



Research Paper

The World War II and British Colonial Post-War Policies on Nigerians

Abubakar Mohammed, Ibrahim Alhaji Modu and Haruna Tsingari Warasini

Department of History,
University of Maiduguri
P.M.B. 1069, Maiduguri Nigeria

Abstract

Nigeria, as a colony of the British, fought the First World War (1914 - 1919) as well as the Second World War (1939 - 1945) on the side of the Allied powers (Britain, France and later United States of America USA). The Second World War ended in favour of the Allied powers. After the war, Britain came up with post war policies which hinged on three important aspects of human endeavour; Demobilization, Resettlement and Rehabilitation of ex-service men including disabled ex-servicemen. The rationale behind the colonial government action in this regard was to eradicate idleness or growth of gang stars and more importantly, to reposition the armed forces in time of peace. We had primary and secondary sources. These sources were analysed using the analytical method of historical reconstruction. This was done with a need to providing a fairly objective account on the subject matter of the research work.

Keyword: Second World War, British, Colonial Forces, Post war Policies

Received 02 Mar, 2021; Revised: 12 Mar, 2021; Accepted 14 Mar, 2021 © The author(s) 2021.
Published with open access at www.questjournals.org

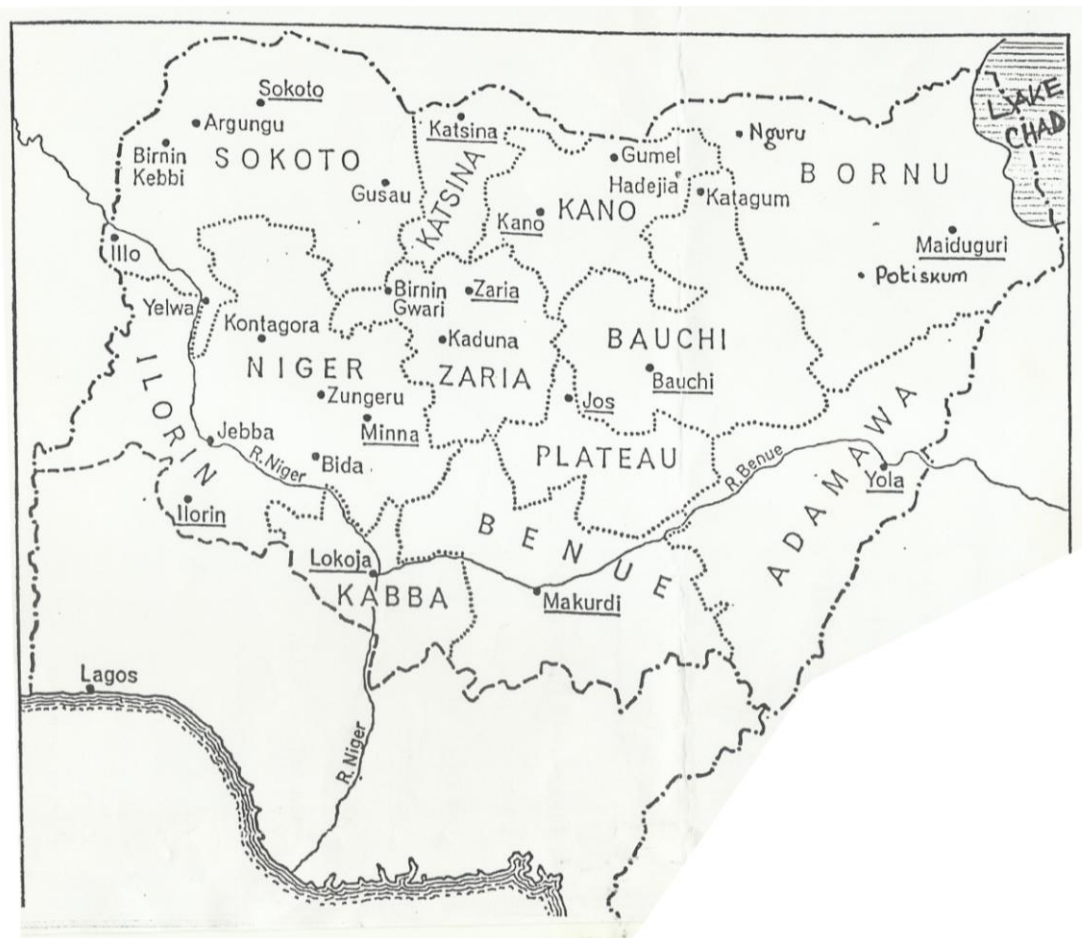
I. INTRODUCTION

This paper, as a matter of introduction took off by examining the administration of Nigeria starting with the British policy of creating provinces in Northern Nigeria. A brief account on the Northeast provinces and its peopling was attempted. Other issues discussed in the paper include why Nigerians fought in the Second World War (1939 - 1945), the mobilization and recruitment in Nigerians for the Second World War as well as Nigeria's campaigns during the said war and finally, the paper treated the end of the war and postwar policies of Demobilization, Resettlement and Rehabilitation in Nigeria. The conclusion attempted to bring out some of the silent features not discussed in the main body of the work.

The British Colonial Government began the Administration of Nigeria shortly after the conquest and amalgamation of the Northern and Southern protectorates including Lagos colony in 1914.¹ The Administration was made possible through the establishment of structures such as provinces, Divisions and the use of Local Authorities to facilitate policies and programmes in the colonial Nigeria.

MAP OF NORTHERN NIGERIA: Provincial boundaries, Some important towns and centres (Provincial Capitals are underlined)

¹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norton_Region_Nigeria.



Source: R. Heussler, *The British in Northern Nigeria* (Oxford, 1968)

Provinces in Northern Nigeria

