

The Warrior of Corruption and Colonialism: The Thomas Sankara Model 1949-1987

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There were many African leaders who fought against colonialism in all its forms and led their countries towards freedom from the corruption and European imperialism which invaded the African continent and drained its wealth for a long period of time. Sankara strived to make his country, Burkina Faso, the cradle of freedom for Africa as a whole. Sankara realised the genealogy for great revolutionaries including Che Guevara, Gandhi, Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., and many others whose ideas continue to inspire social and political change around the world. Sankara spoke to millions of people who yearn for social justice, equality, sustainable development, an end to imperialism, and the elimination of global capitalist exploitation. His speeches are urgent and cover a wide range of topics including race, gender equality, assistance and development, social justice, imperialism, Africanism, religion, African identity and culture, women's emancipation, and foreign policy.

Keywords: *Corruption, Colonialism, Thomas Sankara, Burkina Faso.*

Introduction

Upper Volta witnessed many military coups during the period 1966-1987 after the French colonial period. However, the coup of August 4 1983 was the opposite of previous coups, Thomas Sankara brought class awareness to the forefront and worked to identify the country by changing the name from the colonial name Fulta Upper to Burkina Faso. This was the first goal in the selection of the subject, while captain Thomas Sankara emerged as an attractive and creative figure and also a Marxist military figure. The 1983-1987 National President of Burkina Faso, commonly referred to as the Che Guevara of Africa, is African and national president of Burkina Faso. He seized power in 1983, with the aim of eliminating corruption, mismanagement, and the dominance of the colonial power of France. Immediately after

taking power, he launched a series of measures and reforms to change the socio-economic reality, whose revolution represented the people's control of power. His foreign policies were reshaped toward shaping the fight against imperialism. Faso's domestic policies also focused on preventing famine with agricultural self-sufficiency and a cell on the system of sufficiency land reform, and the prioritisation of education, health, and women's affairs, and such a second goal to choose the subject.

Literature Review

Sankara's Biography and Military and Political Activity until he came to Power (1949-1983)

Birth and upbringing:

Thomas Isidore Noel Sankara was born on December 21, 1949 in the village of Yaku, north of Upper Volta, France (Amana, 2010). His father, Joseph Sankara, was of ethnic origin, Moses (Ismael, 1995), while his mother, Margaret Kinda, was of Fulani ethnic origin (Muhammad, 1971). Sankara spent his early years in Goa, a town in the wet south-west where his father was transferred to as an additional police commander. His father served in the French army during World War II, and was arrested by Nazi forces (Ernest, 2014). –

Sankara attended the elementary school in Goa in The Province of Bonny and enjoyed his love of sports and the French language. The Church was impressed by his energy and eagerness to learn and he encouraged by priests (Ernest, 2013). It is worth mentioning that his parents wanted him to attend Saint Kara as a Catholic monk, but he preferred to attend the military high school in Ouagadougou in 1966 at the age of 17. When he graduated from high school in 1969, Sankara was a student of the Military Academy in Antiranaby (Madagascar) (Jean, 1987) which witnessed a popular uprising of students, farmers and workers against the leader appointed by France, leaving a clear influence on his personality and ideas. Moreover he was exposed to some philosophies that would become the basis of his revolutionary leadership. There was an influence of Marxist political economy and development theory on him (Skinner, 1988), in contrast to his first rank and a Second Lieutenant in 1972. He received a training course at the Parachuting School in Pau (France), where some witnesses said he was in contact with OCV (Communist Organisation Voltaic). He then travelled to the Rabat Parachute Centre (Morocco) and met Blaise Compaoré (Harris, 1994). Upon his return to Canada in 1974, he met several times with leaders of left-wing organisations, but he did not become a member of any of them. At the same time, a national group of soldiers and civilians is quietly formed. This group included Thomas Sankara, Blaise Compaoré, Jean-Baptiste Lingani, Henry Zongo and Abdessalam Kabouri. Sankara increasingly adopted left-wing politics. He organized the group of communist officers in the army and attended meetings of various left-wing parties, trade unions, and student groups usually wearing civilian clothes (Thomas, 2007).



