

Who Are the Enemies of the People?

March 26, 1983

Thomas Sankara spoke to a rally of several thousand people in Ouagadougou on March 26, 1983. At the time, Sankara was prime minister of the Council for the Salvation of the People. The CSP, headed by President Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo, had been established following a November 1982 coup. This speech is translated from Carrefour africain, April 1, 1983.

Thank you for having gathered here at this January 3 Square. I congratulate you for responding to the call of the Council for the Salvation of the People (CSP) because by doing this you have shown that the people of Upper Volta are a mighty people.

When the people stand up, imperialism trembles. As it watches us, imperialism is worried. It trembles. Even now imperialism is wondering how to break the ties being forged between the CSP and the people. Imperialism is trembling. It is trembling with fear because here in this very town of Ouagadougou we are going to bury it.

I congratulate you for coming to show those who disparage us, inside and outside the country, that they are wrong. They misjudged us. They thought they could stop the CSP's march toward the people with their maneuvers aimed at brainwashing and intimidating. But you are here. You have shown that the opposite is true. And imperialism trembles and will tremble even more.

People of Upper Volta, represented by the town of Ouagadougou, thank you — thank you for giving us the opportunity to give you truthful information, information that comes from the people.

What is our purpose here?

Our purpose is to tell you exactly what our enemies want, what the CSP wants, and what you, the people, have a right to. The people love liberty and democracy and will thus combat all enemies of liberty and democracy.

But who are these enemies of the people? They are to be found both here at home and abroad. At this very moment they are trembling, but you must expose them. You must drive them back into their holes. The enemies of the people here inside the country are all those who have illicitly taken advantage of their social position and their place in the bureaucracy to enrich themselves. By means of bribery, maneuvers, and forged documents they have become shareholders in different companies. They are now involved in financing businesses and obtaining approval for this or that enterprise — in the guise of helping Upper Volta. These are the enemies of the people. They must be exposed. They must be combated. We will combat them with you.

Who are the enemies of the people? They are that group of bourgeois who enrich themselves dishonestly through fraud and bribery, through the corruption of state officials, so that they can bring all kinds of products into Upper Volta, increasing the price tenfold. These are the enemies of the people. This section of the bourgeoisie must be fought against, and we will fight against it.

Who are the enemies of the people? They are the men in politics who travel through the countryside exclusively at election time. These politicians are convinced that only they can make our country work. The CSP, however, is convinced that Upper Volta's seven million people represent seven million political beings capable of leading this country. These enemies of the people must be exposed and combated. We will combat them with you.

The enemies of the people are likewise those who keep us in ignorance. Under the cover of spiritual guidance and tradition, they exploit the people instead of serving their real spiritual needs and their real social interests. They must be fought against, and we will fight them.

Let me ask you: do you like these enemies of the people, yes or no?

[Shouts of "No!"]

Do you like them?

[Shouts of "No!"]

So we must fight them.

Will you fight them here at home?

[Shouts of "Yes!"]

On with the fight!

The enemies of the people are also beyond our borders. Their base is among unpatriotic people here in our midst at every level of our society — civilian and military men, men and women, old and young,

in town and country alike. These enemies from abroad — neo-colonialism, imperialism — are among us.

From its base among these stateless men, those who have rejected their homeland, who have rejected Upper Volta, who have, in fact, rejected the people of Upper Volta, this enemy abroad is organizing a series of attacks. These will come in two stages. First will come the nonviolent and then the violent stage.

At this moment, we are living through the nonviolent stage. This enemy abroad — imperialism, neocolonialism — is attempting to sow confusion in the minds of the Voltaic people. According to their newspapers, radios, and televisions Upper Volta is all fire and blood.

Well, you are here, people of Upper Volta. Your presence proves that imperialism is wrong and that its lies will never stick. You are here. You are here and on your feet. It is imperialism's turn to tremble today.

A foreign journalist in a faraway country, sitting in his swivel chair in an air-conditioned office, dared to report that the CSP's informational meetings have failed. Have they failed? You are here, answer me.

[*Shouts of "No!"*]

Have they failed?

[*Shouts of "No!"*]

I hope that imperialism can hear you answer no. Say it again. Have they failed?

[*Shouts of "No!"*]

You see, imperialism is wrong. But imperialism is a bad student. Even though it's been defeated, though it's been sent out of the classroom, it comes back again. It's a bad student. Imperialism never draws the lessons from its failures. It's down in South Africa cutting African throats — just because Africans there are thinking about freedom, as you are today. Imperialism is down there crushing the Arab peoples — that's Zionism.