The British colonial Government assumed the administration of Nigeria long before the amalgamation of southern and Northern protectorates including Lagos colony. Immediately after the conquest of Nigeria between 1900 and 1903, more so, when it took over the administration of the area from the Royal Niger Company in 1900, there were originally eleven provinces which were divided in the area of the North by the British for ease of administration.² These provinces were; Bauchi, Bida, Bornu, Kabba, Kontagora, Nasarawa, Ilorin, Muri, Sokoto, Upper Benue and Zaria.³ However, in 1903 six more provinces were added, five following the Sokoto – Kano campaign, and also Gwandu province, making a total of 17. Similarly, the number of the provinces were reduced to 13 in 1911, and 12 after World War I. However, in 1926 Adamawa and Plateau became new provinces.⁴

The provinces were altered many times through their history, hence between 1900 and 1967, they were divided into Divisions, some of them were further sub-divided into Native Authorities.⁵

North-East Provinces and People

There were three provinces in the North-East. These include; Adamawa, Bauchi and Bornu provinces. Each of these provinces was Administered by a Residence and the various Divisions were headed by DOS (Division Officers) while District were Governed by the Native authorities such as District heads under the Emirs and chiefs. In short, the provinces were established to facilitate the Indirect Rule System of Administration in Northern Nigeria including the North-East.

The people of the North-East, before the coming of the British, were ruled by the Fulani Jihadists except the Kingdom of Bornu which was under the Shehu El-Amin Elkanemi. The kingdom of Bornu was

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

populated by the Kanuri tribes and other tribes such as the Shewa Arab, Kotoko, Marghi, Babur-Bura, Kare-kare, Bolewa, Badde, Fulani, Gwoza, Buduma and some Chadians.

In Adamawa, there are Fulani, Bachama, Jukun, Kilba, Michika and many other smaller ethnic groups, where as in Bauchi provinces there are 55 major tribes that formed the tribal groups in the province. They include; Badawa, Bolewa, Butawa, Fa'awa, Fulani, Kare-kare, Gerawa, Hausawa, Jarawa. Others are Wari'awa, Zulawa, Tangale and Waja.⁶

Why Nigerians Fought the World War II

The outbreak of the World War II in 1939, saw the participation of Nigeria on the side of the British empire. This was obvious going by the relationship that existed between the two. In short, Nigeria was a British colony and what affects the British automatically affects Nigeria. Hence, there were many factors that made Nigeria into fighting the war.

One of the factors was the German policy towards the negro people and their condemnation of French and British policies in Africa, that the African who believed in British or French democracy was considered to be a Bolshevik and therefore must be annihilated.⁷ Another reason of fighting the World War II by the Nigerians was their willingness to make the supreme sacrifice in the defence of the British Empire and not to allow 'Fascism to devour them'.

