



Revolution in the Land of the Incorruptible: Burkina Faso in 1984

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Introduction



It is August 4, 1984, and today the “Republic of Upper Volta” was renamed to Burkina Faso (meaning “Land of the Upright People”) by the newly established President, Army Captain Thomas Sankara. You are a member of the President’s newly formed government, the National Council for the Revolution, which is the latest exemplar of Socialist ideals on the African Continent.

Our government is already breaking the mold with a range of political reforms aimed at empowering the honest workers who have suffered under the oppression of the old regime. This Government is the first in the country’s history where women and men can hold office, and all the wealth and privilege attached to government office has been abolished. For the

first time, our country is being run for the people, not for those who run it.

With zeal, we are pursuing large-scale agricultural projects, land redistribution, infrastructure, and workers empowerment, but the old order still threatens our righteous cause. Although the new government has the support of the people, there are those who would overturn our progress if we are not vigilant. Our government at risk internally from disillusioned unions, political dissenters, and rouge military units, and is threatened externally by powerful western regimes and capitalist. The capitalists and tribal leaders who prospered under the old regime are forming political blocs of dissidents intending to up end our government in coordination with wary imperialist powers who fear our ideas.



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Revolutionary leader Thomas Sankara

We must quickly demonstrate our ability reform to keep our reputation as a government of the people, but there is a long way to go before the land might be considered prosperous. Most of the economy is based on agriculture, and Burkina Faso is currently suffering from a year long drought, reducing what little arable land to near-infertility. What little mineral wealth and manufacturing exists is mostly built around old colonial exports, and most infrastructure was designed to serve those needs.

Literacy rates are among the lowest in the world, particularly among women. Despite the optimism many feel about all of Burkina Faso's recent policy changes, the country still has a lot of work to make the country prosper. We have *carte blanche* move our policies forward, and we'll need to build a country we can be proud of from the ground up.

History Overview

Independence and Coups

"Tenable" and "Stable" are not words that generally describe any of the governments of the regions, including Burkina Faso's. The impoverished French colony of Upper Volta (est. 1919) achieved independence 1960, but the newly established government exploited the people with neo-colonial policies that enriched the same individuals who had prospered under the colonial rule. Accordingly, the military co-opted this dissatisfaction of the labor organizers and staged a coup.



Though the "provisional" military government came to power with the support of the disenfranchised, they too were corrupt. Opposition parties were made illegal, and plans for the military to step down in 1970 were ignored. What followed was a series of coups; the most recent and most successful taking place in 1980 and 1982. In 1983, a popular coup organized by Army Captain Blaise Compaoré was successful in bringing our leader, Capitan Thomas Sankara, to power.

Sankara's revolt was part of a wave of junior-officer coups that have swept across Africa in the 1970s and 80s. Revolting against the established order, and the leadership of the continent's original generation of post-colonial revolutionary leaders, leaders who have shown themselves better at challenging European colonial powers than ruling their countries.



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Africa's Che

Thomas Sankara was born in Northern French Upper Volta in the year into a family that



allowed him greater educational opportunities, and a chance to seek the benefits of a career in the military. He would go on to attend the Kadiogo Military Academy's first class in 1966. While serving in the military, Sankara gained popularity by fighting in the country's border war with Mali in 1974. Over the course of his studies and service, he encountered the works of Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, and in 1976 formed the so-called "Communist Officers' Group;" members group helped bring Sankara to power and now serve as his most senior aides. Marxism's tenant of land redistribution, shared profit for labor, and a shunning of international capitalism form the basis of Sankara's ideology and government, and this is clearly demonstrated in many of the policy initiatives he's set out to accomplish. Described as modest and

incorruptible Sankara only owns a few possessions, and is fanatical in his purists.

Reforms and Difficulties

Agricultural Focus

Agriculture employs a clear majority of the labor force in Burkina Faso, but even so, the country does not have a self-sufficient food supply. Only about eight percent of the total land area of the region is being used to produce crops, owing to poor soil quality, drought, and inefficient irrigation. Most of the crops being cultivated are cereals for sustenance (particularly sorghum and millet). The most common commercial crop is cotton, which accounts for about half of all the country's exports.

