

**T**HE "doctrine of the hinterlands" nations; the African of the day decided the present shape of Nigeria. Few people now realize that it was this forgotten doctrine that has created the present "nations" of West Africa. It had a similar effect in East Africa, but with modifications. The European development of trade, and eventually of a vague consular jurisdiction, lay along the coast. The white nations pegged their claims and allowed themselves into advantageous positions with a greater or lesser degree of courtesy or force as the case might be. It was not unlike a group of people round a small bar. The "pegs" were forts where there was dry land and hulks where the waters covered the earth.

**GEOGRAPHICAL BOX**

For 300 years this manoeuvring went on until, in the middle of last century, anxious parliaments passed resolutions saying that they never, yes, never, wanted to acquire another inch of territory; and other agencies sent out courteous parties amply supplied with beads and mirrors and other cheap goods and some really valuable presents, which were not appreciated by the recipients and, of course, arms and gin. Five thousand cases of spirits were found when a Royal Navy party entered one chieftain's palace in the Creeks.

Naturally the traders on the coast knew that their trade would be worthless if anyone managed to divert "their" up-country tribes from their interest; their trade would of course collapse, for the coast by itself produced little. It was the hinterland that really mattered. Nevertheless, few people penetrated far into it; and hardly anyone managed to live there for long except the heroic missionaries, who sickened and died in a way that must have been very gratifying for the forces of evil.

In the end the matter was solved by international agreement, that is, of course, agreement between European

theless, many people came here and managed to survive and to increase. We have no idea why or how this happened. The immigrations were slow and gradual and probably of small parties. They came from the north and east, and the last were perhaps 1,000 years ago. A few came in by sea, but the greater part must have come by land. It is not unexpected therefore to find that they formed layers across the country—the Yorubas in the south-west and the Ibos in the south-east, with the Efiks and smaller peoples around them. The peoples of the east-west sections of the Niger and Benue valleys are not particularly interrelated, but they are quite different from the groups between them and the coast. Here are the Nupe, the Tiv and the Ijokos, and, just off the line,

## From Tribalism to Nationhood

By SIR REX NIVEN

**Commissioner for Special Duties in Northern Nigeria**

As it were, of the opposed forces in the last of the interminable wars between Ibadan and Oyo and the Ilorins. The old independent Northern Nigeria Government was on one side of this line and Southern Nigeria on the other. It was not until 1939 that the South was split for administrative reasons into Western and Eastern groups of Provinces. The Northern boundary, which lies well south of the rivers, is not much more than 150 miles from the sea.

Over all this area live people with a highly developed artistic skill. They differ in manner and in material, but even in the everyday things of life they show their care and genius: their sense of form and economy of line; their use of the material in which they are working. In the ordinary domestic art, without a wheel (so true that halves of spherical pots separately made can be precisely united), in the wooden implements of the home (and farm and in the iron worked under poor conditions and with the simplest of tools and equipment, this sense of style and rhythm stands out clearly. All are exactly fitted for their purpose.

**NORTHERN BUILDER**

The wood carver of Benin and Awka is matched by the northern builder who, with his fingers, shapes the elaborate and imaginative mudwork of their buildings from the smallest to the most important. The shape of a mud corn bin (10 feet high) is as good as a Greek jar. The cloth woven all over the country is not only strong—but often seems seldom to wear out—but often decorative and colourful. Where thatching with grass is practised, it is not only fine and pleasing to the eye but it keeps out the rain.

Their rhythm in music is, I suppose, almost too well known for it to be men-

up the country, in bringing diverse peoples together, in smoothing off the rough edges of shyness and strangeness and in spreading infectious diseases. It is a strange reflection that under British administration rivalries between Regions were purely among officials: tribal spirit appeared not to exist. Under self-government the latter has revived remarkably and now affects all levels of society.

How was it that the present Regions occurred? It was nothing more or less than the meeting between administrators pushing up from the coast and Lugard's smiting patrols pushing south. For the most part the present line is not unfair to tribal boundaries. It smudged by the movement of people. In the west the line was the front line, and in the east it was the line of the

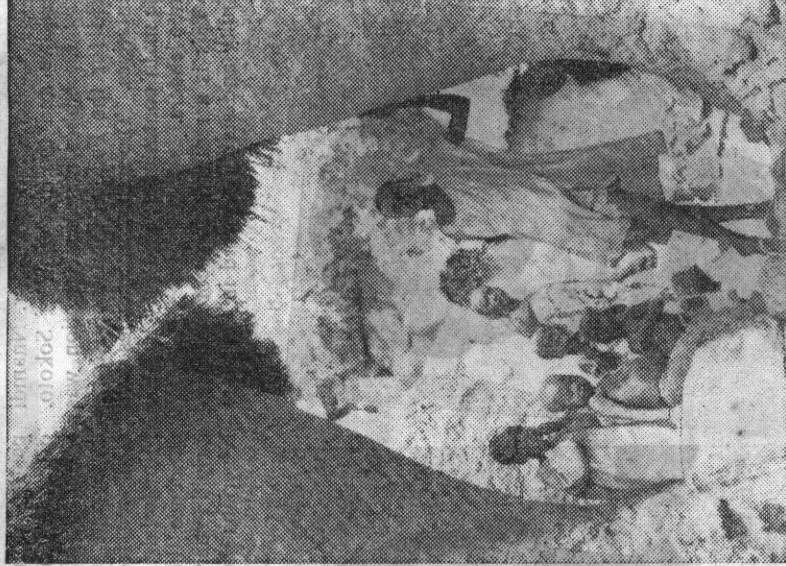
realized that nothing is indeed impossible. But still, as in Europe, there are vast areas where the peasantry follow their old ways, embellished and sometimes improved by the modern and the scientific.

One of the striking things about the population of Nigeria is its density (and emptiness). An area covering 100 miles east of the Niger, the area in the west through which the railway line runs from Abeokuta to Osogbo, the valley of the upper Sokoto River and the area round Kano—these carry 500 or 600 to the square mile, they say, but in fact on the ground they may be over 1,200. They are mostly farmers and in general grow their own sufficient food. Some of the areas are well watered and naturally fertile, but one million people just round Kano city depend on animal manure for their farms (and have done so from time immemorial). The emptinesses are due to lack of water and to slave raiding. Some of them show less than one to the square mile.

In spite of the fact that all these people came together fortuitously into what is now Nigeria, in spite of their diversities, in spite of the great distances, in spite of the divergences of climate, language, customs, belief, and state of development and so on, there is a distinct national feeling and a genuine desire to work together, provided, of course, that such does not interfere with local development and local *amour propre*. This in itself is a good augury for the future of the industrious people of Nigeria.



A Hausa trader at Kano.



Pagans at Minya, north of Jos.



A typical Ibo girl.