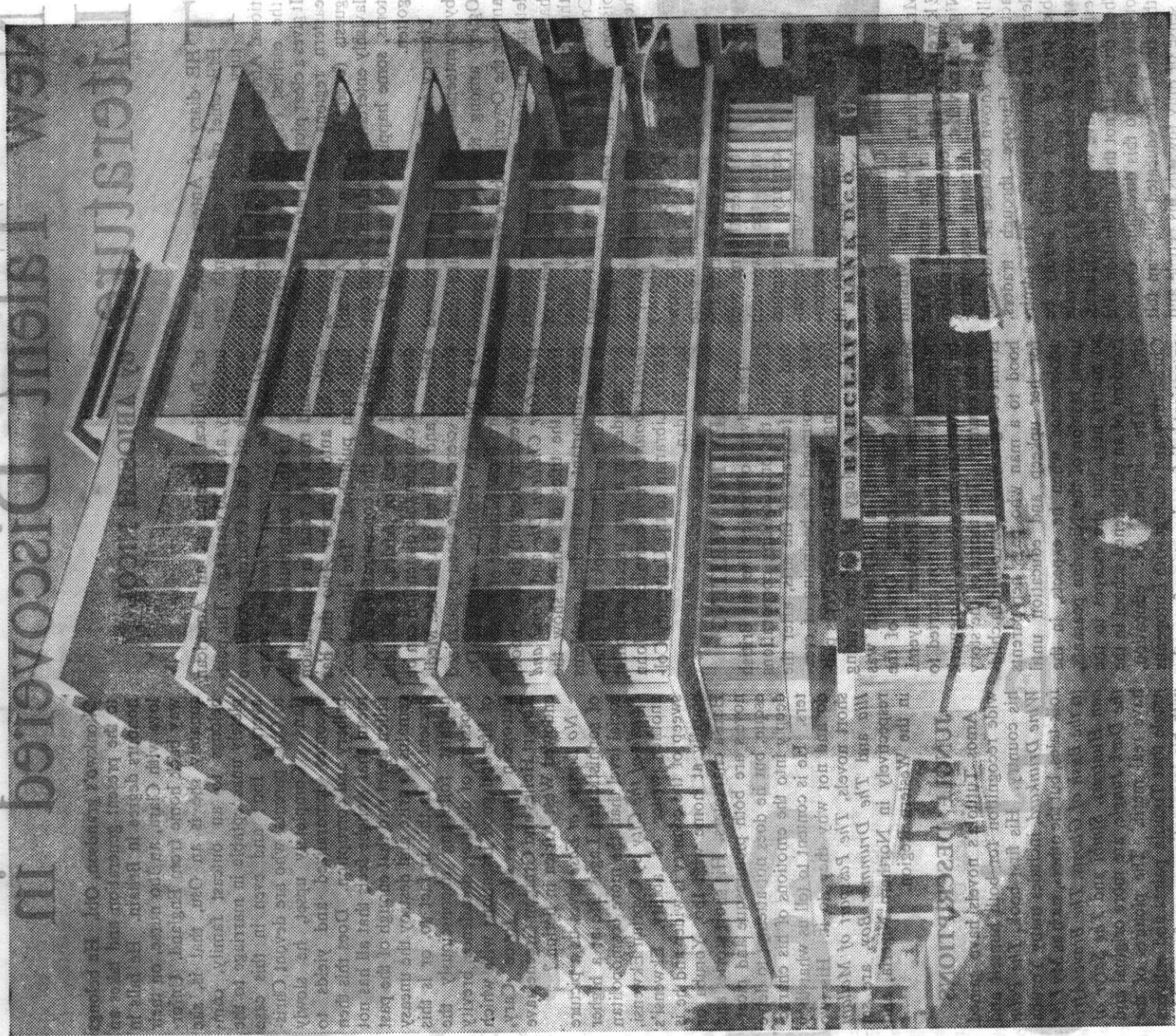
If the actual opportunities for investment are dealt with last, it is because they are almost limitless in a country

Africa south of the Sahara; its political and geographical division into three parts offers a base for a stable system of government; it is an important supplier of raw materials having all its outlets on the Atlantic seaboard. Avoidance of total chaos in the whole western world implies that Nigeria will maintain its advance towards a reasonable standard of living, and this in turn implies that the impetus given in recent years to foreign investment will be maintained and increased. It is not conceivable that in this way Nigeria will become the stable mass on which the peace and prosperity of West Africa, even of all Southern Africa, will be built.

Modern design is incorporated into the new Treasury building at Ibadan, in which are the offices of the Premier and the Ministry of Finance. The design is a generalization of that which discredits the author more than the Nigerian labourer. Many well-run businesses can prove that it is not necessary. Nigerians take readily to the mechanical trades, and it is a fact longer in service than an English farmer, working more and much worse land. On the other hand, Nigerians do seem to have two awkward, though not unpleasant, drawbacks: they find it difficult to accept routine, and repetitive jobs are often spiced with ill-timed touches of imagination.

Investment on the national and international scale needs no discussion here, and for reasons that will be made clear the very small investor requires talent and endurance so exceptional as to make him statistically irrelevant. The investor who stands here, and the one most likely to succeed, is the business with spare capital and managerial talent which for one reason or another can profitably expand into Nigeria.

TRAINING NEEDED: The human resources are thus ample and only need training. But it is essential that the intending investor can produce a management of the very highest quality: indeed, it is true to say that the character of his local managers will dictate the course of his investment much more than his capital resources. Good manners, patience and a ready laugh are the components of success, though in the North the sense of humour is better reserved, and no arbitrary definition must be the Nigerians themselves. The inanimate facilities generally are experienced enough to manage complex business affairs. The smallest com-



The head office of Barclays Bank for Nigeria and the Cameroons in Lagos, opened in August. The result of collaboration between the architects, Messrs Walker, Harwood and Cranswick, and the engineers, Messrs Maurice Nachshen and Partners, the building was built on swampy ground floating on a cellular concrete raft.



Making a topographical survey in Western Nigeria.

The Nigerians want results to which he regards his own interests and Nigeria's as inseparable. Nigerians are only mildly nationalistic and have none of the racial complexes that hamper so many other African countries. But they are proud and ambitious, and among them to attract new industries. The Federal Government controls their own progress comes first. They are also extremely sensitive judges of fiscal incentives but does not, on the whole, invest directly in private industry. Generally speaking, an investor in Nigeria that is judged useful to the economy will find all governments anxious to help him with facilities, tax concessions and protection. He will be wise, in return, to allow for Nigerian participation in the venture where it is appropriate, and in any case his success to allow at least a month to do so.