Sankara has put a tremendous focus on the nation achieving a self-sufficient food supply by modernizing the irrigation systems and even the considered the construction of a series of dams to collect the seasonal rain in reservoirs. However, a severe lack of capital for construction remains a chronic problem, and the fact that only 2 of the country's rivers, the Black Volta and Komoé, flow year-round.

Further complicating the issue are the political/economic entanglements. Rather than focusing on exporting cotton for a profit, Sankara has been adamant that cotton be used to clothe the Burkinabe instead of acting as a commodity in the international market which only benefits the wealthy classes. Sankara's economic policy includes taking land away from the tribal leaders who have historically feudally lorded over the local farmers. This practice could increase our popularity with the masses and could be used for multitude of projects, but would infuriated the powerful chieftains whose ancestors have owned the land for generations.

Sugarcane has been suggested as a possible cash crop, but getting the capital to invest in the infrastructure required to develop sugarcane on a



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large scale will likely prove difficult. Whatever course the cabinet takes, it should be considered that rainfall in the area fluctuates wildly, and the yield of water sensitive crops like cotton may boom or bust based on the notoriously unpredictable climate.

Manufacturing and Mineral Wealth

At present, there exists very little manufacturing in the country, and urban centers have only recently begun increasing in population density enough to herald the labor force that manufacturing plants would need to be successful. What little manufacturing exists is currently dedicated to food processing and textiles.

Sankara wants to improve transit infrastructure to allow more citizens to migrate to urban centers and help to expand the manufacturing sector with an emphasis on making the country self-sufficient in textiles and food, while opening new factories dedicated to mechanization of agriculture.

One of the more developed industries is mineral extraction, particularly with gold ore, which represent about half of all export revenues. There are significant ore deposits in an area known as the Agacher Strip in the north bordering Mali. Mali also claims the region and its disputed nature has delayed any extraction of the gold and natural gas resources in the region.



Self-Sufficiency over Foreign Trade

Burkina Faso’s international trade has been plagued by a growing trade deficit for years, and Sankara’s policies hope to tackle this issue by increasing self-sufficiency within the country. At present, Burkina Faso imports about a quarter of its food supply, most of its clothing, and nearly all its petroleum. Most of the existing production is the same as it was in the colonial era, geared towards maximizing profits for the imperial overlord France. Most exports are raw materials and simple goods, with most finished products coming from Europe.



Blaise Compaore (left) and Thomas Sankara

Infrastructure and the Public Good

Transit and Power

Comrade President Sankara has made clear his intent to “tie the nation together” through an ambitious program of road and railway construction - all to be accomplished without any foreign aid. Though vehicle ownership is not widespread, reliable infrastructure will allow for greater initial trade, manufacturing, and food distribution; as well as, allow for more effective movement of the armed forces and emergency response services.

Sankara has also enlisted the support of workers in the building of a nationalized power network in order to further modernize the country, although funds and materials for the project have proved hard to come by so far.



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At the present, there has been a lot of focus on construction, but the appropriation of factories - some of which were built with foreign investment - has not been popular with everyone. By co-opting many of the brick factories, and requiring communities to work certain amounts, we hope to generate enough resources, and create centers of production solely for the public good and set to use for related infrastructure projects.

Education, Housing, and Health Care

Education is priority as it is one of the most effective means of empowering the proletariat. Local communities have been instructed to begin building primary and secondary schools throughout the country. A lack of qualified teachers has been a real issue, and a new initiative for “Revolutionary Teachers” to go out and instruct basic literacy and proper ideology is being considered. Still encouraging attendance



of students and ensuring resources are distributed is a continuing issue.

In particular, Sankara wants to organize a nationwide vaccination campaign to fight diseases like polio, and build a pharmaceutical dispensary in every village to ensure all Burkinabe can receive basic care.

