

GENERALS WITHOUT SHAME

By Moses Oludele Idowu

*“It is not titles that honour men but men that honour titles.”
— Niccolo Machiavelli*

Sometimes in the 1980's or 1990's a troubling fact came to light from a retired army officer based on statistics to the effect that Nigeria has the highest number of retired generals in the world. Much more than Israel, Soviet Union, United States etc., and other nations involved in heavy military combat. I think it was the late Joe Garba who said it but can't remember precisely now. That was about 30 years ago. With the gale of retirements every time government changes baton in the last few years the situation will now be worse. So we have more generals, retired generals than any nation on Earth. But more does not mean better. And it is now time to question the processes by which a person rises to become a general in Nigerian Army and compare that process and interrogate it with other nations. Evidently something is not right. If we have produced this humongous number of generals both serving and retired and we are now more insecure both as individuals and a nation something definitely is not adding up. If a community has produced more academic professors and still have the largest number of illiterates in the entire region, then it is proper to ask how and who made these people professors and how they acquired their titles and climbed to the professoriate. If the effects of their knowledge has no bearing and cannot be seen in the immediate environment, then their authenticity is in doubt.



protesters and their phone conversations. The friends of this general now came together formed a WhatsApp Group and began to raise money to free their colleague and friend. The terrorists demanded for N400 million (four hundred million naira) but the family began to negotiate while his friends both serving and retired were raising money. They paid the ransom and he was released. Another general who coordinated the whole raising of ransom now posted a letter of appreciation on Social Media. This is what shocks me.

First let me begin. I congratulate the family of General M

Haba! In Nigeria? Generals raising money for ransom? Generals don't pay ransom, they fight. Generals don't raise money, they lead soldiers and warriors to the battlefield to save their fatherland. If army generals are now paying ransom to terrorists then what is the fate of the rest of us, “bloody civilians”? This battle is lost already. Even before it begins. Fellow countrymen, forget it, as long as these type of men are in charge of our affairs both in the political arena and in the Army we have lost the battle. I know a bit of military history. I have studied a bit of War History and I know that even generals rarely even come into the picture. Some of the spectacular actions and cases in military history were not even planned by generals but by younger and middle level officers like colonels and majors.

I. Tshiga for his successful release from terrorists' den safe and sound after 56 days in captivity. Only soldiers or someone trained in military could survive 56 days in the forest without harm. I salute his resilience. But still I am troubled and deeply too about the Army, Security Agencies and even Nigeria. Has it come to this? I am particularly troubled by the letter of appreciation of another general, Abdullahi about how they raise money for ransom to terrorists. Haba! In Nigeria? Generals raising money for ransom? Generals don't pay ransom, they fight. Generals don't raise money, they lead soldiers and warriors to the battlefield to save their fatherland. If army generals are now paying ransom to terrorists then what is the fate of the rest of us, "bloody civilians"? This battle is lost already. Even before it begins. Fellow countrymen, forget it, as long as these type of men are in charge of our affairs both in the political arena and in the Army we have lost the battle. I know a bit of military history. I have studied a bit of War History and I know that even generals rarely even come into the picture. Some of the spectacular actions and cases in military history were not even planned by generals but by younger and middle level officers like colonels and majors.

Here are few cases: The Israeli war hero of the Six -Day War, Guy Jacobson was not even a general for all his marvels. Yoni Netanyahu, elder brother of current Israeli Prime Minister who led the Entebbe operation – one of the rarest in military history – was not a general. He was only a Colonel. Charles Peace who trained and started the Delta Force, American Special Forces that did marvels during the Gulf War was just a Colonel. Israel faced the kind of terror Nigeria is now facing in the 1960's. The Security Council had no answer because these were terrorists not conventional army. That was where Ariel Sharon first showed his military genius. He was only a major in the Army. With his Unit 201 of commandoes they made terrorists think twice before striking on Israeli targets. Just a major. He became so popular that whenever a Security Council was meeting the Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion would ask, "Where is Major Sharon?" even brushing aside military protocols, to the envy of generals present. And by the time he became general he dealt with Hamas terrorists (sorry, freedom fighters) even pursuing them to Lebanon and Tunisia.

The mysterious killing of Abu Jihad (Abu Nidal) in Tunisia on Sunday morning in 1983 by Israeli commandoes was another masterpiece in military history and literature. Abu Nidal was the leader of Black September Organisation, a dissident Palestinian faction who masterminded the 1973 Munich Olympic massacre of Israeli athletes. Soldiers are going deep into another nation to bring terrorists to justice. It is generals who are paying ransom to them in Nigeria. How about that? Egypt was rocked by Islamist terrorists in the 1970's who even assassinated Anwar Sadat, a general and a hero of the Yom Kippur War. Thus when Gen. Hosni Mubarak took power he took on the terrorist's head on. He dealt so bitterly and

fatally with them they scattered in all directions and left Egypt. To even be found with any of their subversive literature of Islamic Jihad or Muslim Brotherhood was a serious offence punishable with several years of torture in prison. Many renounced terror and became normal Muslims. Others fled to Afghanistan to be fighting Russia, some to London, Gaddafi's Libya, Iran. But not Egypt. Under Mubarak if you threw a stone into a church building and you were reported, you'll need to be pitied. One man defeated terrorism in Egypt. That was a general. Ariel Sharon did it in Israel. That was a general. Colin Powell designed the strategy that brought victory in the Gulf and cleared Iraq soldiers out of Kuwait. Generals fight terrorists, they don't pay them. Generals confront terror they don't accommodate it. Otukpo the hometown of David Mark, another general, is now under siege by Fulani terrorists. And nothing is happening and will happen. Mark is not talking and silent. The other day a general annulled a free and fair election because according to him he doesn't want to die like a chicken. He didn't want to take the bullet for his nation – the same nation that trained him and gave him a commission. Years later another video now on YouTube showing generals kneeling to beg majors after the unravelling of a coup plot. Hundreds of thousands of barrels of crude are stolen daily in a nation where there is an Army, an Air Force and a Navy. And always army generals are named. They are also the ones named in illegal mining as Adam Oshiomole publicly accused them the other day. And now generals are being picked up by terrorists like ripe cherries off a tree by terrorists without any fight; and their colleagues are raising ransom to free them. Generals in name only or indeed? Which Army School trained our own generals? Where is shame, where is honour when generals are paying ransom to terrorists and criminals?

I am ashamed for Nigeria. I am ashamed for the blackman. People criticize Abacha and say all manner of evil about him. But you must give Abacha his due. He would have fought the terrorists to standstill. Tunde Idiagbon would have fought them even if he died in the process. Benjamin Adekunle would have fought them. Danjuma would have fought them. Murtala Muhammed would have fought them to standstill. It is a different story now. We are producing generals at a fast rate and retiring them with hefty pensions and gratuity. And now we are stranded. The highest number of generals and, possibly, the most unsecured nation on Earth. Yet every day billions of dollars are used to procure arms to fight insecurity. It is well. This nation should return to a Culture of Honour. We have no honour again. And now no shame too. We lost the capacity for shame when we lost our Culture of Honour. Now even generals are not ashamed to admit publicly that they paid ransom. How bad can it get? It is time for all retired generals to meet and have a Conference. It is time for them to look at the level of insecurity in this nation before this fire consumes them too. We are all in it together. May the Good Lord have mercy on this nation.