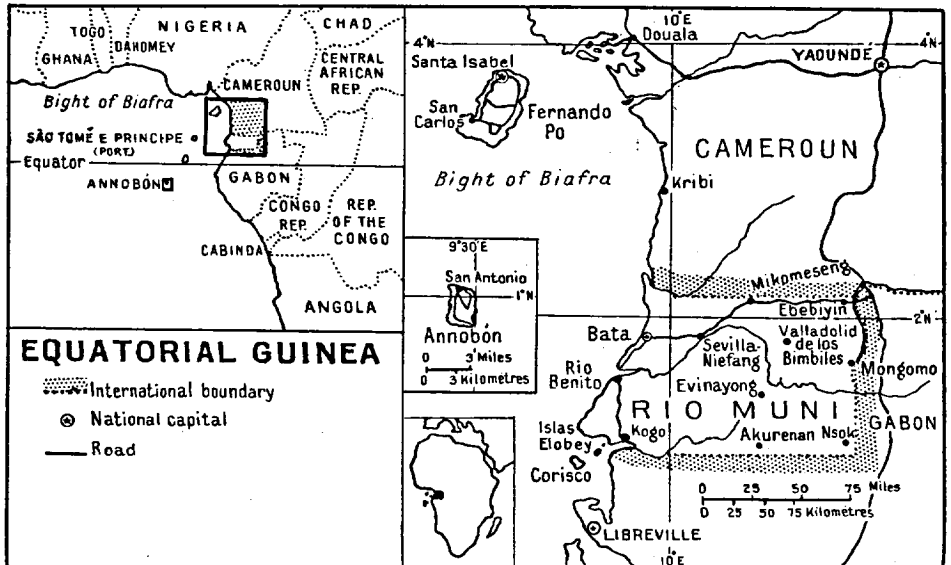# The Republic of Equatorial Guinea

ON October 12, 1968, Equatorial Guinea became the forty-first African country to achieve independence. The new state had been a Spanish colony since 1778. On July 30, 1959, it acquired the status of a Spanish province. On December 15, 1963, it gained internal autonomy by referendum. Last August, again by referendum, it voted for independence. General elections followed in September, when Francisco Macias Nguema was elected first President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea.

Separation from the mother country was not achieved without difficulty. In the referendum of December 1963 on the creation of a single governing council and a single territorial assembly for both provinces, the majority in Fernando Po voted against unification, while the majority in Rio Muni supported the motion. Spain, however, wished to carry out the United Nations General Assembly resolution favouring the acquisition of sovereignty by Spanish Guinea by July 1, 1968. The Spanish Government, therefore, tried to win the approval of the delegates of both provinces for its draft constitution. The first constitutional conference, held in Madrid in November and December 1967, ended in failure because of the separatist views of the Fernando Po delegates. At a second constitutional conference, however, held in May and June 1968, differences were finally resolved, and the delegates agreed on a new constitution that would both maintain national unity and safeguard the social and economic features peculiar to each province.