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Address of Welcome

presented to

HIS EXCELLENCY

SAYED GAAFAR MOHAMMED NIMIERY

President of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan

AT A CIVIC RECEPTION

by

HIS EXCELLENCY MR UKPABI ASIKA

Administrator of the East-Central State of Nigeria

AT THE ENUGU SPORTS STADIUM

ON FRIDAY, 24 AUGUST, 1973

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An Address of Welcome



Address of Welcome presented to His Excellency Sayed Gaafar Mohammed Nimiery, President of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan, by His Excellency Mr Ukpabi Asika, Administrator of East-Central State of Nigeria at a civic reception at the Enugu Sports Stadium on Friday, August 24, 1973.

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is our great privilege today to receive His Excellency Sayed Gaafar Mohammed Nimiery, President of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan and Madam Busaima Khalil Nimiery and their distinguished entourage on behalf of our Head of State His Excellency General Yakubu Gowon, Head of the Federal Military Government, Commander-in-Chief of the Nigerian Armed Forces. It is also our honour and delight to welcome to Enugu and the East-Central State of Nigeria Your Excellencies and our distinguished guests on behalf of the Government and People of the East-Central State and on our own behalf. Although you have already commenced your brief tour of this State with a trip to Onitsha this morning, I hope you will not consider it an after-thought if we say, even at this stage, our formal words of welcome and offer our sincere wishes for your safety while you travel here and homeward.

Since the news of Your Excellency's proposed visit was made public, our people have looked forward to your arrival with great expectancy. Many of them have today gathered into this sports arena to see and to cheer the Head of one of the largest independent States in Africa. It is a fact, Your Excellency, that many of the

African peoples south of the Sahara trace their origins to the great African country which you lead, a probable fact I feel able to attest to after having visited the great and living Museum at Khartoum, but I feel sure that the enthusiastic reception which our people are demonstrating today does not issue mainly from a tribal memory but from the living fact of renewed contact and fraternity among African peoples after the Dark Ages of Imperialism. Your Excellency's image has spread well beyond the borders of the Sudan to the affectionate notice of the people of this State to whom you represent one of "that little band of prophets", one of those leaders who, in the governance of their people, proceed with justice and compassion. Our people have learned with joyful appreciation and a deep sense of empathy of Your Excellency's historic achievement in the ending of the seventeen year-old civil conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan and in ordering peace and harmony in your land. Having not long ago been through a civil war ourselves we are in a position to appreciate the stature and greatness of a man who achieved this feat. The magnanimity, wisdom and the great sense of humane responsibility of Your Excellency's Government have been amply manifested in the tremendous efforts now being made in the Democratic Republic of the Sudan to resettle large numbers of refugees returning home after many years of exile. We admire the current determined efforts of your Government at providing them with accommodation, food, medical and educational facilities.

We have, Your Excellency, dwelt on this subject because we ourselves in this State have been also the beneficiaries of magnanimity, greatness, of the love of a leader, our own Head of State, for his people and their welfare and of those great qualities of man—understanding, forgiving and forgetting.


In welcoming you, Sir, we salute a true son of Africa, a great leader, a greater statesman.

Three years ago, many of the faces you see today were but shadows of their true forms. We had just emerged from a civil war some of whose tragic remains you have seen today as we motored to and from the riverside city of Onitsha. The movement and pattern of hostilities had resulted in intense displacements of the population and extreme dislocation of lives. The disruption and destruction of living houses, services, facilities, offices and factories had created a very large body of unemployed who were surviving on destitution level. We were then faced with problems very similar to the ones which Your Excellency's Government is now tackling in the Southern part of your country. We had our millions of men, women and children who, though in their homeland, were, in effect, refugees. The circumstances of the war had rendered them jobless and penniless. The major feature of post-war Government activity was therefore that of immediate relief which involved measures aimed at feeding our populace and making available to all some money to facilitate exchange of what was then available for purchase. In the early period of 1971 this exercise was phased out into rehabilitation and permanent reconstruction efforts. In tackling these problems, my Government has had to depend not only on grants and loans from the Federal Military Government as well as on some support from various national and international agencies but also on the communal efforts of our people to do things for themselves and their willing ability to submit themselves to the demands and directions of my Government.

It is, of course, evident that total reconstruction, in the sense of the restoration of all pre-existing inventories is not yet complete, although most of our major public works and institutions have

been reactivated. Indeed in many areas we have been able to move considerably ahead of the pre-war standards—for example in industry, our Brewery is now undergoing expansion to three times its pre-war capacity; in medicare, not only have we built several new hospitals but we have successfully reconstructed a former General Hospital and in the process transformed and equipped it as a first-class Teaching Hospital with the fastest growing Medical School in the Country; and in education, the measure of our achievements is easily shown by the fact that, as against less than 800,000 children in school pre-war, we now have almost 1.4 million children; as against the optimum annual admission of less than 9,000 children into secondary schools pre-war, we have for the school-year beginning this September admitted almost 34,000 as new entrants. It is thus we can say and do say that the fundamental work of reconstruction, in the more vital sense of a renewed capacity for self-sustaining dynamic growth, has been achieved.

Such success, in the limited period of three years, is the result of three things—*unity*—a restored, revalidated and acutely internalized unity as Nigerians with one destiny, one common and equal citizenship and a consequent harmony of interests, purposes and direction of the leaders and the people; *faith*—a renescent faith in our ability as Africans to determine and define our own destiny, our own mode of immersion in the world; and *industry*—the skills, the dedication, and the hardwork which all our people have demonstrated in the effort to abolish the nightmare of the past and to build a greater tomorrow. Your Excellency, unity, faith and industry in the pervasive atmosphere of restored peace and of confidence in the continuing stability of the nation reborn—these have been responsible for what many observers have described as a miracle.




Your Excellency, war is destruction; a civil war more so than others. Yet it depends on the quality of the post-war leadership whether the experience of tragedy remains wholly negative or is transformed into creative experience to achieve new goals and new syntheses in the given society. We have been very fortunate in our leadership in the person of His Excellency General Yakubu Gowon. It is thus that the form, the content, the quality and complexion of the peace that has emerged are not only mirrored in the successes, of which we have spoken and in what you see here today, but also reach deep into our hearts. And, Sir, it is because we know that Your Excellency is also such a leader that we salute you, and through you, all our brothers and sisters of the Democratic Republic of the Sudan. In our language we say: *Onyisi na ndi soya, uno nu.*

Your Excellency and Madam Nimiery, we welcome you and your entourage. The honour of your visit will always be cherished by the people of the East-Central State and all other Nigerians. *Salam !*







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