Yet another reason could be understood through the motion raised or moved by honourable A. Alakija in the Legislative Council, pledging Nigeria's loyalty and support to the British Government in the prosecution of the war. In his speech, according to Olusanya, he revealed some of the reasons why Nigeria decided to stand with Britain. He further spoke of Hitler's attempt to deprive Nigerians and all Africans of their liberty.

Therefore, the Nigerians supported the British war effort not because of threats or persuasion by British officials but for a number of other reasons. Firstly was their belief in parliamentary democracy, freedom and liberty which they realized were being threatened by Hitler.⁸ Secondly, Nigerians had an utter dislike for German rule and for Nazism. Thirdly, there was the hope of gain as Nigeria became important as strategic highways for allied military movements a vital link both for sea and air communication between Britain and the Allied Nations as well as the Middle East. As a result of this new strategic importance, a great deal of activity began.⁹ Roads, airfields, harbours, camps, railways extension – all attracted labourers. Thus, Britain's demand for manpower led to the recruitment of many Nigerians into the various branches of the Armed forces.

Mobilization and Recruitment in Nigeria for the World War II

The mobilization for the World War II in Nigeria started when the various promises demonstrated their loyalty in a pragmatic form. They contributed substantial amounts to the various funds – such as the Win the War Fund, the Red Cross Fund and King George's Fund for sailors all for the war effort.¹⁰ Furthermore various organizations, native authorities, schools and individuals were mobilized to donate generously and fund-raising activities such as races, dances, polo, cinema shows, football matches and funfares were also organized to support the war effort.¹¹ In Kano province a sum of £10,270 (₦20,540) was collected in 1942. Out of this amount, £5,000 (₦10,000) was sent to the British Government to buy a spitfire fighter plane to be named Kano.¹²

However, by 1940 the Nigerian regiment embarked on a large-scale mobilization and an extensive recruiting campaign was also began. By the end of 1941, the Nigerian Regiment had, apart from other services, raised thirteen Battalions.¹³ During the same year, 16,000 Nigerians had already joined the Nigerian forces and many of them were already serving abroad.

It could be recalled that almost everybody was involved in mobilizing people for recruitment. The European military officers, the traditional rulers and the media houses such as the press were propagating the importance of fighting the war and in some cases, people were conscripted into the Army. Prior to the enlistment through conscription, people were voluntarily joining the Army. According to Shettima Ali Monguno, a Maiduguri based Philanthropist and Educationist, stated that they play soccer in the evening with

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Oluanya, G. O. *The Second World War and Politics in Nigeria 1939-1953*; Evans Brothers Ltd. Lagos, 1973, pp.42, 43.

⁸ Ibid. p.47.

⁹ Ibid. p.48.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.45.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Jimi Peters, *The Nigeria Military and the State*; I.B. Tauris, London, 1997, p.61.

the European military officers. Some of his school mates were attracted by the neatness of the officers and so they were enlisted. Those that could not make it in the elementary school, joined the military as well.

However, after the recruitment exercise, the enlisted candidates were then subjected to medical examination and thereafter, the successful ones were then trained or sent to Zaria for rigorous training before taking to the war front in the East Africa, North Africa, Middle East, Far East and Europe. The names of those recruited from the North-East provinces of Adamawa, Bauchi and Bornu could be referred to on appendix I.¹⁴

Nigerian's Campaigns During the World War II

The operations of the Nigerian Regiment in the World War II, deserved to be considered. It was in this that an all Nigerian Brigade and Gold Coast (Ghana) Brigade sailed for East Africa, taking part first in the defence of Kenya, then in Abyssinian (Ethiopia) campaigns, "Despite their training in bush warfare, based on lesson from the World War I and their short training in mobile warfare, they covered about 960 kilometres between Mogadishu and Harrar in twenty six days, pushing the enemy before them and taking a number of guns, machine guns and prisoners."¹⁵

On their return to Nigeria, the soldiers who participated in these campaigns began to teach the meaning of war to the West African Divisions. The Divisions later on sailed from India on 17th March, 1941 to reinforce the British forces against the Japanese. "Equipped with unfamiliar weapons including flame throwers, and carrying their heavy weapons on mules, they required to operate behind the enemy lines dependent on air-supply drops and living for long periods on the rations they carried in their packs".¹⁶ The Nigerians fought in the most appalling conditions through the heaviest rains for four months, living on hard rations – sometimes luck to get five days rations in a week and seldom having a roof over their heads. Again, most of those who took part in the campaigns, fought gallantly and bravely and in the process, won distinguished medals.¹⁷ After the end of the war, some of the soldiers were retired from active service either because they were incapacitated or because of age.

