

on the inside

# Nigeria's

# Dilemma

A Brunswickan Feature

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"The Inside" is a **Brunswickan** supplement. A feature section will appear by-weekly for the duration of this University year. Articles express the opinions of their authors. No prejudice is intended. Students interested in writing articles of this nature are encouraged to contact the editor.

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Nigeria celebrated its 6th Independence anniversary last Saturday Oct. 1st. It was a tragedy. Riots and violence broke out throughout the country and resulted in the loss of more than 1000 lives. It is a pity because Nigeria has been considered by the outside world as the most stable and progressive of all the newly independent African states. Perhaps this is because the world tended to look at Nigeria's wealth and development much more than the internal problems. Nigeria is plagued by traditional rivalry between the northern and southern tribes; a rivalry which has invaded almost every walk of life from politics to the civil service.

General Ironsi's army coup of last January tried to put an end to the political and tribal conflicts. The army hoped to set up a civilian government free from tribalism and corruption. But the General, himself from the south, by surrounding himself with a small band of southern advisers, showed that even the army had succumbed to the problem it had set out to combat. A rift had appeared in the army and the counter coup by Lieutenant-Colonel Gowon last July was motivated by the urge to bridge this rift and capture power for the north. But as later events showed, the bachelor 31 year old Lieutenant-Colonel, found the task of restoring confidence, efficiency and discipline in the army too much. His pledge to keep the army out of politics as much as possible is wishful thinking because the army cannot, at the moment, withdraw completely from politics before a basis for civilian government has been reached.

However, the 14 delegates and their 14 advisers are in Lagos for a conference. They are trying to hammer out a basis for the future constitution of Nigeria's civilian government. Well-known personalities like, Chief Awolowo, Chief Enahoro, Dr. Njoku, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nigeria; Sir Kashim Ibrahim from the north; and Dr. Elias, the former Attorney General, are leading delegates from their regions. Various suggestions have been advanced; from federal systems with strong central government to a loose confederation with Nigeria split into 18 regions.

Nevertheless, whatever solution the delegates forge out in Lagos, Nigeria's dilemma will be far from settled. Tribal animosity which is kept active by chronic riots and killings as that of Oct. 1st, will not only make the resumption of civilian government difficult but also retard the development of Nigeria as a nation.

The problem facing Nigeria today cannot be solved by the army or the politicians alone, as Lieutenant-Colonel Gowon told the nation in his broadcast on the night of the recent riot:

"Tragic as the recent events have been, it is my determination to remove the army from politics as quickly as possible and to do this every true citizen of Nigeria must cooperate."