

PAUL BIYA BI MVONDO: DISCIPLE OF MACHIAVELLI OR A SHEER RUTHLESS AND CAREFREE DICTATOR?

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Reading through the book “THE PRINCE” by Niccolo Machiavelli, Images of my country and its political landscape dangled in my mind. I could see how well the principles described by Machiavelli apply to this African nation and how the government’s control over the country is so overwhelming. I wouldn’t be surprised if this book was used as a “Bible” by our leaders. They have managed to maintain their power for the past 24 years and there is too much similarity between the principles laid out by Machiavelli in his book and the way the country is being run by the Cameroonian hawks. I selected two of the principles at random, just to see how they apply to the Biya regime.

Machiavelli says that, as a leader you cannot be loved by everyone, so try to be loved and feared at the same time, but of the two, choose to be feared. Biya tried love at one point, but obviously he wasn’t that good at it. So, he settled for FEAR and it seems to be working, at least for the time being. After 24 years in power, his sadism has reached a point where no sordid action cannot be justified. As long as he stays in power, the rest of the people can die:

- Students are killed in for protesting a patent abuse of authority by the Minister of Higher Education;
- Prison warders are being put in jail for reclaiming their rights as workers;
- Plantation workers tortured and jailed for demanding back pay and better working conditions;
- Student leaders banned from attending state schools for leading peaceful protest;
- Business forced to liquidate because their owners sympathize with opposition parties;

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- Opportunities shunned for some because of the language they speak and the region they come from;
- Excessive force and fear is being used to shut the people up. Etc;

“Le Cameroun, c’est le Cameroun” our leader once said, and we are seeing it.

Machiavelli also states in his book that a ruler cannot please everybody all the time, so therefore, he has to be cunning in order to maintain control. Biya is cunning and he is also a coward. It is obvious he is not there to please anyone other than himself. He uses absence and manipulation to control his people. Biya's constant absence creates a void between him and the Cameroonian people. No one knows where he is at any particular time or what he is doing. No one knows where he stands on certain issues and people usually do not know how to contradict him. How can one debate a man without opinion? The best one can do under such a situation is to speculate.

The relationship between Biya and the Cameroonians people is now characterized by some sort of disdain and resilience. Everybody is sick and tired of him and secretly prays that he should collapse and die as soon as God can allow that to happen. Other pray that someone should actively help in this process, but very few are willing to take action. Some have tried and failed, some are still trying and it obvious that this status quo cannot stand forever. Every year we listen to the same speeches, marked by an obvious disconnect with reality. If Biya can be proud about the country being classified as a Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC), then it says a lot about the direction he plans to take the country in the future.

The Biya regime is like a huge roadblock to the socio-economic and political well being of the Cameroonian people. Corruption, embezzlement, incompetence and above all lack of interest for the future of the country are the main characteristics of his government. The country has been plunged into a jungle warfare, where

only the most corrupted and corruptors are able to survive. Morality, virtue, and ethics have been systematically neutralized.

We Cameroonians are also to be blamed for this situation. We are the ones in the offices, in the hospitals, in the market and above all we are the ones corrupting the officials on a daily basis. We always say we had no choice but to corrupt the authorities in order to get the services that we need. But remember one person is enough to start a revolution. That person may be you, it may be me. Together lets stand up and fight the ills of our society. Now is the time.