There are also smaller Tunisian, Turkish and West African communities. Older still, of course, are the important Jewish and Polish communities dating from the end of the last century. Since immigration ceased in 1974 the immigrant population stabilised at about 6.5% of the total. Most of the North African, Portuguese and Turkish workers are in the building and motor industries, whereas West Africans are concentrated in public services such as street cleaning. Many immigrants also work, frequently on a seasonal or casual basis, in the components industry, agriculture and the ragtrade. The North Africans — Algerians and Moroccans who have been able to secure low-rent high-density housing, often in (hitherto) left-wing districts on the outskirts of the large cities — frequently encounter racism from their neighbours. On the other hand, immigrant workers who are in all-male hostels (especially those from France's West African neo-colonies) live rather more apart from much of the French working class and encounter everyday racism most often at the hands of the state, especially in police identity checks.

After the elections in May 1981 immigrants expected an improvement in their status, and indeed the following October some limited gains were made: marriage between an 'alien' and a French citizen was no longer subject to the endorsement of the Minister of the Interior, 'aliens' could form their own associations, meaning they could organise politically, and arbitrary deportations were ended.

The amnesty for illegal immigrants, however, became bogged down in bureaucratic problems and the rigid criteria employed excluded certain categories like seasonal workers. Many employers sacked immigrants rather than give them the work-contracts they needed to get official papers. In fact the 'amnesty' operation left many immigrant workers still without papers and in a much less secure position than before. Just before the Dreux election, Secretary of State Mme Dufoix wrote, but they were not fair. However, the elections were free, a commentator said. Just before the Dreux election, Secretary of State Mme Dufoix announced new measures against illegal immigrants who, it was said, made it more difficult for 'regular' immigrants to become integrated. Three days after the Dreux election, on September 15, the all-too-familiar 'identity controls' by police began again: in rue Saint-Denis, in the centre of Paris, all 'foreign-looking people' were stopped for papers and held for computer checks if they had none on them.

It seems that the government is playing straight into the hands of the racists. During the municipal elections last March they decided not to 'risk' using a rather anodyne poster exhorting French and immigrants to 'live in harmony together'. The recent clampdown on illegal immigrants, while further 'integrating' and improving conditions for those with 'regular' status, is another divisive measure.

On the centre-right the neo-Gaullists (UDF) remain divided between supporters of Simone Weil who preferred to lose a municipal by-election to the Left rather than ally with fascists, and those who try to pass the NF off as simply excessively chauvinistic. Jacques Chirac, Mayor of Paris and the most dynamic figure of the main opposition RPR, described the NF as a 'natural ally' on TV shortly after the Dreux election. 'Three members of the extreme Right in Dreux pose less of a threat than four Communists in government', he proclaimed.

Meanwhile, at the recent 'fête' of the merely chauvinistic NF large numbers of Memories of a Fascist, by Lucien Rebatel (who was the editor of the pro-nazi Je suis partiout) were sold, as were the books of revisionist historian Faurisson, who seeks to rehabilitate the Third Reich. Ominously, there have been talks about an alliance between the NF and another extreme-right group the PFN (Party of the New Force). The latter is currently organising a series of countrywide meetings against immigrants, allowing the NF to concentrate on elections. The extreme Right looks set to become a significant force in French elections.

Cathy Lloyd

NIGERIA COMES OF AGE

Last month Nigeria celebrated its 23rd anniversary. It was also a celebration of survival. The four year old political system, an adaptation of the presidential system, had just carried Nigeria the nation through the major test of elections. There was, as was widely reported, chaos and disorder. The elections were free, a commentator wrote, but they were not fair. However, the Shagari administration now has another four years to pursue its goal of development.

Nigerian politicians talk obsessively about catching up with the West. Unfortunately, this rambling mass of land which can be divided into three major ethnic groups and a huge number of different languages, and which numbers over 100 million people, is most definitely trapped in the Third World.

Six years after independence in 1960 the country experienced an attempted secession. Thirty years of military rule followed. The last four years was therefore a renewed experiment in democracy. The government is young, not only because its principal actors are young, but also because they have a short history of self government.