Empowering the People/ Revolutionary Progress

Popular Revolutionary Tribunals

Drawing inspiration from other communist movements, Sankara has instituted a system of special courts called the “Popular Revolutionary Tribunals” (or TPRs). These courts are designed to punish the enemies of the people and revolution, and can bring anyone up on charges: lazy workers, corrupt officials, or scheming aristocrats. Usually these courts operate with public crowds gathered to watch; this make sure the trail is carried out justly and that the guilty are duly convicted. While these are well with in laws of the Burkina Faso, the foreign press, siding with wealthy criminals, often calls them a sham and have brought up the idea of sanctions.

Revolutionary Defense Committees

Across the country, civilians are being organized into “Committees for the Defense of the Revolution,” or “CDRs.” Men and Women are being armed, trained, and organized at the village or workplace level to create a network of local armed cells capable of resisting foreign aggression. Sankara has made it clear that the CDRs are intended to give all Burkinabe the ability to “fully participate in the CNR's great patriotic struggle,” both at home and abroad.

The CDRs are not part of the army and fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of the Interior. The units are commanded by local leaders, and are trained to act as a reserve military unit, but also to supplement local police and act as emergency responders.

Other Projects

Sankara has prioritized other policies aimed at empowering the Burkinabe, notably efforts regarding women and culture. Seeking to tackle the gender divide in the country, Sankara has made many overtures to the women of Burkinabe; the President has opened government positions to women and banned customs like forced marriage, and is even cultivating an all-



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female military unit. Local cultures are also being enriched with a new youth pioneer movement called the “Pioneers of the Revolution;” an organization dedicated to the spread of communist and Pan-African ideals among the children of the country.

Pressing Diplomatic Issues

The Agacher Strip

Relations with our neighbor to the north, Mali, have become tense ever since we came to power, with all eyes on the resource rich region called the “Agacher Strip.” The area is widely believed to be filled with many valuable resources like gold and natural gas, but due to its disputed nature neither side has begun to develop the region yet. A brief war was fought in the region in 1974, with a peace mediated by the Organization of African Unity in 1975. Despite this there is still disagreement on where the border should lie.

Colonialism, Africa, and International Communism

France was the former colonial master of all West Africa, and was a staunch supporter of the previous corrupt regime, as it had gone along with their colonialist agenda of enriching the elites and robbing Africa of its resources. While it has not formally denounced our government, yet, relations are clearly strained as we continue to move away from their domination of our country. Other nations in the area have not followed out lead of liberation. The Ivory Coast is a staunch supporter of French hegemony in

the region, and their leader Félix Houphouët-Boigny is known for his aggressive anti-communist policies. In Africa, we have good relations with Gaddafi's Libya, the communist Benin, and Liberia. The Soviet Union has opened an embassy, but so far we haven't sought out close relation with the super power.

Foreign Aid

President Sankara has said, “He who feeds you, controls you.” He is completely against all forms of foreign aid believing it creates a dependency on charity. This ideology is hand in hand with his drive towards self-sufficiency in trade.

Foreign Banks

All of France's former colonies, including Burkina Faso, use the same currency, the CFA Franc (African Financial Community). The currency has fixed exchange rate of 50:1 CFA to French Franc. This fixed rate of exchange establishes a favorable environment for export to Europe and makes foreign investment in West Africa more suitable. Although the president has directed the country's industry toward self-sufficiency, the infrastructure and financial climate of the nation is arguably more disposed toward an export-centric economy. Although many trans-national are unwilling to develop production and markets in a communist country, there may be greater interest should some of the country's stringent labor laws be relaxed. Courting foreign markets and issuing bonds have also been suggested as remedies to the presently stagnated economy.



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Before moving on:

Apologies from the ODUMUNC staff.

There was an inconstancy between the positions in the issue brief and those assigned (listed in parentheses). For preparation purposes please refer to the titles listed first.

Characters

- **Lieutenant Bayala Alain, Minister of Trade and Labor (Minister of the Public Service, Labor and Social Security)**

The support from the workers of the labor unions and farmers in the field was crucial to our revolution, and in line with that trust it is this Ministries duty to act as a relay between the people and the government, as well as; keep these groups in line if they begin to waiver in their commitment to the revolution. Lieutenant Alain is also responsible for managing the external trade of country, monitoring the border for smuggling, collecting tariffs, and inspecting import and exports, so acting as a de facto border guard.

