

EDITORIAL

William Eteki Mboumoua, the incumbent Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity, and, at the time, Cameroon Minister of Education, a highly cultured and foresighted man, invited me back in 1962, to launch the Cameroon Bilingual Cultural Review, because I was, at that juncture, the only Cameroonian bilingual at an appreciable level.

That was back in 1962.

After much hesitation and reluctance heart-searching, I accepted the challenge. I went through the legal formalities, and, on December 11/1962, I received the following document from the Legal Department of the Federal Government, and the Review became officially recognised as an autonomous periodical :

RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
PARQUET DU PROCUREUR
DE LA RÉPUBLIQUE

Yaoundé, le 11 décembre 1962.

RÉCÉPISSÉ

Le Procureur de la République près le Tribunal de Première Instance de YAOUNDE, certifie que le 6 décembre 1962, M. Bernard FONLON, Chargé de Mission à la Présidence de la République à Yaoundé, a fait par écrit à son Parquet, la déclaration suivante, en application de la loi du 29 juillet 1881 sur la presse, concernant une publication mensuelle intitulée :

« A B B I A »

Son sous-titre :

REVUE CULTURELLE CAMEROUNAISE
CAMEROON CULTURAL REVIEW.

Nom du journal	: A B B I A
Périodicité	: Tous les deux mois
Tirage	:
Directeur-Gérant	: Bernard FONLON
Imprimerie	: Gouvernement
Siège social	: B.P. Yaoundé.

Le Procureur de la République

B. MATIP.

At the start, there was a long debate as to what kind of audience the Review should be addressed: some said we should address ourselves to primary school leavers; others said to the Brevet holders and those of the G.C.E. ordinary level; others that we should write for the Baccalaureat or the G.C.E. A - level holders.

I kept silent and listened to all the views.

Then said I, "Gentlemen, have you explored all the possibilities with regard to the audience to which our Review should be addressed."

"Yes we have."

"Well" said I, "my mind is made: we shall strive and strain to write for highest intellect in the world, because if we succeed in doing this, we will win world renown and the respect of international Scholars."

Thus, to today, we are read in places as widely apart as Washington D.C. and Peking.

Articles in Abbia have accomplished things we never would have dreamt of. Researchers cite Abbia as an authority.

Thus, during the past fifteen years, our aim has been largely fulfilled.

But fifteen years is a big slice of a man's life gone; yet not necessarily that of a review.

We must face the hard fact that, in another decade, we who created the review will not be there.

It becomes therefore imperative to make the rising generations interested in the review; it is imperative that, when we go, its standard of scholarship should not fail or falter; it is imperative to whip up, among the rising youth, a thirst for Learning, so that, when they take over, they should keep up the standards we have strained to establish.

That is why we have decided to bring certain parts of the review to their level. That is why we have decided to give room in this Review to the Creative Effort of young Cameroonians in School and College.

But let those who are interested in this apprenticeship know that good writing is the result of laborious and painful drudgery. Horace, the great Latin poet said that he who is not prepared to erase shall never become a writer of renown.

Therefore any manuscript that comes to us must have been thoroughly thought out and written and rewritten and rewritten! I speak from experience: an article published by me has been a first draft. Nor a second. There is one that took four years of writing and research and rewriting and rewriting, although in the end it sounds so simple that a reader might think it was an effortless matter of easy grace.

Therefore he who would want to appear in print in these pages must also delight and live laborious days.

I would want this point to be rammed in, to be made abundantly clear and to be well understood, namely, that putting this Review at the disposal of the up and coming generations, means, not that Abbia intends to lower the level of its scholarship, but that the youth to take over must raise, by unflagging work, the level of their scholarship to that of Abbia.

I once believed, (and there are those who still believe) that the more obtuse and difficult a piece of writing, the more learned it was. They forget, as Socrates once said, that the gods are perfect because they need nothing and that for man to strain to be content with little is to make the nearest approach to the gods, the nearest approach to perfection.

In other words God is Simplicity itself, in fact God defined his nature to Moses in the simplest of words when he commissioned Moses to deliver the Israelites out of the house of Egyptian bondage:

I AM who AM.

HE WHO is hath sent me to you. (1)

Take this other example:

I went down to the Petracus yesterday
With Glancon, the son of Ariston. As
this was the first celebration of the
festival, I wished to make my prayers
to the goddess and see the ceremony. (2)

Thus begins one of the greatest books ever written, and it is said that Plato wrote this opening passage twenty eight times before he was satisfied. Yet see how simple it reads.

Some of the greatest classics are in the simplest language.

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- 1) THE HOLY BIBLE: The Duway Version A.D. 1609 : Exodus 111, 14.
2) Plato the Republic, Everyman's Library, 64, page 1.

What is necessary, absolutely, is to develop a trained mind full of profound ideas pertinent to the needs of society. The next thing is so to master the language that is the vehicle of your ideas that you can express them with limpid simplicity, in language that is precise, accurate, relevant, and beyond the commonplace.

Do not be fooled into the idea that the more obscure the language the more necessarily profound must be the ideas. Of course there are profound works that are obscure; but, by and large, the greatest thinkers wrote simply — laboriously.

Yet let no one fool you: to write in clear simple language, is a strenuous exercise, more often than not. Writing is a discipline — on its own.

As one French man once put it:

Ce n'est pas assez de savoir la Théologie
pour écrire la théologie :
il faut encore savoir écrire,
qui est une seconde Science. (3)

Yes, writing is a science on its own right. Let that be clearly understood. I want to make another point abundantly clear, and it is this: Abbia is not an exclusive group of persons.

Abbia is a Review which, accidentally, happens to be run by a group of persons. The door stands ajar; if you are interested, knock and it shall be opened up to you.

Having laboured for the past fifteen years, we are calling upon those of the rising generations who are committed to Intellectual Enterprise to prepare themselves for the take-over, strung up that Abbia shall remain Abbia; strung up that this Cameroon Cultural Review shall not die.

Bernard FONLON
Director and Editor in-Chief.

3) Jean Louis Guez de Balzac (1597-1664) Grand Epistolier de France Quoted in Rhetoric and English Composition by Herbert J.C. Grierson, LL.D., Litt. D., Litt. et Phil. D., Professor Emeritus of Rhetoric and English Literature, University of Edinburgh, page 1.

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