Military and Political Activity:

Sankara's personality emerged after returning to Upper Volta in 1973 and qualified for leadership positions. At the end of 1974, Thomas Sankara was sent to the front of Marie de Som, a disputed area of Mali and Upper Volta to take part in the war between his country and Mali in 1974-1975. He condemned it as a war with no interest and for being unjust. In 1976, he became a parachute instructor and took charge of the commando forces in Bo (Pierre, 1966). His political popularity grew in 1981, with Sankara briefly serving as Minister of State for Information under the newly formed Military Commission for Reform and Military Progress (CMRPN). This was a group of officers who had recently taken power. In April 1982, he resigned from his post and denounced CMRPN when he staged a military coup to overthrow the regime of Sai Zarbo (Abdul Wahab, 1985). After losing his credibility and taking over the government of Jean-Baptiste Ederagoo, Sankara was later appointed Prime Minister in 1983 but was soon expelled and placed under house arrest, causing a popular uprising (Thomas, 1989).

Sankara's Efforts to Fight Administrative and Financial Corruption in Burkina Faso and its Revolution in 1983-1987

On November 25, 1980, the Regime of LaMizana was overthrown and a military elite led by Colonel Sai Zarbo was formed. Two years later, in November 1982, another military coup toppled the Zarbo regime, formed an interim rescue council, and the selection of Lieutenant Colonel Jean-Baptiste Aridrege, who presided over his rule, was short-lived (Masood, 2006). Surprisingly, he discovered a plot by opposition figures, civilians and military, to bring back the Government of Sai Zarbo and arrested them, leading to a violent conflict in February 1983 within the People's Salute Council. Sankara, then Prime Minister and member of the radical party within the government, announced his withdrawal in May 1983 when Sankara began his duties. Diplomacy began with an official visit to Tripoli and attending the Non-Aligned Summit in New Delhi where he met Fidel Castro (Bassem, 2010) adjacent to Côte d'Ivoire with the support of France, he began to worry about the political development in Upper Volta. Between March and May 1983, Sankara delivered resounding speeches to mass gatherings with messages that did not obscure his political leanings, and it should be noted that two days after Sankara's speech at Bobo Dioulasso on May 14, 1983, Guy Bain, Mitterrand's adviser to Africa, arrived in Upper Volta for an official visit. In the early morning of May 17, armoured vehicles surrounded Thomas Sankara's home, effectively placing him under house arrest. In the days that followed, large demonstrations broke out in Ouagadougou, where the slogan "Free Sankara" spread, and popular demonstrations, as well as a faction of the pro-Sankara army, forced the authorities to release him (Hamdi, 2015). In the light of the foregoing, Thomas Sankara lived in a society where the poor loved him in his fight against corruption and the privileges of officials who occupied 70% of the national



budget on the shoulders of 90% of the population who burned their backs to install the Upper Volta hard shell.

Sankara came to power on August 4, 1983, after a people-supported coup in Upper Volta, a country with a difficult colonial history that continued to deteriorate national identity even after it gained political autonomy in 1960. Moreover, the Burkina Faso revolution, or the August Revolution, took place in a backward agricultural country where it was burdened by the ideological traditions that produced by a certain pattern of social and feudal organisation. This was due to the domination and exploitation practiced by imperialism against the people of Upper Volta, a country suffering from the absence of a conscious working class, a small country and the revolutionary movement collapsed as a result of the military coups that won. All these circumstances paved the way for a revolution and demanded change (Hamdi, 2015). Sankara called in his first speech on October 2, 1983 to form an immediate committee to defend the revolution and became president of the Revolutionary Council. The Councils for the Defense of the Revolution were a popular organisation representing the people in exercising power and working to monitor and defend it. Under the name of "Revolutionary Conservative Authority", the goal of these committees was to fight corruption and colonialism (Sisi, 2018). The establishment of the Council for Development and Reconstruction, which worked to achieve convincing results throughout the period 1983-1984 in a number of operations such as water and railway battles and the development of millions of children with the support of the World Health Organisation (UNESCO) as well as "the three struggles".