- **Dayo Bakary, Minister of the Treasury (Minister of the Economy, Finance and Development)**

Burkina's finance are in ruin. The series of coups that has rocked the country hasn't helped our economy grow, and the ensuing chaos caused taxes to be left uncollected on many occasion. Records of who owns and owes what have largely been destroyed or lost in the years of confusion, and it commonly understood that the wealth large land owners, chiefs, and prominent business men are hoarding wealth from the state. A fervent Marxist determined to redistribute wealth from the haves to the have nots, and thus fulfilling the promise of the revolution. This ministry has full control of the treasury and tax collection services. It can also institute and execute its own initiatives on tax policy and has the power to direct funds to particular projects, but needs committee approval for large initiative scale reforms.

- **Alain Bayala, Minister of Energy, Mines, and Factories (Minister of Energy, Mines and Quarries)**

The industry of Burkina Faso is orientated towards the extraction of resources and cash crops for shipment back to France. Minister Alain's responsibility are some of the vastest in the Council. The creation of a domestic manufacturing base, and the mining of critical resources, especially from the *Agacher Strip*, are all crucial for reviving Burkina Faso's economy. Some advise this Ministry to nationalization of the few large factories and mine, since they are owned by the government's opponents: wealthy capitalists, former colonial collaborates, and foreign investors. This would allow us to use the property for public use, but we should be wary of backlash. Either way this ministry has been authorized to nationalized some of these possessions, but would need council approval for large scale actions, and manage the existing state industry.

- **Mariam Blati, Minister of National Education and Literacy**

Every Marxist pamphlet requires the education of the people so they know when they are being cheated; with our history of colonialism, corruption, and capitalist exploitation this is truer than most. Just as important is ideological instruction, which will help the people understand our polices and the looming threat of exploitive capitalism. Minister Blati is required to remedy this, increasing adult literacy and



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achieving almost universal youth literacy. Though local communities have been instructed to construct local schools few have done so, and many are refusing to allow women to enter. Funding has been allocated to allow the recruitment of “Revolutionary Teachers” to recruit passionate youths to go out and provide basic education to the farmers, but the program has just started and still does not have clear direction.

- **Capitan Blaise Compaoré, Minister of State (Minister of Foreign Affairs and Burkinabes Abroad)**

At the right hand of Comrade President Sankara is revolutionary and Minister of State Blaise Compaoré. Compaoré was one of the members of the Communist Officer’s Group, and studied with President Sankara at the military academy. He was crucial in the planning of the revolution that brought the current government to power. Compaoré has repeatedly proven himself as someone who understands the dealings of the state at the highest levels and is considered an important friend and ally of the President. The foreign affairs of Burkina Faso are still fluid, and it will be critical to gain full international recognition as well as attendance in the United Nations.

- **Lieutenant Samira Daouda, Minister of Public Communication and Propaganda (Minister of Culture)**

Burkina Faso is a young country, but the people who live here have a long and proud history that the people must know of. The history of the mighty Mossi Kingdoms that ruled this area should be known far and wide to bring a sense of pride to the people. They should also know of international Communism’s struggle against the evils of capitalism; this will help them understand their government’s course of action, and aid us in our fight against those enemy capitalist agents still residing in our midst. To this end control of all public and private broadcasting equipment has been turned over to this Ministry, not in other public use. In addition to these roles it is this Ministry’s duty to censor any counter-revolutionary slander published, and to monitor the communications of anyone suspected of betraying the state.

- **Akua Germain, Minister of Revolutionary Justice**

A former court secretary who distinguished herself as a fierce supporter of Sankara and a fiery Marxist, Ms. Germain was specially placed in her position to pursue justice against those who have and will exploit the people. With authority over the courts, including the Popular Revolutionary Tribunals, and their staff Germain has all the necessary tools to file charges against any who exploit the people.

