

# Welcome to the Fold, Brother Rawlings

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I find it healthy when a person reminds another person considered as a friend, that the friend is veering off-course. It is in the light of this that I find refreshing, the recent criticism of the performance of the President Mills' administration by the ex-President, Ft Lt. JJ Rawlings.

According to the news, the former President has made the following comments about the current government:

- That the pace of the President Mills' government is too slow;
- That "there was a lot of mediocrity" in the selection of ministers by President Mills;
- That President Mills has "lost moral control" which has resulted in other people "dictating to him" and "calling the tune";
- That "things are going in the wrong direction".

He went further to remind President Mills that "people (probably with President Mills in his sights) were not elected as independent candidates but on the ticket of the NDC". In this connection, Ft. Lt. Rawlings called on the leadership of the party to make their voices heard.

I totally agree with Ft. Lt. Rawlings on most of these points. For example, ex-President Kufuor had started nominating his Ministers within ten days of taking office in 2001, although there had been a second-round ballot (just as in 2008). Within a few days of taking office as Chief of Staff of then President Kufuor, Jake Obetsebi Lamptey "hit the ground running" by chasing ex-NDC Ministers for state cars. In addition, the then President Kufuor's new security personnel invaded the residence of Ex-President Rawlings with a platoon of soldiers, scooped up Odinga Lumumba from next door and kept him in solitary confinement for two years without trial. Odinga was only released when he was about to die. He never recovered from his ordeal and died two years later in his home country, Belize.

As early as 7th February 2001, President Kufuor dismissed the Managing Directors of the Agricultural Development Bank (ADB), State Insurance Company (SIC), the Deputy Managing Director of SIC, the Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), the Director-General of the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (SSNIT), the Chief Executive of the National Insurance Commission (NIC) and the Director of Commercial

Banking of the National Investment Bank (NIB). Among cars that were seized from former NDC Ministers was that of Mr. Sallas Mensah, MP for Oda, which he had bought from CEPS and paid the duties on it. At that time, there was no cry of witch-hunting. President Kufuor also declared that the economy was in "tatters". This is not very different from "the country is broke" as stated by Ms. Hannah Tetteh in 2009.

I appreciate that, behind the censure of President Mills by Flt. Lt. Rawlings is an inherent acceptance that it is fair enough to publicly criticise a political friend even if that friend is the President or Head of State. It would be good if such criticism is not seen by anyone as an act of unfriendliness on the part of the ex-President. It is most likely that the motive behind his frustration is not out of mischief but out of a genuine yearning that things that ought to be done by President Mills must be done in good time. It is in view of this that I definitely agree that it is morally right to point things out if you think that your friend is going wrong.

What baffles me is that it had to take Flt. Lt. Rawlings more than twenty-six long years to realise this ethic. Could anyone imagine how our then Chairman of the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) reacted when his friends criticised the direction of the PNDC in 1982? The following account answers the preceding question.

In 1979, a group of young people, in the wake of the June 4 1979 uprising, FOUNDED an organization that they called the June Four Movement (JFM). Although the name emanated from the inspiration that the FOUNDERS took from the uprising, no member or functionary of the AFRC was initially personally related to the organization. By 1980 the government of the Peoples' National Party (PNP) was in full swing to discredit the AFRC and demonise its ex-Chairman, Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings. These founding members of the JFM decided to bring Flt. Lt. Rawlings under the umbrella of the organization in order to shield him from attacks of the then government.

It was on the platform of the JFM that Flt. Lt. Rawlings re-established his credibility. He proclaimed his determination to fight for the economic, social and political interests of the downtrodden people; "the masses", as he used to say. It was this credibility which provided him with the spur to stage the coup of 31st December 1981. It was therefore not a surprise to some of us when two other leading members of the JFM ended up as members of the initial PNDC.

