

60 YEARS OF BRITISH RULE

By Sir ALAN BURNS

WHEN British ships, first visited the coast of Nigeria in the second half of the sixteenth century they came in search of trade—ivory and pepper and, later, slaves for the plantations in America and the West Indies. Little then was known of the interior or of the people who lived there, and the only contacts were with the coastal tribes. Benin was at that time the most powerful kingdom, and Lagos was inhabited by only a few fishermen. Bornu and the Hausa kingdoms of the hinterland were scarcely even names to Englishmen, although they had long been in touch with the Moslem states of north Africa. The course of the Niger, and the fact that it flowed into the Gulf of Guinea, were still undiscovered.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century two events occurred that were still carried on the trade, and thousands of slaves were rescued and liberated. At the same time, British merchants turned their attention to legitimate trade with the coastal tribes. It was not until 1830 that the Lander brothers proved that some of the "rivers", which European vessels had visited for more than three centuries, were in fact the mouths of the Niger, and only parts of the intricate system of waterways which made up its immense delta. Attempts were at once made to develop trade with the hinterland along the course of the Niger and its main tributary, the Benue, but the mortality among the crews of the vessels that ascended the rivers was so great that the idea was abandoned for a while. British merchants, however, continued to trade on the coast, and ships of the naval squadron visited the river ports from time to time to attack slave ships or to punish outrages against the traders. As a result, British influence steadily grew and in 1849 it was decided to appoint a consul, with his headquarters at the Spanish island of Fernando Po, to look after British interests in the area.

By this time the Yoruba kingdom, which had risen to power during the previous two centuries under the Alafin of Oyo, had largely disintegrated as a result of civil wars, and the prisoners taken in these wars were being sold to dealers in Lagos, which had become one of the principal bases of the overseas slave trade. The legitimate Oba of Lagos, Akitoye, had been driven out by a usurper who favoured the slave trade and rejected British requests that it should be stopped. In 1851 a British naval force captured Lagos after severe fighting and restored Akitoye to power on his promise to abolish the slave trade. Ten years later, in 1861, as Akitoye's successor was unable to prevent a revival of the trade, Lagos was annexed as a British colony.

For another 24 years no more was done to extend direct British control over the country but treaties were made with the chiefs of certain tribes aimed at the abolition of the slave trade. Later, in the early 'eighties, a further series of treaties placed the territories of various chiefs under British protection. By this time, thanks to the use of quinine as a prophylactic against malaria, it had been found possible to establish trading stations on the banks of the Niger, and a combination of British trading interests there, organized by Sir George

Mr. Selwyn Lloyd with the Nigerian High Commissioner in London, Alhaji Abdulmaliki.

to have the greatest effect on the future of Nigeria. In 1802 a Fulani sheikh, Othman dan Fodio, led his people in a jihad against the pagans and lax Moslems of the Hausa states, and in a few years the whole of Hausaland was governed by Fulani emirs under the suzerainty of Othman's son, Bello, who became the first Sultan of Sokoto. For a time the new rulers administered their emirates wisely and well in accordance with the precepts of the Koran, but later they fell away from this high standard, the courts became corrupt, and the emirs tyrannical, raiding their pagan neighbours and even their own subjects in order to obtain slaves.

In 1807 the United Kingdom Parliament passed an Act that made the slave trade illegal for British subjects, and from that time strenuous efforts were made by Britain to stamp out the traffic. A naval squadron patrolled the West African coast to intercept vessels that

land. The rest of the area became the Niger Coast Protectorate (at first called the Oil Rivers Protectorate) and was administered by a Consul-General resident at Calabar.

