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CLASS B

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Describe the Progress of Nigeria
towards Independence.

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Except for the tragedy of the Congo, the year 1960 will surely go down in African history as one of the most glorious of years for no less than seventeen African nations gained their independence and most of them were admitted into membership of the United Nations. One of the most important of these nations is Nigeria — "a giant among Lilliputians", with a total area of 373,250 square miles and a population of about thirty five millions. Only the Congo surpasses it in area, but it falls far below it in population figures with only fourteen millions.

Although Nigeria has been under British rule for just a century, yet the story of how it was built into a modern united nation and gradually prepared for independence, and the important place it holds today in Africa and the British Commonwealth, is a long one. As is the case with many other African and Asian nations, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to gain a footing in it for, in the year 1472, they started trading in the coastal areas and up the rivers — the most important 'produce' sought being slaves.

In 1562, John Hawkins, the famous British sea-hawk, also bought or seized slaves there and took them to the West Indies. This trade went on for nearly three hundred years until men's eyes were opened to the cruelty and injustice of it. But even after the Reformed Parliament of England abolished slavery in 1833, it was carried on illegally for many years. To limit this illegal trade, or to stop it altogether, Britain occupied Lagos in 1861, and this was the beginning of British contact with Nigeria.

At first the British engaged in general trade but, as some form of government was necessary to aid this, the few British trading companies were forced by necessity to take over administration, and hence, Lagos and the surrounding territories was constituted a Colony in 1862. These few trading companies amalgamated into a single company in 1877 to develop trade with

the interist. At the Berlin Conference in 1885 Nigeria was recognised as a British sphere of influence and in the same year a Protectorate over the area from Lagos to Calabar was proclaimed. In 1886, the Amalgamated Company was renamed the Royal Niger Company, and given a charter. The Company's officials, acting as District Officers governed at this time much like the East India Company's officials in India. Specially chosen District Officers governed, by prudent methods, through the local kings and chieftans, and brought peace, order and good government gradually to all Southern Nigeria. In 1900, the Company's administration rights and powers were taken over by the Crown, and a Proclamation was issued setting up the Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria.

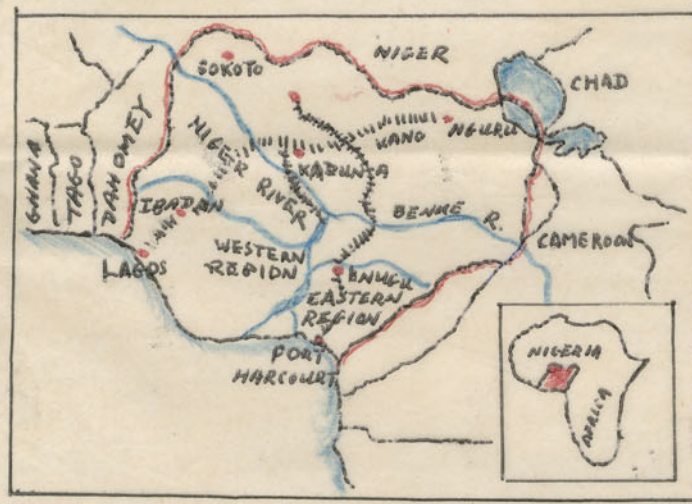
Although a good foundation for future progress had been laid in Southern Nigeria by 1900, very little contact had been made as yet with Northern Nigeria. Here was a vast territory where the Fulani Mohammedans exercised tyrannical control over the Hausa and other tribes. Slavery still reigned supreme there, and these more warlike tribes often raided Southern Nigeria. French influence had also begun to spread there, so it was time for action on the part of the British authorities.

Now a man appeared on the Nigerian scene who has the right, more than any other, to be called the architect of modern Nigeria. This was Sir Frederick Lugard (later Lord Lugard). First he raised companies of native soldiers (Hausa and Yorubas), and then advanced into the North. The Union Jack was hoisted at Lokoja on January 1st. 1900, and the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria proclaimed with Lugard as High Commissioner. Soon the power of the emirs and sultans of the North was broken and "by 1903 all Northern Nigeria acknowledged British authority." Lugard perfected the system of "Indirect Rule" and by 1906, when he left to become Governor of our own Colony of Hong Kong, peace and order reigned. He returned to Nigeria in 1912 as Governor of both

Lugard in
Africa.

Lugard on
Africa.

Protectorates. In 1914, these two Protectorates were united under one government with Lugard the Governor-General of this new unit. Under Lugard, the three divisions of the country had Lieutenant-Governors, and a large advisory body was set up "devised to give the opportunity for the expression of public opinion", and containing a number of chosen African members. Hence, by 1914, some kind of unity had been brought to a hopelessly divided country sunk in the deepest savagery; slavery had been ended, and peace and order established. A very good beginning had been made in organising the country on modern lines, a police force was in existence, and the nucleus of an army formed-an army that later on was to gain renown in Burma in World War Two.



In the same year as this unification of Nigeria, the first World War broke out. The war affected Nigeria to a certain extent because the German territory of the Cameroons was close to it. But the Nigerians proved very loyal to the British authorities in war operations in West Africa, and when peace came part of the German territory of the Cameroons was entrusted by the League of Nations to British Administration.

