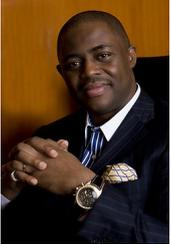


It Was the Igbo That Introduced Tribalism to Nigerian Politics- Fani-Kayode



"Igbo domination of Nigeria is only a matter of time"- Charles Onyeama, a prominent igbo lawyer and member of the Central Legislative Council, 1945. (Pg. 204 "Ethnic Politics In Kenya and Nigeria" by Godfrey Mwakikagile).

"It would appear that the God of Africa has created the Igbo nation to lead the children of Africa from the bondage of ages" - Dr Azikiwe, President of the Pan-Igbo Federal Union. (The West African Pilot of July 8, 1949).

The first statement from Charles Onyeama, which was made in 1945, was the first overtly tribal and divisive comment that was made and recorded in the politics of southern Nigeria in our history. That is where and when tribalism in the south actually started. After that comment and as a direct reaction to it, the yoruba established the "Egbe Omo Oduduwa" to further and protect yoruba interests and after that came the formation of the Action Group in 1948.

The second statement from Zik, which was made in 1949 (and which clearly shows that the great Zik of Africa had forgotten that the NCNC was not an igbo party at the beginning and that it had in fact been established by an upper class and very well educated yoruba man by the name of Sir Herbert Macaulay, one of the famous "Black Victorians" from the Lagos Colony, and who, at his death bed, was gracious enough to hand over the leadership of the party to him even though he was igbo) confirmed that tribalism was here to stay in the south and that ever since that time the igbo had an agenda to dominate others. This sentiment and this unfortunate igbocentric attitude is what cost Zik the Premiership of the Western Region in 1953 when the NCNC narrowly lost to the Action Group.

It is clear from this that if you want to know who started tribalism in southern politics and the politics of the southern protectorate of Nigeria it was not the yoruba or the southern minorities but the igbo. The excesses of the Igbo State Union and their treatment of the southern minorities and the yoruba from 1943 till 1967 was completely unacceptable. The rest of the south were prepared to accept the igbo as equals with open arms but they were not prepared to be politically dominated or conquered by them.

Worst still the first coup in the history of Nigeria, which was the Jan 15th 1966 coup d'etat led by Major Ifejuana and Major Kaduna Nzeogwu, was essentially an igbo coup and an igbo grab for

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power. I say this because 95 per cent of those that took part in it were igbo and 99 per cent of the political and military leaders that were brutally murdered during it's execution were non-igbo. It was this coup and it's sheer brutality that led to the even more brutal northern officers counter-coup of July 1966 (in which 300 igbo officers were killed in one night including the igbo Head of State, Gen. Aguiyi-Ironsi, and his yoruba host, the Military Governor of the Western Region, Gen. Adekunle Fajuyi who sought to protect him), the pogrom of igbos in the north (in which over 100,000 igbo civilians were killed in a few weeks) and the Nigerian civil war (in which 2 million Nigerians and Biafrans died).

These are the facts of our history. Live and learn. If you want to know who introduced tribalism into southern politics, it was the igbo. If you want to know who carried out the first coup in our country it was the igbo. Having done the painstaking research over a numberof years these are my findings and this is my conclusion.

I will open my wall for a robust discussion and debate on this issue and I will accomodate contributions from even those that are not my fb friends just for this debate. I will accomodate all shades of opinion and contributions from anyone that cares to join in the fray and I want to encourage those that disagree with my findings to state their case. We are all still learning but please take not that any rude or insulting comments will be deleted. This is a historical debate and I would encourage all those that seek to qoute anyone or make any assertions to mention their sources so that we can cross check the facts. Thanks.