

## *The Federation of Nigeria*

WITH THE opening of its newest mission in April, Canada established diplomatic links with a fascinating young giant among the nations of the world — the Federation of Nigeria. Less than a hundred years ago British naval forces were landing at the Yoruba town of Lagos to stamp out what was left of the slave trade. On October 1, 1960, the Federation of Nigeria will be transformed from the largest British dependency to the most populous sovereign state in Africa — while the Yorubas watch the independence ceremonies on television. Within these limits of time and custom a complex country of great potential strength has been developing. Its 35,000,000 people speak such a medley of languages and dialects that a constitutional pamphlet had recently to be published in twelve tongues besides English. The Nigerian kaleidoscope ranges from the hot and humid Slave Coast of Guinea to the margins of the Sahara; from the sophisticated college students of Ibadan to backward peasants.

One might describe Nigeria very generally as being hill country in the southwest and a plateau in the north and east sloping towards the Sahara. There are four main zones traversing the country from east to west, which correspond closely to the annual rainfall. As the latter decreases toward the interior from 200 inches at places in the southeast to 20 inches in the north, the belt of mangrove swamps and dense tropical forest changes to park land, to grass land, and to thorny scrub interspersed with bare patches of sandy soil. The Niger ("Black") River, from which, of course, the country's name was derived, and its tributary the Benue, flow slowly through broad valleys, dividing the country into three sections to which the political regions roughly coincide. In the east the Cameroon Mountains rise more than 6000 feet above sea-level, the highest peak reaching 13,350 feet.

The Nigerian population is concentrated principally in the southern part of the country (the Eastern and Western Regions), where 43 per cent of the inhabitants occupy 20 per cent of the country's 373,000 square miles. Several districts in the Eastern Region contain more than 1,000 persons a square mile; these are amongst the most densely populated areas in West Africa. By contrast, the square-mile population is 20 in the Northern Region, reflecting the scanty rainfall of the savannah country. Nigerians are mainly rural and village dwellers. Urbanization is increasing steadily, however, particularly in the Western Region. There are nineteen cities with populations of 50,000 or more, nine of which are located in the Western Region or adjacent to it. Ibadan, capital of the Western Region, is the largest city, with a population of about 500,000.

Within the Nigerian population are different peoples and groups. The Western Region's inhabitants are predominantly Yorubas. They are a proud, sophisticated people, fond of music and festivities. It is they who had first contact with the Europeans. Yorubas were the first Nigerian doctors, lawyers, and professional