

Unpopular Essays

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Dr K. O. Mba diwe Revisited

THE representative of Imo State's Ideato/Nkwere/Isu Local Government Area at the Constituent Assembly is by no means, an ordinary person.

Dr. K. O. Mba diwe, by the grace of God, is former Adviser to the Prime Minister of the Federal Republic of Nigeria on African Affairs. He is ex — Federal Minister for Aviation and Communication as well as former Minister for Agriculture and Natural Resources.

In the First Republic, Dr. K. O. was a formidable member of the NCNC, and later, President of the Democratic Party of Nigeria and the Camerouns.

If you are looking for K. O.'s contemporary relevance, here goes: He is, by self description, an "elder statesman, the man of timbre and calibre" as well as foremost member of the Constitution Drafting Committee, popularly known as the committee of 49 wise men

And by general acclaim, Dr. Mba diwe is a fortuitous member of the Constituent Assembly. When K. O. talks, the assembly listens, for the opinion as elder statesman cannot be lightly discounted.

So it was that as the year 1977 was fast expiring, the Daily Times allowed itself the criminal indulgence of suggesting that the men of the Constituent Assembly were not showing any evidence of seriousness, Dr. K. O. went to town on the newspaper.

How could the Daily Times cast such aspersion on the august assembly, on the same

people whom Dr. K. O. has characterised as "men of timber?" The issue before the House was clear. A battle line was drawn between Dr. Mba diwe's evaluation of the quality of the Cons-

The outcome was an instructive insight into the life and thought patterns of a great man. It was very clear that the interviewer could not keep pace with Dr. Mba diwe. And so, the man

technological countries in thousands, not in hundreds, in Japan, in Moscow, in Washington. They should invade those territories and bring back some technological skill. We are tired of academic sounding logical sequences. Now, we want action". (Emphasis, mine).

And the interview was not lacking in definitions. For instance, there was this thing about political rascals. For the benefit of the interviewer whose knowledge in politics might not have been very deep, Dr. Mba diwe explained: "Political rascals are people who could not rule their own homes but would want to impose themselves on the country and lead a whole nation. Yet, you to go their homes, they have not led very decent family lives. That is political rascality. Secondly, a political rascal is a man who knows he is dishonest, who, it is clear to himself that he is a dishonest person."

Dr. Mba diwe also philosophised on the origins Nigerian Army. "You can produce coups" he

Mba diwe went on to offer thought on the more serious question of the military in future Nigerian politics. "Can you go and build any government structure without taking into consideration the position of the army? Anybody doing that is just getting out of Nigerian tradition. You can borrow from America or borrow from England Army has become the Duke of the day!"

Then there was the question of ideology around which newspaper interviews these days are built. As expected, Dr. Mba diwe could not be caught identifying himself with either Adam Smith or Marx. Far be it from the man of timbre to be seen repeating what lesser minds had said. If the man has any commitments, it is to the need to create an indigenous Nigerian ideology.

And so, when the interviewer posed the almighty question, Dr. K. O. was ready with an ideology all his own! "My philosophy is unitism, the philosophy of unitism. A united and indivisible nation. Nigeria has a lot of inherent socialism in its own

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of military coups and about the nature of the said, "not because the military wishes, but because God wants to use the military to crush those people."

It was not clear what people the man of timbre was talking about, but that is a little matter. Dr

I do not agree with the importation of any "ism" anywhere in the world. We have all the "isms" here in Nigeria. But of all the "isms," what is paramount and utmost in Nigeria today is, how can we get a united country from the heterogenous nature of

our society? We have different languages, different views. How do we harmonise them? Anything which does not live to that unity must be abominated."

But the unwary interviewer pressed further, determined to have the intellectual's view on socialism. Dr. Mba diwe replied that socialism could be seen in the life style of traditional Nigeria. "Tell me," he said philosophically, "which socialist doctrine that is deeper than what our elders have laid down?"

Then the interview plunged from the unfathomable realm of the abstract, into more mundane issues of practical politics. Would Dr. Mba diwe consider realignment with his old friends, friends, like Dr. Zik and Dr Okpara, with whom he had quarrelled before?

"We are not in any disarray" he countered. "Do you mean political or going differently?" Dr. Mba diwe questioned the questioner.

Then he talked about Dr. Okpara in greater detail. "I don't see why Dr. Okpara is still remaining abroad. He is free to return. He was not a soldier who waged the war. We were in the same political party and in the centre, I handed over power."

Meanwhile, Dr. Mba diwe is in the process of recapturing power — through the democratic process. And the country is blessed. There are not many people like him in the world anymore. Statesman and patriot, God fearing and hard-working, man of "timbre and calibre", a real pillar of society.

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tituent Assembly and the derogatory view of the Daily Times, between Dr Mba diwe's enlightened opinion and the irresponsible journalistic prattle of the Daily Times.

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The man is a winner any day! And so, when recently, the magazine, NEWBREED paid a courtesy call on the man of "timber and calibre," it was by so doing, offering the nation the privilege of a close-up on the perpetual winner.

took liberty of incomprehensive questions to offer thought on all facets of our national life.

NEWBREED had asked the leader to say if there was going to be a leadership problem in the country on the exit of the military. He disposed of that very briefly and went on to talk about telephones and roads. "I am shocked that after the civil war, the type of country which we have produced is causing a great brain anxiety. It is causing untimely death. Our telephone system is appalling and a disgrace. You can't phone anywhere. Come to the Eastern States, you have been through it to see the roads."

He also took advantage of the question on leadership to offer thought on our youths (whom he said must be moved to action). Rather than sit "in corners," Dr. Mba diwe insisted, they must be sent "back to