

INTERVIEW WITH  
SHEHU MUSA YAR'ADUA  
*JAN GWARZO*  
KATSINA RADIO AND TELEVISION  
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INTRODUCTION: Our guest is one of our most illustrious sons who has excelled in soldiering and politics. He is one of the few sons of Katsina that have become the beacon of development of the country. I present to you Major-General Shehu Musa Yar'adua, Tafidan Katsina, one of those who excelled and became leaders not only in Nigeria, but the world over.

General Shehu Musa Yar'Adua is indeed in the forefront of leading Katsina people that have made their marks in various endeavors.

YAR'ADUA: The reason I decided to join politics was because I foresaw that the way things were going in Nigeria, based of my thinking and experience, we were moving to the point of no return. I told people at that time that Nigeria was in trouble and it was going to face difficulties. We felt that there was no way to prevent the calamity except we join politics. I sat down and thought of the kind of politics I should participate in. I thought that there was nothing that I was lacking in my living condition. I had joined the military, fought the civil war and came out alive and healthy and I had reached the number two position in the country. So, frankly speaking, I feel that I am indebted to Nigeria and if I saw anything going wrong, I must help in salvaging the situation. I felt that the only way I can help is by joining politics.

SADA: Why did you call for a Sovereign National Conference?

YAR'ADUA: For Nigeria to continue in this condition as it obtains now is disturbing. I know a lot of people sincerely do not believe in

dividing us (the country). So, this has never bothered me. Nigerians may gather and discuss and this may be different from the kind of conference held in 1979. In my thinking, Nigerians could hold a conference and decide in the first place whether they want to continue living together. So the Hausa/Fulani, the Yorubas, the Igbos, the Tivs and others – there is need to sit and discuss the basis of our association. Afterwards, if we all agree to live together, then we can decide on how to associate. During the 1979 and 1989 Conferences, the question of dividing the country did not arise. It was a matter of writing the constitution. Now, we have to sit down and revisit the basis of our association. This is the importance of the conference. With all these crises and agitations, some people are calling for the country's division and others are saying that they are being cheated or marginalised, it is right to hold the conference. This will determine who is cheating who.

SADA: When do you think we will see democracy in Nigeria?

YAR'ADUA: People should bear in mind that no matter how long it takes, Nigeria must return to democracy. But democracy is something that requires patience. Because, no matter how you want to correct the ills of society for progress, that cannot be done in a day. No matter how much you desire democracy, it has its pitfalls. The most admired democratic country in the world today did not achieve that in a day. It took years of learning and perseverance for them to reach where they are today.

So no matter how bad things are in Nigeria, there will come a time for democracy and in spite of democracy's pitfalls, there is no better system of governance like it. We must be patient and tolerant. We must acknowledge that those in governance are human beings and not saints and therefore they are subject to

commit mistakes. **The beauty of democracy is that if you are dissatisfied with somebody in government, you await election day and vote in somebody else. Nobody can remain in office for eternity.**

Therefore, I want to appeal to Nigerians to be patient as I know Nigerians as people who want things done in a hurry. However, many of the things we desire cannot be accomplished in a hurry. We must be thoughtful about certain things. **All of us are going to die and leave the country so our thinking must transcend our immediate desire.** We must think of the future as we are going to leave others behind. We must prepare adequately for it. We must constantly think of the future in whatever we do now – is it going to endure? Is it going to be beneficial to the future even if it is to us now?<sup>i</sup>

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