The end of War and Post-war Policies of Demobilization, Resettlement and Rehabilitation in Nigeria

Sequel to the appointment of the war time Minister of Labour and National Service (Armed forces), Ernest Bevin, the chief architect of the demobilization plan by the British Government, the resolution on the future of the troops that fought the World War II was unveiled.¹⁸ Thus the beginning of demobilization for troops in Britain and her colonies including Nigeria.

The General Demobilization for troops serving abroad commenced in October, 1945,¹⁹ but, owing to shipping shortage comparatively small numbers of troops were repatriated. The numbers were gradually increased up to approximately 3,000 to 4,000 per month ex-India from January 1946 onwards. From April to July 1946 some 3,000 per month were scheduled to return from the Middle East. During the same period, Nigeria was ready to receive 7,000 men per month from the Far East and Middle East combined.²⁰ It was anticipated that by the end of October, 1946, the demobilization exercise for troops overseas would be completed. Similarly, the general demobilization scheme for troops serving in West Africa came into operation in April 1946.²¹ This scheme was based on length of service but only those who were enlisted before July 1941, were released.²² Thereafter, the rate of the release was speed up considerably.

At this juncture, therefore, the general demobilization exercise in the Nigerian Royal West African Frontier Force (NRWAFF) also began on the same date with Britain, that was in October, 1945.²³ In Nigeria, the returning troops disembarked in Lagos which was the demobilization centre. At the centre, each soldier's pay was calculated and all essential documentations were also completed. Discharge books were issued to each retired soldier. At the same time, the ex-serviceman was expected to returned to the ordinance equipment and

¹⁴ Appendix I. List of the names of the Soldiers recruited from the North-East Provinces, 1939-1945, pp.74-104.

¹⁵ Abubakar, M. The History of the Nigerian Legion of Ex-servicemen in Borno State with particular reference to Maiduguri Metropolitan 1949-1979; (Final Year Project, Unimaid, 1993, p.8).

¹⁶ Ibid, p.9. see appendix II A/50.

¹⁷ Appendix II. Honours and Awards to Nigeria troops of the W.A.F.F. During 1939-1946. pp.106-108.

¹⁸ <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/....demobils>.

¹⁹ Yola Prof. No.21/1946. Annual report on the Resettlement of Ex-servicemen, 1945.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Miller, E. A. Annual Report on the Department of Labour and on the Resettlement of Ex-soldiers, 1945, Govt. Printer, Lagos, 1946. p.18.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

surplus clothing that might still be in his possession. At this point, therefore, ex-servicemen were arranged in draft for movement to the staging camps at the various provinces within Nigeria. the staging camps include the following; Yola, Kano, Bauchi, Kontogora, Katsina, Gboko, Zaria, Makurdi, Oturkpo, Gusau and Lokoja.²⁴ From any of these points, each ex-soldier was discharged and sent to his place of origin unless he indicated his intention to return to where he lived at the time of enlistment, where he had a job to return to or had a strong offer of a job, or where his family or other allottee was living six months before demobilization.

The importance of demobilization or the reasons why a country demobilizes its forces could either be one of the followings;

- a) that demobilization helps to reduce the cost of standing armed forces; fewer personnel were paid as such and funds could be spent more efficiently on equipment and salaries,
- b) that demobilization provides an opportunity to restructure armed forces to be more efficient,
- c) that the technical objectives of demobilization generally include improving the quality and efficiency of armed forces.