By June 1982, the leadership of the JFM outside the PNDC had started to express concern about the direction and character of the PNDC. When our quiet expressions of concern about the PNDC's plans to surrender the economy to the IMF and the World Bank went unheeded, the leadership of the JFM, together with our fraternal organization, the People's Revolutionary League of Ghana (PRLG) took our concerns to the workers and the general public (just as Flt. Lt. Rawlings did to the President Mills' government last week).

By September 1982, Flt. Lt. Rawlings could not take our public expressions of concern any longer. He summoned some of the leadership of the JFM to his office in Gondar Barracks. It was an experience that has since had a profound effect on me in dealing with political issues.

At the meeting, Flt. Lt. Rawlings could not contain himself as he emitted brimstone and fire at us with threats designed to frighten us. As he went on and on, he turned to me and said "And you Kwasi Adu, we are aware of your behind the scenes activities. Stop them!" I did

not understand then, so I asked what he meant by my "behind the scenes activities". "The things that they used to talk about during the PNP days", he replied. I did not still understand so I persisted, "I was not a member of the PNP, so how could I have done things behind them?" He snarled back in response, "As for me I am telling you; there are some people who when you criticise they react rhetorically. But there are some who don't; they ACT!" With the heavily armed soldiers that he had brought to the meeting, the meaning of this was not lost on anyone. At some stage, he looked at us and stated "the sight of you fills me with anger". "You have the pen, and I have the gun", he threatened. At that stage, things became even clearer.

I was shocked that now, the sight of JFM leaders, including myself, was filling him with anger. I, who had taken his wife and children into hiding, on the morning of the coup on 31st December 1981, in the face of a swarm of personnel from the Military Intelligence and Special Branch around his house, was now a pariah? All of this was because he had now found new friends, who were "calling the tune" in his government? I looked at him and was about to say something, but my courage deserted me; so I could only murmur it to myself under my breath: "God never sleeps".

To those who may be doubting what I am saying, they may wish to read Mr. Zaya Yeebo's recollection of this event in his book. "Ghana: The Struggle for Popular Power" and sub-titled: "Rawlings: Saviour or Demagogue" (1991; published by New Beacon Books, London) pages 127-129. I wish to quote some of the relevant parts.

"But before the end of the meeting, Rawlings changed his mind and instead extended an invitation to all leaders of the JFM to a meeting at his Gondar Barracks office on 22 September 1982. Johnny Kwadjo, Ofosu Taata, Kwesi Adu, Nyeya Yen, and myself attended that meeting.

We waited for him a long time, then he suddenly burst into the conference room looking tense and jittery. We all stood up as a sign of respect, but he signaled to us saying, 'Sit down, sit down.' In his now familiar theatrics, he took a hard look at everybody, while pulling hard at his cigarette. When it was finished, he crushed the stub with a force that was certainly not required for the dead end of a cigarette. Still no word from him. The conference room was surrounded by heavily armed soldiers who made sure we knew they were there.

Rawlings was in a tense mood and paced up and down the conference room. After a while, he took off his dark glasses, revealing his blood-shot eyes, and looked at us again and again. No one said anything to him. After sometime, he pointed to Taata and asked, 'Are you Taata?'

'Yes,' Taata replied. 'Leave the NDC immediately,' Rawlings ordered. (The NDC was the body that was formed to replace the Interim National Coordinating Committee – INCC- of the Defence Committees-KA)

We burst into laughter because Ofosu Taata was not a member of the NDC. He was the Managing Editor of the Workers Banner. (The Workers Banner was then the mouthpiece of the JFM ; KA)

This mix-up unsettled Rawlings for a while. He stood there in a pensive mood for a while, then burst out.



'The sight of you all fills me with anger,' he snarled. We laughed. After several incoherent ramblings about articles in the Workers Banner, our anti-IMF position and our support for PDCs and WDCs, he then turned to Kwesi Adu and said: 'We are aware of your behind-the-scenes manoeuvres'. We were surprised at his bellicose rhetoric, but no one said anything.

Rawlings continued, 'You guys had better put a stop to that thing, you are out of touch with reality.'

'What thing?' someone asked. 'The Workers Banner,' Rawlings replied.