Imperialism is everywhere, making us think like it, submit to it, and go along with its maneuvers by spreading its culture far and wide with the help of misinformation. We must bar the road to this imperialism.

As I said, it will proceed to a violent stage. It is this imperialism that landed troops in certain countries we know. Imperialism armed those who are killing our brothers in South Africa. Imperialism again is the assassin of the Lumumbas, Cabrals, and Kwame Nkrumahs.

But I'll tell you something, in fact I'll promise you — because I have confidence in you and you have confidence in the CSP — that

thanks to the education we will give our people, when this imperialism comes here we will bury it. We will bury it right here. Ouagadougou will be its *bolibana* — the end of the road for imperialism.

Imperialism is using its more subtle methods to try to sow division within the Council for the Salvation of the People. Already it has managed to create anxiety and fear in the minds of the people. But we are not afraid. For the first time in Upper Volta something fundamental is happening, something completely new. Until now, the people have never had the power to establish political democracy. While the army has always had the possibility of taking power, it has never wanted democracy.

For the very first time we see an army that wants both power and democracy, and that is genuinely seeking to ally with the people. For the first time, too, we see the masses come out in impressive numbers and reach out to the army. We believe this army, which is taking the destiny of the Voltaic people in its hands, is the people's army. This is why I welcome the placards here that talk of the people's army.

In order to weaken us, our enemies at home and abroad rely on a certain number of factors. I'll mention some and leave you to complete the list. They would have us believe that the CSP is blocking the normal functioning of the state machinery because we've made some decisions to the detriment of certain civil service executives. We have taken such decisions because we think that there are those who, at this stage of the revolution, cannot keep pace. There are functionaries who don't come into the office till 9:00 a.m. and leave again at 10:30 a.m. to go to their orchards and watch over their villas. Is this the way it should be?

Our enemies claim we are blocking the state's functioning when we get rid of these kinds of functionaries. But who is afraid of whom?

We are with the people. They are against the people. The decisions we take will be decisions against the enemies of the people, since they will be for the people — the militant people of Upper Volta. Are you in favor of keeping these corrupt functionaries in our administration?

[Shouts of "No!"]

So we must chase them out. We will chase them out.

Are you in favor of maintaining these corrupt men in our army?

[Shouts of "No!"]

So we must drive them out and we will.

This may well cost us our lives, but part of our job is to take risks and dare to act, and you are here to continue the fight at all costs.

Our enemies say that the Council for the Salvation of the People is preparing to carry out nationalizations, that we are about to confiscate their property. Who is afraid of whom?

If you take a walk around Ouagadougou and make a list of the mansions you see, you will note that they belong to just a minority. How many of you who have been assigned to Ouagadougou from the farthest corners of the country have had to move every night because you've been thrown out of the house you have rented? And every day, the owner raises the price a little more. There will be no problems for those who have acquired their houses by regular means, they need not be worried. But to those who have acquired houses and land through corruption we say: start to tremble. If you have stolen, tremble, because we will come after you. Not only will the CSP come after you, but the people themselves will take care of you — yes or no?

[Shouts of "Yes!"]

Honest citizens, have no fear, even if you own 1,000 villas. But you, the dishonest, even if you own only a tiny two-room place in a run-down part of town, start to tremble, because the CSP is coming! We didn't come this far only to stop halfway along such a promising road. We are not here to sell out or betray the people.

They say we want to carry out nationalizations. The CSP does not understand and will never understand, just as you, too, will never understand, how certain people can come and set themselves up in Upper Volta, start an enterprise for which they've been granted favors — all kinds of tax exemptions — on the pretext of creating jobs and contributing to the economic development of the country and then, after a certain number of years of the most brazen exploitation, announce personnel cuts.

On what conditions were you granted these favors? On the condition that you create jobs for the Voltaic people. Today, when you've squeezed the lemon dry, you want to throw it away.

No! To this we say no!

Our enemies say that we have proclaimed freedom of expression and of the press only to begin to restrict this freedom. As Comrade Jean-Baptiste Lingani said earlier — and presently Comrade Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo will say it better than I can — in no way do we wish to put an end to freedom. But we say that the freedom to criticize brings with it the freedom to protest. And freedom for honest men should not mean freedom for the dishonest. We will strip the

liberties of those who use the freedoms created by the CSP to attack the CSP and, in that way, to attack the Voltaic people. We will take away their freedom to harm the people and leave them free to serve the people. We cannot allow the freedom to lie to and brainwash the collective consciousness of the Voltaic people. This would be to work against the interests of the masses of Upper Volta.