"The Three Struggles":

In light of the corruption and the dismantling of traditional networks (Frédéric, 2002), Sankara issued a series of measures and reforms on the anniversary of his accession to power in August 1984 where he changed the name of Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, which means "land of straight men", and pursued a policy of austerity and self-sufficiency, the establishment of national reconciliation councils, and the establishment of popular courts to combat and exclude corruption (Bruno, 2014). In line with the above, he was interested in nationalising land, redistributing land to farmers, and using modern irrigation and fertilisation programs that increased the production capacity of wheat. Cottons role in supporting the field of agriculture became clear through his speech in 1985 on food security. The need to develop diversified agriculture and encouraged the cultivation of 10 million trees for the purpose of fighting desertification, he also called for fighting forest fires and fighting stray neighbourhoods and overcutting wood in addition to the construction of water reservoirs and dams. Sankara also increased his interest in the educational aspect, and found that despite the end of the French colonisation of Upper Volta and the passage of 23, a year later, 89% of the rural population is unable to read and write with 6% of this total being urban students of

school age. In response to this, Sankara sought an educational campaign to replace colonial schools with new schools and ordered the establishment of each village, as well as seeking to reduce school fees from 10,000 to 4000 francs for primary school, from 85,000 to 45,000 for high school, and the construction of more than 344 schools. The researcher finds that Sankara's interest was not limited and his interests included health which was at the top of his priorities. He followed the policy of fortifying against infectious diseases through the doubling of vaccination campaigns and was interested in increasing public awareness for the purpose of acquiring good health habits and establishing health centres throughout the country. This included establishing more than 284 clinics for childbirth and 87 pharmacies (Thomas, 1983). Women received special attention from Sankara in his speech on March 4, 1987 on the occasion of International Women's Day, stating that "you can't revolt." The victory of the liberation of women, explaining the origin of the oppression of women and the importance of the struggle to put an end to them, gave special attention to the challenges facing the struggle for the liberation of women in Africa. This represents a real interest for women and men fighting forms of exploitation and oppression around the world (Thomas, 1983), calling for the appointment of women to government positions, the recruitment of more women into the army and the placement of women in places of power where they were formerly absent. Sankara has banned female mutilation in Burkina Faso, forced marriage, and polygamy. Sankara established the country's first Ministry of Family Development. Its services have been dedicated to educating Burkina Faso women on the home economy, effective child-rearing, awareness and AIDS prevention. Sankara established the Burkina Faso Women's Union in 1985. UFB gave women a political place "within the well-defined limits of the revolution by allowing them to express their issues with men. The government's goal was to raise women's status beyond previous regimes by appointing "five women to ministerial positions" (Thomas, 1990). . It was found that the establishment of the people's committees on October 14, 1987 was to prevent administrative and political corruption, gather information, and investigate information about the income and assets of officials within institutions and the government, and pass any anomaly to the police for further investigation (Bruno, 2002).

Sankara's Attempts to Fight French Colonialism in Burkina Faso until his Assassination in 1987

In light of the foregoing, Sankara, in his 1983 speech to the United Nations, reiterated his desire to free his country from neo-colonialism and make him support himself to a large extent, through political change and restructuring based on the strengthening of confrontation (Martin, 2013). This is what opened the fronts of the conflict internally and externally in four years and made him many enemies, as he took a foreign policy far from aligning with France and other Western powers. He sought to build a solidarity front across the continents and declared his solidarity with the just causes of Palestine to South Africa (Al-Akhbar, 2017).