Johnny Kwadjo asked, 'What am I doing here since I am not a member of the editorial board?' 'You are a member of a certain collective,' Rawlings reminded him.

For a moment it was difficult to believe that power and its acquisition could transform a person so quickly. The Rawlings, who used to come to the JFM meetings full of humility begging for support and sympathy, had been transformed. We looked on.

Referring to the Workers Banner, he said we could have written such things in Limann's time. I asked 'What is the difference?' but he ignored my intervention and continued, 'Whether the paper will come out or not depends on the next issue. There are others who can use the paper better.'

No one said a word so he continued: 'You have the pen, and I have the gun.' After this, he was about to storm out when Taata got up and said, 'Jerry, we cannot settle matters this way.' He hesitated, and Kwesi Adu added, 'But you have not listened to us.'

Attempts to reason with him or to get him to explain the source of his anger failed."

That was my "brother" JJ Rawlings in 1982. At that time, he could not take kindly to public criticisms from his friends. It appears that after twenty-six years, he has finally seen the light: that it is okay to criticise a friend. However, this realization (on his way to Damascus) has come too late for some people, including my old friend, Kwame Adjimah, who, I understand, was shot dead by a member of the PNDC. Kwame's only "crime" was that he was part of the JFM that had criticised the PNDC.

Kwame Adjimah, on the morning of the 31st December 1981 coup, when the public reception of the coup was, to say the least, lukewarm, went to the JFM farm in Kantamanso to rally the Nungua members of the branch of the JFM (then harvesting cassava that morning) to come to Accra to demonstrate in support of the coup. Mr. Adjimah was arrested and detained in early 1983. He escaped from prison in the wake of the Jiwah coup attempt in June 1983. According to the information, he was re-arrested somewhere in the Volta Region, brought back to Accra and executed in a gruesome manner by a member of the PNDC. Mr. Adjimah was first shot on the kneecaps. As he fell, he clutched the feet of this PNDC assailant and begged him not to kill him. The PNDC member then pointed the gun close to Mr. Adjimah's head, and blew his brains out. The darkness fell on Kwame Adjimah only because he had expressed views contrary to those of someone whom he had considered as a friend.

In view of my Brother JJ Rawlings' present outlook towards President Mills, I believe that he will now admit that the way Kwame Adjimah was treated was not a good way to treat a friend who criticised him in public.

Flt. Lt. Rawlings is reported to have also said that "there was a lot of mediocrity" in the choice of Ministers by President Mills. I wonder how many members of the AFRC could

have endured a parliamentary vetting for Ministerial jobs. Moreover, one of his PNDC Ministers mixed cement and forced another person to drink it. That victim died soon after, because the cement formed a concrete in his stomach. That cannot be said to be a mark of excellence with respect to the calibre of a Minister that my Brother Rawlings chose. It becomes a sad state of affairs when the pot begins to call the kettle "black".

On the issue of people outside the NDC "calling the tune", my Brother Rawlings should now sympathise with the FOUNDING members of the JFM who were used by Rawlings to win and retain power at the end of 1981 but who woke up one morning to find that other people were now "calling the tune". In the last week, I have been wondering why, in dispensing his "medicine" to President Mills, Ft. Lt. Rawlings did not taste it first to see whether it tastes nice.

My personal take on the President Mills administration is the proliferation of blocs that are fighting for turf around him. At the last count, I managed to identify seven of such blocs. It appears that the frustrations of some of these factions in not gaining what they consider as "the upper hand" is what is giving grounds to public outbursts and leaks. While they fight around the President, the remainder of the political field, as well as the ball, has been left free for the NPP to play.

If these things are so frustrating for Ft. Lt. Rawlings to the extent that he has no option but to go public with his criticisms, all I can say to him is: My Brother, welcome to the fold. You now know how it feels like when your political friend abandons you and rather turns to "outsiders" who begin to "call the tune". At least in your case, you will not have to suffer the shocks and threats to which you subjected some of us when you were on top as Head of State.