In the case of Nigeria, it was obvious that demobilization was necessary going by the half hazard nature of the enlistment or conscriptions that was introduced by the British in Nigeria to help meet the immediate demands for the war effort. Most of those enlisted from the North were illiterate farmers and the few ones were not yet commissioned officers that is, they were NCOs. Thus as soon as the troops returned home in 1946,²⁵ demobilization was commenced. Some demobilized troops were given jobs which had been reserved for them in Government and private sectors, their expectations were not met, though most of them were illiterates, however they were well-looked after by the Army while in active service and so they anticipated same continued treatment in the form of soft and well-paid government jobs. There were the rising cost of living soon after the World War II and it led to some unrest in some units within Lagos but the problems were contained.²⁶

The demobilized troops were paid gratuities ranging from thirty pounds (£60) for an RSM to about fourteen pounds (£28) for a private. Similarly, the Nigerian Regiment was reduced to five infantry Battalions and new units and services sufficient for the peace time and routine functions were formed.²⁷

Resettlement of the Ex-servicemen

The issues of resettlement and rehabilitation of ex-servicemen were handled by the British colonial Government in Nigeria. The concept of their policies on the resettling the ex-servicemen was to keep them always engaged and to discourage idleness among the ex-servicemen so that they could not form or constitute a gang roaming the streets in her cities and causing troubles. Hence, employment became the watch-word for the colonial government policy of resettlement and rehabilitation of ex-servicemen in Nigeria. Furthermore, they encouraged the ex-servicemen to embraced the 'back to land' policy on agriculture so as to fend for themselves.

Therefore, during the first half of the year 1946, the work of resettlement of ex-servicemen was conducted by the Labour Department.²⁸ The first step was the establishment of a special branch of the Lagos employment exchange entirely devoted to this programme. This inevitably encouraged men to come to Lagos in search of employment, and as such plans were further made for a country-wide organization to provide similar facilities for ex-servicemen to obtain employment in the vicinity of their domiciles. Thus Resettlement offices were established in many centres including the provinces of the North-East Nigeria.

Although the scope of this thesis is from 1946, it is however, desirable to consider the immediate past development in this regard. It was decided in June, 1945, that a special branch of the secretariat known as the Resettlement Branch was established that took over the responsibility of the Resettlement work from the Labour Department. In the same vein and out of the 32,784 demobilised troops, 16,122 were already registered for employment and only 4,738 were placed in employment.²⁹

Looking at the figures above, it would be right to say that the colonial administration had no policy with regard to resettling the ex-servicemen many of whom no longer interested in returning to their homes in the

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Dule, S. M. et al. History of the Nigerian Army; Hqts, Nigerian Army, Abuja, Nigeria. 1994, p.102.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid. p.103.

²⁸ Yola Prof. 4517, S.P. No. 21/1946. Annual Report on the Department of Labour and on the Resettlement of Ex-servicemen, 1945.

²⁹ Ibid.

villages because there were nothing to attract them there. Many of them, perhaps a large number had learnt new skills and trades in the forces, hence uncontented to return to agricultural life.³⁰

Rehabilitation of Ex-servicemen

After the World War II disabled ex-servicemen had been trained in the Ministry of Labour's training centres for new jobs, and the king's National Roll Scheme had also been introduced in 1919³¹ to encourage employers to employ a quota of disabled ex-servicemen; but the Act of 1944 was far more comprehensive and applied not only to ex-servicemen and women but to all the disabled.³² The incorporated findings into the 1944 Act of the Tomlinson committee for the permanent service enabled the Ministry of Labour to maintain a register of disabled people and helped them find work in an effort to rehabilitate them.

Therefore, the same policies were extended to Nigerian ex-servicemen not only the disabled but the able bodied ex-servicemen as well. However, to discuss the policy of the Rehabilitation of ex-servicemen, there is the need to examine "The Employment of Ex-servicemen Ordinance, No.48 of 1945".³³ The Ordinance which came into force on June 1st 1945 provides for the re-instatement of men who voluntarily left their work to join the forces or who were conscripted into the force, and for the compulsory engagement of ex-servicemen (both disabled and able-bodied) in filling all vacancies available such as caretakers, cleaners, commissionaires, Gatekeepers, Messengers and Watchmen among other vacancies that were reserved by government for the employment of ex-servicemen in Nigeria. In addition, the policy had made it mandatory upon all employers of Labour, be it government or private sectors, to register in this regard. For this reason, registration centres were established at all Division offices for the purpose of registering disabled and able-bodied ex-servicemen.³⁴

In order to facilitate the rehabilitation of the ex-servicemen through employment, an Advisory Council, consisting of an Independent chairman, a military officer and an equal number of representatives of employers and employees had been constituted and its functions was to offer advise and assist the commissioner of Labour in matters relating to employment and training of ex-service men. Sub-committees of the Advisory body were also established in all the provinces. They were called provincial Advisory committees whose duties was to report to the Advisory Council and the Commissioner of Labour on any matter submitted to it for that purpose.

