

CONFESSION OF BLAISE COMPAORÉ

*Thomas Sankara called me "his brother".
I ordered his assassination.*

And for 34 years, his ghost has haunted me. My name is Blaise Compaoré. Former President of Burkina Faso. 27 years in power. Today, I live in exile in Côte d'Ivoire. But I never sleep. Every night, I see his face. Every night, I hear his voice. Every night, I wake up screaming. Thomas. My brother. My friend. My victim. 1983: The Revolution. He was my brother. No blood. But of combat. We were young, ambitious, rebellious. We wanted to change Burkina Faso. We wanted to change Africa. We wanted to change the world. On August 4, 1983, we took power together. He was Thomas Sankara. The tribune. The visionary. The one who inflamed the crowds. I was Blaise. The organizer. The one who remained in the shadows. Together, we were invincible. I thought so. The first few months were magical. Thomas was talking. And the people listened, open-mouthed. "Fatherland or death, we will win!" His speeches were poems. Punches. Calls for dignity. He sold the ministers' official cars. He forbade corruption. He planted trees. He vaccinated millions of children. He gave land to the peasants. Burkina was shining. The whole world was watching this little country, this little man, this great leader. I watched the shadow grow. And I was starting to get scared. 1987: The Crack. I don't know exactly when jealousy started eating away at me. Maybe when the journalists talked about him, never about me. Maybe when the ambassadors courted him, they just shook my hand. Maybe when the people chanted his name, and mine was lost in the noise. Thomas was the light. I was the shadow. And the shadow, one day, wanted to exist. "Friends" came to whisper in my ear: "Blaise, he's getting dangerous." He wants to go too fast. He's going to make us quarrel with everyone. "Blaise, France is worried. He speaks too loudly against imperialism. "Blaise, Houphouët-Boigny doesn't like him." Côte d'Ivoire, our neighbour, our ally... You're going to lose everyone. "Blaise, we must act." For the country. For stability. For you. French "friends" too. In air-conditioned offices. With files. Promises. Thinly veiled threats. "Compaoré, if you don't do anything, we won't be able to support you anymore."

I listened. And I began to prepare for the irreparable. October 15, 1987: The Day I Killed My Brother. I look back on that date as if it were yesterday. The Council of the Entente. An ordinary meeting. Thomas was there, smiling, confident. My hands were sweaty. The pounding



heart. Shortness of breath. The men were in place. Commandos. Soldiers. Those I had chosen, trained, armed. At 3 p.m., the shots broke out. I heard the detonations. I heard the screams. I heard the silence afterwards. Then the phone rang. "It is done." He's dead. I hung up. I stood still, staring blankly. I had just killed my brother. My friend. My companion in the struggle. That night, I didn't cry. I was too busy taking power, controlling the media, reassuring embassies, lying to the people. Thomas' body was burned. Scattered. Without a grave. Without

a burial. Without goodbye. So that no one can come and meditate. So that his memory disappears with his ashes. But memory does not burn. The years of power: the illusion. For 27 years, I reigned over Burkina Faso. People said: "Blaise is a wise man. A unifier. A man of dialogue." They didn't know. They didn't know that every night, Thomas came to visit me. In my dreams, he looked me straight in the eye. "Why, Blaise?" Why? I would wake up sweating. I drank. I was taking medication. Nothing helped. So I toughened up. I tightened the screws. I muzzled the media. I silenced the opponents. I said to myself: "This is for the country. It's for stability." But it was for me. To survive my own crime. I ruled like a kinglet. Distributing favors. Buying support. Playing the balance. For 27 years, I held on. But Thomas was still there. In the eyes of mothers. In the songs of the griots. In conversations in a low voice. The Burkinabè did not forget. They were waiting.

2014: The Fall On October 30, 2014, the people rose up. One million people in the streets of Ouagadougou. A million voices chanting: "Blaise, get out!" Blaise, get out! And in the crowd, portraits of Thomas. Everywhere. Thousands of portraits. With his glasses, his beret, his smile.

