

Struggle for a Bright Future

August 4, 1983

On May 17, 1983, Sankara, Jean-Baptiste Lingani, and others were arrested in a coup organized by President Ouédraogo and senior military officers in the Council for the Salvation of the People. Thousands took to the streets of Ouagadougou in response, demanding freedom for Sankara. Sankara and Lingani were released from prison and placed under house arrest on May 30. Capt. Blaise Compaoré and 250 others marched on Ouagadougou on August 4, freed Sankara and Lingani from house arrest, and overthrew the Ouédraogo regime. Sankara, as president of the new National Council of the Revolution, broadcast the following radio address in French to the people of Upper Volta at 10:00 p.m. on the evening of August 4, 1983. It is translated from a transcription of the broadcast.

People of Upper Volta!

Soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers of the national army, together with paramilitary forces, today once again were obliged to intervene into the running of state affairs so as to restore independence and liberty to our country and dignity to our people.

In reality, the patriotic and progressive objectives that brought the Council for the Salvation of the People (CSP) to power on November 7, 1982, were betrayed six months later on May 17, 1983, by individuals vehemently opposed to the Voltaic people's interests and aspirations toward democracy and liberty.

You know who these individuals are who fraudulently wormed their way into the history of our people. They revealed themselves in pitiful fashion first by their two-faced policies and later by their open alliance with all those conservative and reactionary forces who are capable of nothing more than serving the interests of the enemies of the people, the interests of foreign domination and neocolonialism.

Today, August 4, 1983, soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers from all the different military branches and units, motivated

by patriotism, decided to sweep away this unpopular regime — a groveling regime of subjugation established on May 17, 1983, by Comdr. Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo under the leadership of Col. Gabriel Somé Yoryan and his thugs.

Today, August 4, 1983, the patriotic and progressive soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers have thus cleansed the honor of our people and their army and have restored to them their dignity, enabling them to enjoy once again the esteem and respect enjoyed at home and abroad by everyone from Upper Volta during the period from November 7, 1982, to May 17, 1983.

To achieve this honorable goal, the goal of dignity, true independence, and progress for Upper Volta and its people, those involved in the present movement of the Voltaic armed forces have learned the bitter lessons of the experience with the CSP.

On this day, August 4, 1983, we are establishing the National Council of the Revolution (CNR), which will assume state power from this moment on, replacing the regime of the phantom CSP headed by Comdr. Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, who had already arbitrarily dissolved it.

People of Upper Volta! The National Council of the Revolution calls on every single one of you, man or woman, young or old, to mobilize your active support behind it and be vigilant. We invite the Voltaic people to form Committees for the Defense of the Revolution everywhere in order to fully participate in the CNR's great patriotic struggle and to prevent our enemies here and abroad from harming our people. Political parties are, of course, herewith dissolved.¹

On the international plane, the National Council of the Revolution pledges to respect all agreements between our country and others. Likewise, it maintains Upper Volta's membership in regional, continental, and international organizations.

The National Council of the Revolution is not directed against any country, state, or people. It proclaims its solidarity with all other peoples and its will to live in peace and friendship with all countries, in particular with Upper Volta's neighboring countries.

The basic purpose and main objective of the CNR is to defend the interests of the Voltaic people and fulfill their aspirations toward liberty, genuine independence, and economic and social progress.

People of Upper Volta: forward with the National Council of the Revolution in the great patriotic struggle for a bright future for our country!

Homeland or death, we will triumph!

Long live the Voltaic people!
Long live the National Council of the Revolution!

Notes

1. While the bourgeois parties were banned with the taking of power, organizations of the left began to function openly.