- **Capitan Kaboré Issoufou, Minister of the Interior (Minister of Territorial Administration and Internal Security)**

In charge of domestic peace and tranquility the Ministry of the Interior is charged with maintaining the peace and security of the state, and that our internal enemies do not inhibit the will of the people. Capitan Issoufou is in command of all police and investigative units in the country, and is responsible for the new Popular Revolutionary Tribunals, though neither is particularly well organized or well supplied. This Ministry has the power to run these organizations how it chooses, and can arrest and detain individuals it deems a threat to order.

- **Aicha Kouakou, Minister of Agriculture, Water, Sanitation, & Food Security (Minister of the environment)**



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Food security and agriculture are one of the most important issues to the common people, most of whom work as farmers, and President Sankara, who is determined to achieve food self-sufficiency for the country. As such this Ministry will be expected to execute the committee's policies and create their own. Responsible for general food distribution across the country, organizing what will be planted (since this is a command economy), how it will be irrigated, and the large-scale importation and exportation of food, this Ministry is to blame or praised if the common people are fed or starve.

- **Major Jean-Baptiste Lingani, Minister of Popular Defense Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the Popular Armed Forces (Sahel Region Regional Defense Committee Commander)**

Major Jean-Baptiste Lingani serves the state in the capacity of Popular Defense Minister and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Lingani was also one of the members of the Communist Officer's Group along with Compaoré. A trusted advisor and friend to the President, Lingani has full authority to assign and dispose troops as he sees fit. The military is one of the few institutions that has been well taken care through the years of trouble and it was their action that deposed the former regime.

- **Cyrille Touré, Minister of Health (Minister of Women Affairs, National Solidarity and the Family)**

Burkina Faso has a terrible lack of even basic medical services. With some the of the world's highest mother and infant mortality rates during child birth, occasion malaria pandemics due to a lack of mosquito nets, and deadly dysentery due to dirty drinking water, the common people are under constant threat. If we are to become a truly great nation we must solve these issues. This Ministry it charged with acquiring the supplies and trained staff that the country needs, from whatever source possible, to treat these threats. This Ministry has the power to import any supplies and staff needed to support their efforts, no questions asked, and is authorized to begin construction of facilities throughout the country. Mr. Issoufou is one of the few members of the previous government who was kept on, and though some question his loyalties, he is believed to be one of the few people who can tackle this crisis.

- **Malo Yacouba, Minister of Infrastructure (Minister of Commerce, Industries and Crafts)**

Our county is vast, roughly the size of the US state of Nevada, but most never go more than a few miles from where they were born. If we are to be a united nation, who's economy is more than groupings derelict farms, we need functioning road, rail, and power infrastructure that bring the people together. President Sankara's vision of a great reservoirs to store rain water to save the country from drought and the dream of a united power grid are all expensive projects that we do not have the supplies or technical expertise to being building on these projects. For the public good Minister Yacouba has the power to draft civilians into public works projects, as long as they are paid something and provided for, he also has access to several state-owned factories currently used for masonry and brick production.

- **Aristide Dagano, Minister of Revolutionary Progress**

Threats to the people's revolution abound, to maintain our newly won liberty we need individuals to keep a watchful eye on those who would intend to harm it. Similar to the representatives on mission or political commissars of old, this Ministry is in charge of maintaining the revolutionary spirit of the people, and the



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detection and removal of elements that would seek to undermine our country's ideals. Though a small organization this Ministry has sweeping authority like few others. It is capable of issuing its own search, seizure, and arrest warrants, among others, and has the authority to send its representatives to all parts of the country and government in order to fulfill its duty.

- **Alain Baongo, Minister of Youth, Training and Professional Evolution**

The future of our country lies in its peoples, and this Ministry is charged with molding this future through programs aimed at improving the long-term productivity of the population. Possibly the most intellectual of all the Ministries, the YTPE often conducts studies and surveys to inform the government of policies to follow and the people's reaction. They host training courses for new industry, coordinating communal labor on occasion, and providing oversight to the country's youth group, the Pioneers of the Revolution, administering their agenda, staff, and funding, this organization aims at ensuring the long term prosperity of the Burkinabe.



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