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Thomas Sankara speaks

Pathfinder Press, 2007, 447 pages

The life of the great African hero Thomas Sankara

This is a compilation of some of the great speeches made by the great African hero, the Burkina Faso President Thomas Sankara, who between 1983 to 1987 led one of the great African revolutionary governments. Under Thomas Sankara, the revolutionary government of Burkina Faso mobilized peasants, workers, craftsmen, women and youth to carry out literacy and immunization drives to sink wells, plant trees, build dams, erect housing to combat the oppression of women and transform exploitative relations on the land to free themselves from the imperialist yoke and solidarise with others engaged in such struggles in other parts of the world such as Cuba and Nicaragua.

This book is based on speeches and interviews from 1983 until his killing in 1987. Going through the book, one is no doubt that Sankara, born in 1949, was the spokesman for Africa, Burkina Faso and the progressive forces in all parts of the world. History tells us that it was Sankara who changed the name of his country from the colonial Upper Volta to Burkina Faso, the Land of the Upright People. This was the first step he took as to liberate his peoples mind from the lingering yoke of imperialism and colonial rule. Then he began an ambitious programme of social renewal and mass sensitization.

He wanted his people to be self reliant, brave and proud. He wanted to free women from age old domination. He wanted to free the youth from the yoke of lethargy. He wanted Burkinabe to believe in themselves first and no outside power, for their development. He lived by example; modesty, participation and honesty were his hallmarks. For these reasons, the imperialist and their lackeys in Africa and Burkina feared him. He was demonized in the West. But his people loved him. And that matters most.

Hear him tell truth to his fellow African leaders at the OAU Summit in Addis in 1987 when only 16 out of 53 members Presidents bothered to attend: 'How many heads of state are present here, after being duly invited to come to discuss Africa, in Africa? How many heads of state are ready to dash off to Paris, London or Washington when called to meetings there, but are unable to attend a meeting here in Addis, in Africa? This very important.' (p.374). There was a big applause, of course.

In the same speech, he exhorted his fellow African leaders to build self reliance at home: 'My delegation and I were clothed by our peasants, our weavers. Cotton produced in

Burkina Faso, woven in Burkina Faso, sewn in Burkina Faso. Not a single thread comes from Europe or America. I am not here to put up a fashion show; I simply want to say that we should undertake to live as Africans. It is the only way to live free and to live in dignity.'(p.381). Within four years, Sankara was able to diminish the infant mortality in Burkina Faso, halt the desert's onward push, empower women, cut waste and flamboyance in national life and put his country firmly on the map of the world's progressive peoples. This is an excellent book for pan Africanist and all others who wish to see how this young man transformed a whole people's outlook and fortunes in so short a time.

<http://thepoint.gm/africa/gambia/article/thomas-sankara-speaks>