

MARWA, TWO RAMS AND FAWEHINMI

The front page headline of Weekend Concord of May 3, 1997, screamed "RAM - COUR" It was in connection with two rams presented to **Gani Fawehinmi** by the Lagos State Administrator, **Col. Marwa** as sallah gift, but rejected by **Gani** who regarded them as "Greek gift".

The paper was kind enough to arouse the curiosity of the reader in pages 12 and 21 of the same issue with the words: "Marwa, Gani face jury" where views of Nigerians were published. The views represent the confused state of affairs in the country today. The military has driven people into a cue-de-sac of fear, a situation where you can hardly hear the truth from many people.

Out of the twelve interviewed, three talked from two sides of the mouth; three said Gani should have accepted the "gift" in the Muslim mood of sallah; six were unequivocal in support of **Gani's** rejection.

There had been comments for or against before and after this weekend Concord publication. **Sam Omatseye**, a popular columnist, in Sunday Concord of April, 27, 1997 proffered a long argument in favour of **Marwa**. I pick out three points which I consider necessary to comment on.

The first is **Sam Omatseye's** argument that because **Marwa** presented the "gift" under cover of silence, **Fawehinmi** should also have rejected it, under the cover of silence. I ask how silent or secret can such a "gift" from a state administrator to a very popular citizen be that it can escape the knowledge of the Press? Especially a man that had been so vocal against human rights abuses by a military set-up of which the administrator is part and parcel. Remember **Tai Solarin** and the Better Life for Rural Women Uniform?

The second is **Omatseye's** position that **Marwa** did not send **Gani** Christmas gift because **Gani** is a Muslim. So, **Omatseye** continues, it was sent to **Gani** in a Muslim moment of festivity. He added: "The sallah period is supposed to be a time to bury hatchets." To my knowledge, **Gani** has never singled **Marwa** out in any of his campaigns against excesses of the military. So who wield hatchets that are supposed to be buried at sallah period? **Gani** has always believed in the rule of law, instead of the military's rule of force which had cowed many Nigerians to state of anormy. Most are pauperised. Not to talk of the gang of sycophants who say or write what they do not mean and mean what they do not say.

Third is the emphasis on the Muslim aspect of the gift and isolating **Marwa's** gesture from the overall military strategies in dominating Nigeria with a heavy touch of Northernisation which makes it expedient for **Marwa**, a fulani, to become Administrator of Lagos State; and **Marwa** could not have acted without the knowledge of the

central Government. Moreover rams presentation surfaced in Ondo state where you have a non-Muslim Administrator distributing live rams in the sallah spirit. A custom peculiar to the North. They were always given out "under the cover of silence". Southern Muslims give out parts.

Gani and **Marwa** were referred to as "men of the people" in the front page of the same issue of Weekend Concord of 3rd May. **Gani** has been a very open man in all his activities. He does not believe in violence. He believes in disobedience of **UNLAWFUL** orders which was recognised and practised by the uniform services and the civil service from time immemorial. He upholds **LAWFUL** orders derived from statutory obligations of the land that protect the citizens from the rule of force, arbitrary arrests and detentions, discrimination and deprivation for any reason whatsoever etc. **Gani** is a relentless and uncompromising champion of all forms of human rights and dignity. In short **Gani** stands and fights for the oppressed. He is a man of the masses.

The Military Government has polluted the nation. We say this Government is Federal Military Government. It is no more so. Even it is not a unitary Government. It is a centralised military government with power concentrated in one man and all states and local governments responsible to that centre. With these are the control of the national purse and appointments up to highest posts.

For instance the head of the Police Force is from the North. In Lagos state, Administrator, Commissioner of Police, AIG Lagos zone, Senior Security Officers are from the same North. Since the relocation of the capital to Abuja, Lagos has been subjected to all forms of humiliation and the inhabitants are being rendered homeless in thousands. Decrees were promulgated to compulsorily acquire Lagos land, not for public purposes, but for distribution to friends, companies, and sycophants.

I mince no words in saying that we are face to face with internal colonisation and **colonel Mohammed Buba Marwa** is the special colonial administrator assigned to Lagos State since August last year to embark on some palliative measures to divert attention of Lagosians. But he is a military man owing allegiance completely to the head of the military who is, in turn, committed to a Northernisation agenda controlled by a few Northerners whom **Gani Fawehinmi** referred to in the first interview he granted to TELL magazine after his release from the last detention. He was kept in nearly hundred years old prison where he was denied medical care from his doctors. They wanted him to die.