He had returned. I went into exile. Precipitately. Without even taking the time to take my belongings with me. As I left the palace, I saw a young girl holding up a picture of Thomas. She was 15 years old. She wasn't born when he died. But she knew him. She loved him. She was shouting his name. I had reigned for 27 years. No one was shouting my name. I understood, at that moment, the most terrible lesson: You can kill a man. You don't kill your idea. Thomas was more alive in the heart of this teenager than I, an old dictator on the run, with my suitcases full of stolen money. Exile: the ghost that does not die. Today, I live in Abidjan. Protected. Comfortable. But at night, I

don't sleep. Every time I close my eyes, I see the Council of the Entente chamber. I hear the gunshots. I see Thomas fall. I see his body being carried away. I see the smoke from the pyre rising to the sky. And his voice, this voice that I loved so much, which whispers to me: "Why, Blaise?" My daughter sometimes asks me: "Dad, why do you scream at night?" I don't answer. I can't. How do you explain to your daughter that you are haunted by the ghost of your murdered best friend? The doctors say I have nightmares. They call it "post-traumatic stress". I know. These are not nightmares. It's Thomas. Coming back. Every night. For 34 years. He doesn't hit me. He doesn't threaten me. He's just looking at me. With his calm eyes. And he asks me: "Why?" And I still don't have an answer. The Trial: Judging the Living Dead. In 2021, 34 years after his death, the trial of the assassination of Thomas Sankara began. I was tried in absentia. Me and my accomplices. For weeks, the world has been listening to the testimonies. The survivors. Families. The experts. The truth, at last, came out. That day, from Abidjan, I watched television. I have seen Burkinabè crying as they tell of their stolen revolution. I saw young people who were not born in 1987 wearing t-shirts with the image of Thomas. I have seen an entire people demand justice. And I understood that my crime would never be forgiven. The verdict is in: life imprisonment. A symbolic sentence. I'm old. I'm sick. I will never go back to Burkina Faso. But I'm already in hell. For 34 years.



What I learned, too late. If I could go back, if I could talk to the Blaise of 1987, the one who listened to the advice of "friends", the one who was afraid of his brother's shadow, this is what I would say to him: 1. Jealousy is a double-edged sword. I wanted to come out of the shadows. I got out of it. To become what? A hated, hunted, condemned dictator. Thomas, on the other hand, has remained in the spotlight. Eternally. Loved. Respected. Celebrated. Who won, in the end? 2. Those who push you to betray are not your friends. The "friends" who advised me to eliminate Thomas, where are they today? Disappeared. Quiet. Innocent. I alone bear the weight of the crime. They sleep peacefully. 3. You can kill the body, not the idea. I burned Thomas. Scattered his ashes. Erased his tracks. But today, his name is in every street, every school, every heart. And I'm a name that is forgotten, a face that is erased, a ghost that hangs around. 4. Power without legitimacy is a gilded prison. I had power for 27 years. Palaces. Planes. Bank accounts. But I never had peace. Every day, every night,

every minute, I knew that this power was stolen on my brother's blood.

5. There is no justice, there are only accounts. Men believe that they can escape justice. Change country. Change your name. Buy avocados. But there is a justice that cannot be bought.

That of his own conscience. The one that judges you every night, without appeal, without mercy.

The message I want to leave for you. You, young African, who read these words.

You who have ambitions. You who want to succeed. You who meet people on your way who wish you well... or evil. Don't make my mistake. Don't betray for power. Do not listen to those who urge you to eliminate your brother. Do not think that money and honors are worth more than peace of mind. Look at me. I've had it all. Power. Money. Honors. And today, I have nothing. Nothing but nightmares and remorse. Thomas, on the other hand, has lost everything. His life. His family. His country. And yet, he is the winner. Because 34 years after his death, his name is still being sung. Because 34 years after his death,

15-year-old girls are holding up his portrait. Because 34 years after his death, he is more alive than ever. I'm a living dead. He is alive for eternity. The Last Night. Tonight, like every night, Thomas will come. He will enter my room without knocking. He will sit at the foot of my bed. He will look at me with his calm eyes. And he will ask me: "Why, Blaise?" And I, like every night, will be

speechless. Because there is no answer. Because there is no forgiveness. Because there is no rest for those who betray. Then I will scream. I will cry. I will beg. But Thomas will stay there. Quiet. Until dawn. And tomorrow, it will start again. Until my last night. The one where I will finally join him. And where I will have to explain to him. But I still won't have an answer. If you want to know the whole story of Thomas Sankara, understand how leadership can change a country, and especially how to avoid betrayals that destroy African dreams... I will send you the link to download "LEADERSHIP AT THE HEART OF GOVERNANCE AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN AFRICA" by Laurent COMBOIGO. So that you know that power without integrity is just a golden prison. So that you never betray your brothers. So that you stay in the light.

Blaise Compaoré (Former President of Burkina Faso. Story reported in "Leadership at the heart of governance and entrepreneurship in Africa" by Laurent COMBOIGO, pages 231-233)