

ACCESS CODE

The sound of gunshots became intense and was getting closer! Closer was not good at all! We could distinctly identify the actions of the belligerents in combat. There was the nerve wrecking, ear deafening and fear inflicting, heavy shooting from sophisticated and automatic weaponry from the pro-government military forces that would go on for hours without stop. The very ground would even tremble... as did our fragile hearts, and our terror stricken bodies sprawled on the floor, under the bed, cluttered among furniture in a corner, beads of hot sweat rolling down our brow... in testimony of our fear.

Then a “response” from the pro-liberation fighters in sporadic “underdog” kind of shooting with clearly less advanced weapons that would make noise for about five to seven minutes and then stop.

This back and forth of fighting became a familiar music to the ears of Cameroonians in the South West and the North West regions for many years. By December 2019, more than 1700 civilians were killed in both regions; not counting losses among warring factions. Economic losses were in the trillions of CFA!

Thousands of poor peasant families, body worn out and clothes almost thread bare, fled the rural areas such as Ekombe, Kwa-Kwa, Munyenge, Muyuka into the “conflict free” French speaking towns such as Douala, and Yaoundé.

I recall meeting little Fonjong (10 years) from Munyenge on September 11th 2019 at the motor park in Buea. Fonjong, his mum – Ma Tifuh and two siblings – Ambang and Fochoh had been out in the cold and without food for two days! Due to inadequate transport fare their hope of crossing over was little. Haven lost their father and breadwinner in the armed conflict in Munyenge, they were relocating in Douala. Due to inadequate transport fare they had been sleeping out in the cold of the motor park for two days and were fragile, hungry, exhausted and with very little hope. When his gaze

caught mine, his facial expression depicted unfathomable despair; it was impossible to overlook his state. His very words did cut very deep; (and they still do now). *“Little man, are you alright?”* I asked.

“Uncle¹, please help us, we have lost everything!” he replied.

It was impossible to overlook his plight ... and that more than two million Anglophones facing a war they did not start, from an enemy they couldn't expect - the military forces of their own nation! Their desire for LIBERTY, economic independence and a claimant on their right to statehood, started what was later called the **Anglophone crisis**.

At the core of this crisis, was discrimination; in social, political and economic administration of Cameroon

All indicators of discrimination were visible!

Our Cameroonian reality in the lens of Libertarian concepts, showed that our government not only stood in the way of our prosperity and development but also brought in heavy regulations that benefitted mostly their “cronies” at the expense of the poor. Our economic environment totally lacked free markets hence we couldn't benefit from equal distribution of wealth.

The Economic Freedom of the World index, showed that the Anglophone crisis was not only political... but also economic in nature. A clear existed connection between our governments' overspending, increase of taxes on poor masses, and the low level of life of citizens thus leading to chaos and revolution. The big and corrupt corporations in Douala and Yaoundé escaped taxes and thrived. I wondered how such level of crime was thrived and I was hit with the reality that we ranked among the nations with the lowest index of the rule of law. Of course per capita income will increase for the nations wherein abounds economic freedom and a truly democratic system of

governance where

¹ – A common title used by children to address male adults even if they are not family members.

there is the rule of law, but ours was absent! It was clear that our government either did not know or did not want to create and sustain development. There was absolutely no free trade, yet there were lots of socio-political and economic regulations on land, small business and even travel.

I did not need to look at the political life and civil liberties because they were the very reasons why we were in a crisis. A group of people “won” elections every year and kept one guy in power for 38 years! Ridiculous!

We had been labelled the world’s most corrupt country at least once. And like a dog returning to its vomit, our government officials instead devised more crafty means of getting away with corruption and helping cronies do same.

This ultimate “statism” and state control over all areas of social, political and economic life only created more poverty; poverty led to riots and uproar. Too much regulations also destroyed jobs, limited ability to sell to more potential buyers and limited competition, hence keeping some people in business and stopping some from entering and thriving in business.

Government spending was even chaotic and worrisome as we even went into borrowing and increasing international debt; and “bad debt” for that matter! Instead of spending on development of internal infrastructure to facilitate development such as farm to market roads, transportation, funding for start-Ups and SMEs, health and education sectors, they rather funded the police and army, bought outdated and over-priced weapons for war! Weapons to clamp down on the minorities that were asking questions and pointing fingers at their wrong choices and actions.

I had to agree with Lester Neil Smith III that **“the government is like a disease,**

masquerading as its own cure". Clearly, discrimination in political and economic spheres disfavors development while on the other hand, Liberty enriches the poor and discourages discrimination!

One year after, Little Fonjong's words lingered on my mind, "*We have lost everything*". He was correct; because **AS A NATION, WE HAD LOST EVERYTHING.**

Clearly, we totally closed our eyes to an essential asset of transformation, the single **ACCESS CODE** called **LIBERTY.**