The Nigerians nation is sinking and stinking in unprecedented corruption. No wage or salary earner can afford balanced diet. Many do not get paid for months. Pensioners have been dying because of fruitless trips to collect arrears of pay. Self employed individuals have been out of jobs for long. Many have died.

Lagos is the most affected. We hear so much of the "**Marwa** magic" changing the face and life of Lagos and Lagosians. Operation Sweep is one example in fighting crime. Apart from driving armed robbery underground and to other states there is increased house to house robbery and some "operation steal" which are not reported to the Police because of fear of Police Station. Instead of researching into the roots of increasing crime wave they terrorise, kill, maim and in some cases rob and extort in the name of fighting armed robbers.

What percentage of Lagos roads has been rehabilitated? The rains are here again. The evidence is clear. The PTF released a couple of billion naira for Lagos roads. But it is spent on Victoria Island and Ikoyi where the affluent reside.

Lagos earns money from sales of petroleum products, Education fund, contribution to housing scheme, V.A.T etc. than many states. What share of these goes for development in Lagos? What city in Nigeria suffers more from bull dozers than Lagos. Many settlements, shops and houses go under the destruction of both Lagos state and Federal (**Karimu Adisa**) destruction without any consideration for the number of families displaced and property destroyed.

Marwa is powerless to help. Political assassinations, political bomb blasts are more rampant in Lagos than anywhere else. Indiscriminate arrests and detentions are more in Lagos than anywhere else. Then we have a new phenomenon of frame-ups and cover ups. **Marwa**, as

administrator, is supposed to be the chief security officer. What has he been able to do to protect Lagosians. Lagos is meant for subjugation.

Ram gifts under cover of silence or in the open bright sun and media coverage in the spirit of sallah should start from the top. The winner of the June 12, 1993, presidential election languishes in jail at Abuja. His wife **Kudirat** was shot in broad day light. Members of his, and his wife's household and friends were detained for several weeks as demonstration of arrogance of power. No spirit of sallah in even the form of greetings, or burying the hatchets got near them. The murderers of Kudirat are still not known one year after.

Abraham Adesanya was shot at several time in broad day light. He had a miracle manifested in him and he was one of the four respectable Lagosians illegally detained as suspects in the killing of **Kudirat**. They went to court, got bail but were not allowed home. With court judgement in their favour, they spent months in custody. Nothing has been done to assuage the bitter pills and pains.

We, who have lived in Lagos for decades know we were living in paradise which the military and their Northern hegemony agents have turned to hell on earth. We live in fear even of ourselves.

The **GUARDIAN** was kind enough to give us a picture of what Lagos used to be by asking some old residents, in the issue of Wednesday

May 28. They were afraid to accuse the military in this period of frame-up and cover-up.

Gani Fawehinmi was very justified to reject the rams from **Marwa**. **Marwa** under-rated the nationalist and human feelings of **Gani**. He (**Marwa**) must also have over-rated his popularity by the songs of praise around him from cowed, job seeking, favour seeking and starving Lagosians. Some of who work in the publishing establishment whose proprietor is languishing in detention.

To assure his boss of allegiance, **Marwa** built a Press centre at Alausa Secretariat "for journalists" and names it after the 29 year old son of **Abacha** who died last year, a multimillionaire. **Marwa** too is a very rich man according to his own testimony. He was one of **Babangida** appointed Governor's in Borno state who could not be probed.

He left Borno for the U.S where he learnt a lot about "American wonder" in diplomacy. So while the **Karimu Adisa** bull dozers destroy, while the Police who run out of steam of investigation are arresting and charging innocent Lagosians to court, while Federal might is battling against Lagos, **Marwa** is riding high on the crest of popularity.

Remember there is ten million naira insurance on him for all risks he is exposed to for the retrogression that Lagos State has been going through these thirty years. His palliative for ten months is working.

For the two rams gift to Gani, I fault Marwa.

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P.A. Curtis Joseph

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*No paper published this because Marwa ~~was~~
was extravagantly generous to journalists
and many individuals and organisations*