

sufficiency in 1975.

The one category that is rising is debt service payments, which now consume close to 25% of export earnings. Despite two debt reschedulings at the Paris Club in 1989 and early 1992, *Africa Recovery* reported, debt service will rise in the next three years. To ensure this, the Biya regime is being forced to carry out continuing "reforms" of the economy that are no more focused on productive job-creation than Biya's own policies. The IMF is demanding further cuts in the civil service, which have already seen a loss of 60,000 jobs, and further slashing of the prices paid to cocoa and coffee farmers.

Trade liberalization, making official the non-tariffed smuggling of goods into Cameroon, is also being demanded, to be compensated for by increased domestic taxation. And lastly, Biya is setting up a free-trade zone for bringing in investors eager to take advantage of Cameroon's cheapening labor.

Formidable opposition

The net result of the combination of IMF policies and Biya's squanderings is the deepening poverty of Cameroon's people. In the last two years, epidemics of cholera and yellow fever have for the first time swept through large areas of northern Cameroon.

The political result is a strong and well-organized opposition led by the Social Democratic Front of John Fru Ndi and Siga Asanga. As SDF Foreign Relations Commission official Henry Njiwah told *EIR*, the SDF was first founded in 1990 as a regional party based in the anglophone western section of Cameroon, but has now expanded its support nationally. Even in Biya's home base of Abilova, SDF rallies recently drew crowds of 100,000.

Biya has responded by attempting to form his own opposition coalition. He also moved up the election date to Oct. 11, a date set previously for only municipal elections, with presidential elections to follow in 1993. According to Njiwah, people are also being discouraged from registering to vote by various bureaucratic ruses. Despite brutal repression, successful strikes and agitations are now giving Biya a run for his money.

On Sept. 18, Reuters reported, Cameroon had suspended its payments to the World Bank and foreign commercial banks, and aid to the country would be blocked accordingly. Planning Minister Roger Tchoungui, who has directed the IMF "reform" program and is the major enforcer for Biya's repressive social policies, blamed political civil disobedience campaigns, but affirmed Biya's commitment to pay debts at all costs as a "point of honor."

It is likely that Biya is diverting the money into a campaign fund for the Oct. 11 elections. Whether he "wins" the elections or not, there is no question that his role in helping to put the nation's resources into the hands of the IMF and its allied banks, has destroyed his credibility.

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