

# Nigerian Scholar Says Africans Want Independence From British



Ojike enjoys reading what Europeans and Americans have written about his people. Here he peruses a book on African art by an American critic.



He walks to his classes from quarters in the International House.



A constant reminder of home is a native costume he wears occasionally.

By GEORGE COLEMAN MOORE

**"N**IGERIA IS dissatisfied with British rule and wants her independence now!"

There was fire in the intelligent eyes and a firm determination in the cultured voice of Mazi Mbonu Ojike, scion of a wealthy Nigerian family, in the city to work on his Ph.D. at Chicago university.

He is studying a combination course of economics, sociology and business administration which will prepare him for governance.

Ojike was explaining the attitude of the Nigerian masses toward British rule, the war, American Negroes. And somehow the quiet intellectual surroundings of his quarters at International House seemed to be in sharp contrast to a personality rebelling against horrible suppression.

"British imperialism has made peons of my proud people, and ever since we were conquered we have been at loggerheads with the English," declared our informant. "My people, the Aro-Chuku (which means the people of God) were the last of Nigerian tribes to be subjugated. This happened in 1901."

Efforts to pacify and control the natives were made he went on to say by making neo-dictators of

"gutless" tribal leaders. They were compared to the group of despicable American Negroes known as "Uncle Toms."

"Some of these swine make more money from the British government than does your President. These damnable puppets cajol and woo the natives into postponing a threatened rebellion because they want to insure their position," we were told.

That Nigerians deeply resent their spineless "leaders" was evident when our foreign scholar predicted a new day for his people. This he believes will come through education and efforts of the present generation of young men who want freedom and independence badly enough to die for it.

Ojike himself is a symbol of this "new Nigerian" just as so-called American jitterbugs are representative of a "new Negro." He holds diplomas from such recognized universities as London, Oxford, Cambridge and a degree from Ohio State.

This training and his contacts with the peoples of the earth he hopes will give him and his fellows the wisdom and necessary political strategy to overcome the handicaps of imperialism.

Asked if his country would be swayed by the wooing of Japan and welcome Nipponese occupation of the territory, Ojike cut in sharply: "It is paradoxical to think we would prefer one imperialist over another. We are for its destruction wherever found."

Ojike said he envisioned an upsurge of the darker races as a result of the war, and predicted the present conflict would advance Africa and particularly Nigeria.

"I see a long war," declared our native friend, "because of the un-failing operation of Japanese strategy. Whoever wins, however, will have superior manpower, unlimited supplies of materials, and very high morale."

The youthful scholar readily expressed his views on American Negroes whom he insisted upon calling Afro-Americans. Said he:

"Afro-Americans impress me greatly, but I'm a little amazed at the many indignities they accept with such militant agencies they have to fight through."

"You know," he continued, "we Africans consider you our kinsmen and are anxious to develop closer relationships between us."

"I suggest intermarriage, and a few Nigerian students here have done this."

When the question of a romance for himself was posed, the handsome, slightly built Ojike replied that his work superceded any such alliances for the moment.

"I have a few friends though," he added with a twinkle in his eye.