They have also said that certain elements from the CSP, like Capt. Thomas Sankara, have been to Libya and Korea, and that this is dangerous for our country.

Well, people of Upper Volta, here is something to think about: Libya has never done anything to harm us; Korea has never exploited Upper Volta; Libya has never attacked us. But we know of countries that have attacked Upper Volta, that have put our parents in prison. Our grandparents died on the battlefield for these countries. We cooperate with them and no one complains.

Sangoulé [Lamizana] went to Libya. Saye Zerbo has been to Libya and Korea — why didn't anyone complain? There is dishonesty involved here somewhere. Yesterday, preparations were made for a visit by Saye Zerbo to see Muammar el-Qaddafi in one of Qaddafi's planes. They've been publicizing this. And yet when we go to Libya today, they complain.

But we went to Libya in a responsible and intelligent manner! We went to Libya after Qaddafi had sent us three delegations. We told the Libyan leaders that we had nothing against Libya, but that we have positions of our own — that we are not virgins when it comes to ideology. We said we were ready to collaborate with Libya, but that we were also prepared to express — in a responsible way — any disagreements we may have with Libya. We decided to go only after receiving three delegations. And we established concrete conditions in line with the needs of the Voltaic people.

When cement starts to arrive from Tripoli, which we will be able to sell at a good price, will the people be pleased or not?

[*Shouts of "Yes!"*]

Why should we not go and negotiate with Qaddafi if we want his cement? When we negotiate deals worth two to three million CFA francs¹ with certain countries, they talk about it on the radio. The deal with Qaddafi is worth 3.5 billion CFA francs. Are you pleased — yes or no?

[*Shouts of "Yes!"*]

Our people like cooperation between states that respect their peoples. The people of Upper Volta don't want anyone to tell them what path they should take. To those who attempt to housebreak us or

tyrannize us in the area of diplomatic matters, we say no! We are free to go where we wish.

And I'll tell you something — a secret — but don't repeat it to the imperialists. Those who reproach us because we went to Libya have developed their countries with Qaddafi's dollars. Do they think they are shrewder than we are? Why do they deal with Qaddafi? Who is shrewder than whom?

We will go anywhere in the interests of the Voltaic masses. We have seen the social achievements in Libya — schools, hospitals, houses — all free.

How has Libya managed to carry out this social investment? Because of oil, yes, but this oil existed under the former regime of King Idriss. It was exploited by the imperialists and for the benefit of the king. The people drew absolutely no benefit from it. Today, Libyans have free houses and asphalt roads. If we could transform Upper Volta tomorrow the way Qaddafi has transformed Libya would you be pleased, yes or no?

[*Shouts of "Yes!"*]

So by drawing on the good sides of other countries that we deal with, we are simply carrying out our policy of diplomatic independence and applying one of the CSP's rules — to work for the good of the people.

There is no shame in getting on one's knees if it is in the interests of the people. At this very moment, as we address you, we know there are those in the crowd who would very much like to shoot us. These are the risks we take, convinced that it is in the interests of the people. So we say to these people: "Shoot!" And when you shoot, your bullets will turn back and hit you. This is what we call the triumph of the people over its enemies. Today, we speak with the force of our people, not just our own force.

The enemies of the people say that certain factions of the Council for the Salvation of the People view this or that country favorably, or are in such and such a camp, the pro-Western camp, and so on. We say that we are against no one's camp. We are rather for all camps. We repeated this at New Delhi before the Nonaligned nations: we are for all the camps, and we say, too, that he who loves his own people also loves other peoples. We love the Voltaic people, the Nicaraguan people, the people of Algeria, Libya, Ghana, Mali, and all other peoples.

Those who do not love their own people do not love the Voltaic people. Those who are worried today by the transformations occurring in Upper Volta do not love their people. They impose their will

through dictatorships and police operations against their people. We are not like that.

They say we have a certain admiration for Flight Lt. Jerry Rawlings. Rawlings is a man! Every man must have friends and enemies. If Rawlings has admirers in Upper Volta, whose fault is that? It is imperialism's fault. They have created a situation in Ghana that forced those now in power to fight for the interests of the people of Ghana. When Ghana was prosperous, we in Upper Volta had no qualms about taking full advantage of their prosperity. Today, when Ghana has difficulties, why would we turn our backs?