There are a whole range of sources of conflict. Nigeria could be three nations. The British created, by political imposition, the politico-geographical entity called Nigeria. It was ethnic rivalry over the spoils of state which almost destroyed the first republic. The ruling classes from the regions simply couldn't decide how to distribute resources in an equitable manner between themselves. Being rulers of their own 'nations', they were able to rally their subjects by appeals to a common belonging, as an expression of their disagreements. The last 23 years might be interpreted as a lesson in being a Nigerian. The most recent manifestation of this growing sense of nationalization was the expulsion of the Ghanaians in February. However, this was overshadowed by the inefficient and shambolic way in which the exercise was carried out. Many Africans condemned the expulsion, which was seen as a betrayal of the long tradition of pan-Africanism which gave birth to the Organisation of African Unity. Being Nigerian was clearly incompatible with African brotherhood.

But Ghanaians are just one group of people who have flocked to Nigerian cities. Nigerians themselves form a strong migrant group. Alongside the international airports and hotels, the express railways and air conditioned offices are the migrants, who live precarious lives selling cigarettes, pop drink, Kola nut — strong in caffeine — fried meat, fried fish and fried yam on kerbside fires. The economists call this the

Alhaji Shehu Shagari
informal sector, and it is growing at a rapid pace in Nigeria, creating new sources of tension.

In trying to catch up with the West, Nigeria has imported western technology. Industrialise, industrialise is the message. But western technology, which represents over a century of constant refinement so as to reduce the input of labour, seems wholly incongruous with the fact of Nigeria's abundant labour supply.

For despite its oil wealth, Nigeria is still a Third World country, an exporter of primary products. Its manufacturing base is small, and is dependent on the West not only for machinery but in some instances for physical raw materials. Nigeria does, however, have its own steel industry, which is central to industrialisation. But competition from foreign steel manufacturers — and this is the case with most Nigerian products — who sell cheaper and possibly better quality steel could destroy the industry. The textile industry based mainly in the north is constantly suffering under the impact of foreign competition. In fact a genuine manufacturing base is relatively absent from Nigeria. Simultaneously with Nigeria's failure to develop an industrial base, ex-military officers have turned farmers. Along with an increasing number of businessmen, they are transforming the face of the Nigerian countryside. The machine and the new relations between workers and the land has become a pervasive force in precipitating migration to the cities.

Lagos, Nibadon, Port Harcourt, Benin, Warri, Sokoto, Maiduguiri, Kaduna and Kanot are cities bursting at the seams with workers that cannot be formally employed. These migrants bear the remnants of their feudal past as they troop into the cities.

In Northern Nigeria, Islam dominates cultural life. It dictates the pattern of work. Nonbelievers and Christians are ill-advised to transgress their codes. Women have been known to be stoned if they walked past muslim men in prayer.

Occasionally muslims go on the rampage. One year they burnt down the staff club, which sold alcohol, in a northern university. In December 1980 a charismatic Cameroonian migrant led a sect of muslims into an attack on non-muslims in several northern cities. The rioters were reputed to have gone for people who lived in upstairs houses, wore watches, certain types of shoes or drove a car. It was a rebellion against modernity.

The root cause can found in the main participants. They existed on the fringe of the city. They service those who live in the Government Reserve Areas where the ex-colonials used to live, the big Alhajis in their flowing white robes, Italian shoes, Parisian briefcases, Swiss watches, German cars and a house in Kensington. Inequality breeds discontent, and in Nigeria discontent is not simply expressed through economic organisations such as trade unions, but also in religious and ethnic forms, organisations and movements.

Inequality is fed by corruption, which pervades from the minor official to high ranking ministers and civil servants. Public offices are everywhere used for private gains. At the interface of the international and domestic economy personal gains running into millions are common. Corruption, some Nigerian and foreign businessmen believe, helps to oil the state's efficiency. It permeates through the society, so much so that President Shagari has had to call for 'ethical revolution'. A code of conduct bureau has been established. Today it is still struggling to gain the cooperation of ministers and top public officials.

Nigeria is chaotic, disorderly, conflict ridden. It is also a society in transition, from feudalism to capitalism, from a number of small states to a larger nation state, from colonialism to independence, from the traditional to the modern.

Ferdi Dennis