The influence of the Lagos government was exercised to discourage the civil wars in the Yoruba country, which gradually came under British protection. In the Niger Coast Protectorate naval and military action was taken against

the suppression of slavery and the opening up of communications, and in spite of interruptions caused by the wars great progress was made. An extensive system of motor roads, more than 1,900 miles of railway, and in recent years a number of airfields, have facilitated trade and given access to all parts of the country. Palm oil and kernels, groundnuts and cocoa, tin ore and columbite, are among the rapidly rising volume of

domestic exports, the total value of which, in 1959, exceeded £164m. The population also is growing fast and is now estimated to be over 35 million. The number of schools is increasing, and there are more than 1,000 undergraduates at the University College at Ibadan, which was opened in 1952.

After the Second World War there was a number of constitutional changes. The three groups of provinces, now called

Regions, were given separate administrations and legislatures as units of a Federation of Nigeria. In 1957 the Eastern and Western Regions became self-governing in internal affairs, and the Northern Region received the same status in 1959. The Cameroons remains for the present a Trust Territory under United Kingdom administration, but the Federation of Nigeria becomes fully independent on October 1 this year.

PRIME MINISTERS' MESSAGES

FROM MR. MACMILLAN



The advent of Nigeria among the sovereign nations of the Commonwealth is an event of great historical significance. This vast land of 35 million people will inevitably have an important role to play, not only among the African nations, but also in the councils of the world.

I count myself fortunate in having been able earlier this year to see for myself something of the Nigerian achievement. I was heartened by the confident and business-like way in which Nigeria's leaders and her people were approaching the responsibilities of independence. I was heartened, too, by the warm and cheerful friendliness so evident between the people of our two countries. These, I felt, were good auguries for a fruitful partnership between us as full and equal members of the Commonwealth.

In the past the people of my country have been privileged to play a prominent part in Nigeria's advance to full independence. We have done our best to help in men, materials and money, in ideas and ideals. I hope that we shall be able to continue our contribution to Nigeria's advance. Many people from Britain will remain in the country to serve the new Government. British business houses hope to play their part in Nigeria's material development. British teachers will be available, including some under the plans worked out at the Commonwealth Education Conference last year, and other specialists and technicians will be ready if their services are asked for from Nigeria.

Nigeria has now completed her progress from dependence to independence. But beyond independence lies interdependence. It is in the certainty that its members can rely upon one another in time of need that the strength of the Commonwealth lies.

We are glad indeed to welcome Nigeria to our Commonwealth counsels. We wish her well. We assure her of our continuing sympathy and friendship.

Harold Macmillan

FROM ALHAJI SIR ABUBAKAR BALEWA



I warmly commend the initiative of THE TIMES newspaper in publishing this Supplement on the occasion of Nigerian Independence. At the present time it is more important than ever for people in responsible positions to be properly informed of what is happening in Africa, and to be in a position to appreciate the various countries which have recently come into prominence.

This is not to claim any particular merit for the Federation of Nigeria, but I think that as many people as possible should be made aware of the uniqueness of the occasion. In the first place, our Independence is the culmination of 15 years' empirical democracy during which Nigerian Ministers have gradually and imperceptibly taken over the responsibility for government. Today we shoulder the complete load, but the process has been so gradual that we shall, I am confident, take the additional strain without faltering. Personally I am hopeful, and I predict that history will single out the emergence of Nigeria as a triumph for both the United Kingdom Government and Nigerians.

In the second place, this occasion is remarkable in that we enter into Independence with a Constitution of which not one single provision has been imposed upon us. It is the final result of the many conferences which have marked Nigeria's political development over the past 10 years, during which all shades of political opinion, literally at every level, have been consulted: the result is a form of government, complex no doubt, but deliberately chosen for Nigeria by Nigerians.

For the past 15 years I have myself been closely concerned with the constitutional development of Nigeria, and I am honestly confident that we shall have the moral courage not only to work out our own salvation but also to contribute greatly to the future peace and prosperity of this turbulent African Continent.

Alhaji Sir Abubakar Balewa

pectorate over the area was proclaimed. Sir George Goldie's company, which became known as the Royal Niger Company, was granted a royal charter authorizing it to govern the Niger delta and the territory on both banks of the Niger and Benue, as well as their hinter-lands and the Oba deported in 1897.

