

Bamenda in the 1990s: Living with Insecurity in the Birth Pangs of a Democratic Cameroon

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The birth of multi-party politics in Africa and Cameroon was accompanied by electioneering malpractices and the use of troops to crackdown on protesters. In Cameroon it will appear that the epi-center of such military crackdown was in Bamenda because the first opposition party was formed there. Bamenda is the capital city of Northwest Region of Cameroon. It plays host to more than 800,000 people. That city had been the scene of some of Cameroon's worst political violence, including the killing of 12 people in army raids after the formation of an opposition party, Social Democratic Front (SDF) in the early in May 1990. It also witnessed more than 4,000 Cameroonian troops which were stationed to maintain peace and order by the Cameroon government and the arrest of many suspicious political figures. Since 1990, researchers of different backgrounds have focused their research endeavours on Bamenda. (see de Bruijn, 2010; Fuh, 2009, Forkwang, 2008; Takougang and Krieger, 1995; Krieger, 2008). The endeavour in this paper is to open yet another page of the historiography of that city which focuses on how due to the insecurities orchestrated by the military, people coped with the situation. How did people circumvent the more than 6,000 troops to go about their daily lives? How did they get food? How did they find new shelters? These questions and potential answers will shed light on the agency of insecurity and displacement culture in the short run and hence will contribute to the historiography of that region.