

Nigeria achieved independent dominion status on October 1, 1960 and on October 1, 1963, the country became a republic, still within the British Commonwealth.

In the mid-1960s, Nigeria experienced a great deal of political unrest. Two military coups d'état ensued in 1966 and civil war broke out in mid-1967. The civil war, which lasted for 30 months, resulted in extensive loss of life, damage to property, and the disruption of communications and commerce. The war ended in January 1970 and, because of the magnanimous attitude of the federal government to the former secessionists, harmonious relationships have been restored.

Originally, the country was divided into three and then four regions. In 1967 the country was divided into 12 states which were redivided in 1976 into the current 19 states. In 1979 the first civilian government since the 1960s was elected with a constitution modelled on that of the United States.

The President's party, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) controls eight states and is the largest single party in the Senate and House of Representatives. The major opposition parties are the United Party of Nigeria (UPN) and Nigerian Peoples Party (NPP). (The next general election is scheduled for September 1983). A list of current government leaders and advisors is attached as Appendix B.

Each state has its own governor and State Assembly elected for a four-year term. While states have jurisdictional responsibility in such fields as education, medical services and public works, they have limited financial resources and rely heavily on Federal government revenue allocations.

The People

Nigeria is by far the most populous country in Africa with an estimated 80 to 100 million people. Population density is about 97 per square kilometre (250 people per square mile). There are only about 65,000 Europeans in the country, nearly half of whom live in Lagos.

The Federal Capital of Lagos and surrounding metropolitan area, including Apapa, Mushin, Surulere,