No, we are sincere. The people maintain their affection. Individuals may perhaps betray, but peoples do not betray each other. The people of Ghana need the Voltaic people, and we need them.

When Rawlings closed his borders,² they protested. They don't like Rawlings. He closes his borders, stays at home, and they protest?

Well, Ghana can impose nothing on us nor we on it. Rawlings can't give us lessons, nor we him. However, when he says "No way for *kalabule!*" — no to corruption — he says something that is in the interests of the people of Ghana and of all other peoples. The Voltaic people, too, are against corruption.

The enemies of the CSP also say that we are "reds," that is, communists. That gives us a great deal of satisfaction, because it proves that our enemies are in disarray — that they have lost their bearings and no longer know what to say or do. We have done nothing of a communist nature here. We have simply called for cleaning things up, social justice, liberty, and democracy.

When we took the decision to quash the ordinance issued by the Military Committee for the Enhancement of National Progress forbidding the opening of bars at certain times, we heard the Voltaic people say: we have our interests, and we prefer these folks in the CSP, whether they're red or green, communists or not. This is what it means to be close to the masses. It's not the label that counts.

They call us communists to frighten the people. They accuse us of being communists and then tell you that communism is bad. We have no intention of telling you that communism is good or bad. We have only one intention — to tell you what concrete actions we will take, with you and for you, regardless of what label is pinned on them.

The enemies of the people also say that we are attacking foreigners. No. We love all foreigners, those who are here today and those who will come in the future. We take as a given that they love the Voltaic people. We don't assume they are here to exploit us.

The CSP intends to create, together with you, the conditions for mobilization and work. We want the people to organize themselves for work and for the battle we are going to wage.

We know, for example, that certain regions of Upper Volta, such as Orodara, have been very successful at growing fruits and vegetables. We know too that in these regions the produce rots because of the lack of means to transport it. So we think that the people should be mobilized in Orodara to build landing strips so that planes can come in. The mangoes will reach Ouagadougou and Dori and that will be good for the people of Upper Volta.

This is the kind of work we're talking about. Every day now we should be beginning large-scale construction projects, and we want you to mobilize massively to carry them out. We want to build a monument in Ouagadougou — a people's theater. We'll build similar things in every region, relying on our youth. You will build them in order to prove that you are capable of transforming your existence and the concrete conditions you live in. You don't need us to go looking for foreign moneylenders to do this. You only need us to grant you liberty and rights. This will be done.

In addition, the Council for the Salvation of the People intends to put a stop to certain practices. When you arrive at a hospital with a hemorrhage or a fracture, for example, you are ignored — even if you're about to pass out — just because you're a man of the people, a worker, so that some minister or president or prime minister's cold can be treated. We will put a stop to this; we must denounce it every day.

Be confident that we will put a stop to the misappropriation of funds, speculation, and illicit enrichment. This is why we are locking up, and will continue to lock up, all those who steal money from the people.

We tell the people to be ready to fight, to be ready to take up arms and resist every time it is necessary to do so. Have no fear. Nothing will happen. The enemy knows that the Voltaic people are now mature.

They say that two years is too short a time for the transition to normal constitutional life. We say it's more than sufficient, because if you provide freedom of speech under conditions of total freedom and democracy the people will tell you what they want in thirty minutes. We don't need two years.

The CSP thanks you for your mobilization. We were right to have confidence in you and to join with you, side by side, in this fight against the enemy of the people — imperialism. This is why we

should affirm together:
Down with imperialism! Down with imperialism! Down with imperialism! Down with imperialism!

Down with the enemies of the people!

Down with the embezzlers of public funds!

Down with the fakers in Upper Volta!

Down with fakery!

Down with the predatory owls that strike in the darkness!

Down with the fence-sitting chameleons!

Down with the ravenous jackals!

Down with the cornered foxes!

Down with the wreckers!

Down with those who hide behind diplomas paid for by the sweat of the people, who are incapable of serving the people, but who use their diplomas to speak in the name of the people!

Down with those who are against the ties between the army and the people!

Down with those who are against the ties between the people and the army!

Down with those against the people who hide under various suits of clothes, black and white!

Imperialism will be buried in Upper Volta. Its lackeys will be buried in Upper Volta.

Long live Upper Volta!

Long live democracy!

Long live liberty!

Thank you. We will meet again very soon.

Notes

1. Approximately 250 CFA francs equaled one U.S. dollar in 1983.
2. Ghana closed its borders following an attempted coup on November 23, 1982.