Although Northern Nigeria was now part of the greater whole, yet it remained very isolated and backward. For long this

situation remained unaltered for the Constitution which established in Nigeria a Legislative Council in 1922, all ten Nigerian representatives came from the more advanced South. In fact, the Northern Nigerians hardly appeared on the political scene until the introduction, after the Second World War, of the new Constitution drawn up under the governorship of Sir Arthur Richards (later Lord Milverton).

An the years from 1922-1946 things went on smoothly in Nigeria. National political parties had been organised and their leaders began to claim the right for self-determination. Many colonial territories were claiming the same right and the Second World War had the effect of increasing this national demand for independence. All along, it had been Britain's intention to prepare such territories for this goal, and she never claimed the right to remain in any colonial territory if she considered that it was ready to rule itself, or to go against the wishes of the inhabitants. But she followed a slow and steady course and refused to be rushed into sudden decisions that would be disastrous in the long run.

By 1946, developments began to be more rapid in Nigeria. In that year a new Constitution was drawn up. It established a common legislature for the whole country and for the first time provided for a majority of Nigerian members. Unfortunately, it emphasised the differences in the country by its division of Nigeria into three Regions, based on the three unequal areas formed by the River Niger and its tributary the Benue. These are also the areas that are dominated by the three great rival tribes of Nigeria; in the Eastern Region the Ibos, in the western Region the Yorubas, and in the Northern Region the Haus as. The old rivalries and jealousies, and the fear of minority groups, for a long time seriously, threatened national unity. But Britain by wise advice and a prudent policy succeeded in making the leaders of the three most important political parties that had gained

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support in each Region to see reason and to join together to make a Nigeria that would be united, strong and influential. The Northern Region, always the most backward, where Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello, the Sardauna of Sokoto, held political sway with his right hand man, British educated Abubaker Tafawa Balewa, was always a bit suspicious of British intentions and also feared domination in a United Nigerian Parliament dominated by the progressive Eastern and Western Regions. A visit to the U.S.A. in 1955 changed Balewa from a "Northerner" into a Nigerian. He saw that what America had done—moulded many people of different racial origins into a United Nation — could be done by Nigerians too, so from that time he declared "seperation is dead; Nigeria is one Nation." The final transition to Federation was easier then and made more certain still by a clearer definition of relations between the Regional and Federal Governments and by promising the North as many seats in the Federal Parliament as those of the Eastern and Western combined.

Even before general agreement on a Federation set-up was finally reached between the Nigerian political leaders themselves, and the first step towards this final goal had been taken, it must be remembered that the Regional bodies up till 1950 had only, more or less, advisory powers. But after this year constitutional advance was rapid. In 1951 Regional and Federal ministers were appointed. In 1954 the Federation became an accomplished fact and in 1957 a Federal Prime Minister was appointed. In the same year the Western and Eastern Regions were granted self-government to be followed by the North in 1959. Finally on October 1st. 1960, with riots and racial hatred in South Africa, turmoil in East Africa, bloodshed in Algeria and disorder in the Congo, the Federation of Nigeria was officially proclaimed when the green white and green flag of the new nation was hoisted at Lagos in the presence of Her Royal Highness Princess Alexandra, representing Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth. It was a glorious day of universal rejoicing and of harmonious goodwill between Britons and

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Nigerians. Everything had worked out peacefully and perfectly and so the largest state in Africa, emerged triumphantly, destined, we hope, to play a great part in the new Africa and to transform the balance of power there for, "what Nigeria thinks and does will be infinitely more important than what Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah or Guinea's Sekou Touve thinks and does."

Nigeria today has a House of Representatives of over 300 elected members — all Nigerians — more than half of whom come from the Northern Region. Each of the Regions has its own Upper and Lower Legislative Houses, and local government is well organised and progressing. The Federal Prime minister is Abubaker Tafawa Balewa and Dr. Nnamde Azikiwe has just been appointed Governor-General. Dr. Azikiwe was formerly leader of the National Council of Nigeria which is the main political party in the Ibo East and the Cameroons (the final fate of the latter is to be settled by a plebiscite soon.) Chief Abafemi Awolowo is head of the Action Group, the main political group in the Yoruba West, and which now forms the opposition in the Federal Parliament. The Sardawna of Sokoto is the leader of the Northern People's Congress party but has had little to do with the Federation Parliament. This is how Nigeria is governed today and the story of how this method of government was built up.

From an educational point of view Nigeria has been well prepared for independence. It can boast today of having the biggest and best trained civil service (40,000 in number) of any other new African state. There are over 900 doctors, about 600 lawyers and large numbers of well qualified teachers. More than 20,000 Nigerians have attended British and Irish universities; about 5,000 are studying in these at present. Primary education is well organised with about three million children at school, and there are 100,000 at secondary schools. Ibadan University caters for 1,000 students, and another one will be ready soon. In new plans drawn up lately great emphasis has been laid on education, and

large sums of money are going to be spent on it.

Also a sound economic foundation has been laid in Nigeria. Emphasis was at first laid on agriculture - the development of cocoa, palm oil, groundnuts etc. Later on minerals received attention and now the emphasis is going to be on industry. A good system of communications exists and at present a very very good spirit of peace and harmony prevails throughout this great land.

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