He spoke in a lecture about his criticism of the visit of the President of South Africa to France, (Mohammed, 2014) considering French President François Mitterrand as an indirect accomplice in the crimes committed by the apartheid regime and confirmed this during his visit to Harlem, New York to show support for the fight against discrimination in the United States (Hamdi, 2015). The relationship was further strained in relations between France and Sankara during a dinner in honour of French President François Mitterrand in the capital Ouagadougou in November 1986. The Nicaraguan revolutionaries in Central America, who were resisting the United States' intervention, provoked hostility toward France, the United States, and African client countries, particularly Côte d'Ivoire and neighbouring Mali and Togo (Hussam al-Din, 2012). Sankara called for a united front for African countries to give up their foreign debt. The poor and exploiters had no obligation to pay the money for the rich. This was directly linked to Fidel Castro's campaign in Havana in 1985. This campaign and speech emphasised the abhorrent nature of debt, colonial assets, and its disastrous effects on public and social policies in particular. It defended the campaign of abominable debt cancellation for developing countries and opposed the new colonial penetration through Western trade and finance. Sankara furthered his rejection of foreign aid and loans (Beginnings, 2015) and established the creation of a unified front against debt by saying “We believe that religion should be viewed from the point of view of its origins, which came from the origins of colonialism...” (Amber, 2008). Moreover, Sankara contributed to the joint cooperation between Ghana and Burkina Faso, he showed a defensive position in case of any aggression through the exchange of military units between them, which justifies the imperialist uprising against Sankara for fear of achieving that unity that threatens its interests in the region (Obed, 2014). Sankara stated that “we must work to end our mental colonisation and achieve happiness in the borders of sacrifice sought to be prepared to accept. We have to renew our people to accept themselves as they are, not to be ashamed of their real situation, to be satisfied with that” (Amber, 2008). Sankara's foreign policy has become a major threat to French policy in Africa, so France and the United States sought to arrange a conspiracy to liquidate him so that his ideas do not invade the rest of Africa, in agreement with the opposition forces from within, represented by Captain Blaise Compaoré, a close friend of Sankara, to overthrow Sankara and eliminate him. The coup was preceded by Compaoré's distribution of leaflets in Ouagadougou for the union against The Stranger by Blaise Compaoré and the tribal chiefs who had been stripped of their powers, as well as many senior civil servants and military officers who resented the reduction of their reward, all of which paved the way for the assassination of Sankara (Hamdi, 2015). France pledged to support the coup and provided all the funds and facilities to an important figure, Charles Taylor (Massoud, 2006), which helped pave the way for Blaise Compaoré.

In the morning of Thursday, October 15, 1987, Sankara discussed several issues with Blaise Compaoré, the most important of which was the establishment of a political party to bring together all the left-wing parties to save the revolution and draft a speech for the purpose of

the meeting of the military organisation to be held this evening in the Council of Accord. At 4:15 p.m., shortly after the meeting, shots were fired in the outer courtyard (Bruno, 2014). Twelve people were killed, and at 8:00 a.m., a statement was broadcast on national radio announcing the resignation of the president, and the establishment of a popular front led by Captain Blaise Compaoré. The Ivory Coast and Togo Persians welcomed the coup, they feared in the region (Janvier, 2007). In the light of the foregoing, the death of Thomas Sankara was announced several days later in the press, announcing the testimony of his death from natural causes. Compaore's attempt to conceal all the facts about his death were supported by France (Janvier, 2017). It is observable from this the fears of the major powers and the opposition forces from outside and inside of the ideas of Sankara, which paved the way for the African states that were colonised to claim their rights and defend their wealth looted by the European colonisers and whose speeches and sayings remained slogans against the colonisers.

Conclusions

1-Thomas Sankara's character occupies a prominent place in the history of contemporary Africa, and os characterised by strength in the anti-imperialism movement. He attempted to build a front of united African countries that refuses to pay off debts, foreign aid, and loans.

2-Moreover, his policy of self-sufficiency, reliance on domestic production, the prohibition of importing many materials into Burkina Faso, and the growth of local industries, was further encouraged by his support for revolutionary movements that directly opposed French domination.

3-Following a series of measures and reforms, he sought to develop the infrastructure of the Burkina Faso community, as he was concerned with health, education, concern for women's affairs, and agricultural reform. This was evident through his speeches regarding the stability of the country and changing its situation from a backward country to an agricultural and economic country, the emancipation of women, the interest in agriculture, its speeches on forests and the tree, the prevention of forest burning and cutting. The researcher finds that his policy during the period 1983-1987 made him many enemies from the outside and inside.



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