At this juncture therefore, it is important to note that in each registration centre, there was an Area Resettlement Officer who, in addition to other duties, was responsible for seeing that all employers of ten or more Africans in his area registered and engaged ex-servicemen according to the quota assigned to them. The quota was put at five per-cent but could be raised progressively as desirable. In this regard therefore, monthly reports or returns of changes of staff were forwarded by the firms to their Area Resettlement Officers (AROs) to indicate compliance.

However, to further provide employment to the ex-servicemen, the Nigerian colonial government purchased Trade Training School at Enugu and began training of ex-servicemen in various trades by the middle of 1946.³⁵ There were 100 carpenters, 60 Masons, 60 General and motor fitting. Others were 20 painters, 20 Electricians and 20 Tinsmiths and Coppersmiths. In addition, scheme to assist independent Artisans, Craftsmen and Farmers to set up their private business was established to enable ex-servicemen obtain tools at the cheapest rate possible. For instance, steps were being taken to set up machinery by which it was intended to make money available on loan to Native Administration to expand the existing system of credits to farmers who were engaged in mixed farming and peasant trades and crafts.³⁶ In this regard, ex-servicemen who were prepared to farm were given the opportunity of participating in general schemes for land settlement with the view to rehabilitating them.

The rehabilitation of the disabled ex-servicemen were also included in the policy frame work of the colonial government. Government established a rehabilitation centre at Igbobi and facilities for surgical treatment were provided.³⁷ These were also electro-therapy and physio-therapy facilities for treatment. At the centre, ex-servicemen were taught various trades through occupational therapy in workshops. There were remedial exercises such as gymnastics and swimming. Furthermore, special wards for permanently disabled ex-

³⁰ Olusanya, G. O. *The second World War and Politics in Nigeria. 1939-1953*; Evans Brothers Ltd. Nigeria, 1973, p.97.

³¹ Stephen Mattingly. *Industrial Rehabilitation*; *British Medical Journals*, 1965, 2, pp.930-932.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Yola Prof. 4517, S.P. No.21/1946. *Annual Report on the Department of Labour and on the Resettlement of ex-servicemen, 1945*, p.18.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.19.

³⁶ *Ibid*. p.20.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

servicemen were constructed at seven centres throughout Nigeria, viz: Benin, Makurdi, Kano, Sokoto, Bauchi, Bida and Yola³⁸ to offer medical services to those near-bys.

At Igbobi centre, limbless ex-servicemen were fitted with artificial limbs. After the completion of their rehabilitation and before they were sent back home, the District Officer and the Area Resettlement Officer were advised of the type of work or occupation consistent with their disabilities to be assigned to them.³⁹ The disabled ex-servicemen were also provided with free articles of clothing necessary for limbless men for example, trousers, shoes and socks, and stump-socks. They were also provided with free transport fares from their homes when visiting Igbobi centre. The visit was periodic and twice per annum. The purpose of the visits was for the repair or re-adjustment of their artificial limbs. Thus, the colonial government policies of Demobilization, Resettlement and Rehabilitation carried out in order to eradicate idleness or growth of gang stars and above all reposition the entire Armed Forces in time of peace.

II. CONCLUSION

The British policies on the Nigerian Army confirmed features long after Nigeria attained her independence from Britain on 1st October, 1960. The Nigerian government came up with policies of Nigerianization in all aspects of administration such as Education, Security, Agriculture, Economy to mention but a few. The Second World War (1939 - 1945) veterans were not left out during the Nigerian Civil War of 1967 to 1970. Over seven hundred (700) of the Second World War veterans were reengaged in the Nigerian Army 1st Division headed by Major General Mamman Shuwa. The 1st Division played a major role in prosecution of the Nigeria Civil War from 1967 to 1970.

³⁸ Ibid, p.21.

³⁹ Ibid.