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**Burkina Faso: more moderate rule expected from coup leader. Compaore likely to have better ties with neighbors than Sankara did**

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**By Kathy Koch, Special to The Christian Science Monitor October 19, 1987**

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Abidjan, Ivory Coast — The new government in Burkina Faso is expected to be more democratic than its predecessor, and its leader will probably get along better with neighboring West African heads of state. That is the general assessment of diplomats and African business sources of what to expect from the government of Capt. Blaise Compaore, the deputy leader who led a coup last Thursday. Charismatic and outspoken President Thomas Sankara was killed in the coup. The new ruler, they say, has a much more reserved style, and is reportedly more inclined toward public debate of national policy.

As Sankara's second in command, Captain Compaore had been considered moderate, and he has already released some political prisoners and reinstated teachers fired during a 1984 strike. Compaore also has a close personal friendship with the powerful elder statesman of the region, Ivory Coast President F'elix Houphou"et-Boigny. Burkina Faso depends heavily on remittances of some 2 million Burkinabe working in Ivory Coast.

``The news of the coup was favorably received here,'' said a Western diplomat in Abidjan. ``The people here think Compaore may be less pro-Qaddafi, less anti-West, and more favorably disposed to the principles espoused by Houphou"et.''

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Mr. Houphou"et, who has been President of Ivory Coast for 27 years, is a conservative pro-business leader who has always retained close ties with the French, his country's former colonizers. Captain Sankara, who came to power in a 1983 coup, had alienated the French and many West African neighbors with his revolutionary, anti-imperialist rhetoric, and his friendship with the radical left-wing leaders of Ghana and Libya.

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West Africa's more conservative leaders feared that Sankara's growing popularity would radicalize young Africans in the region, who were attracted by his immense personal charisma, seen here as a ``Mr. Clean'' image, and his populist national self-reliance programs. Neighboring officials were embarrassed in 1986 when Sankara - after a highly-publicized trial by a Burkinabe ``people's tribunal'' - imprisoned former Malian, Senegalese, and Ivorian officials of the regional West African economic community for embezzlement.

The United States, although wary of Sankara's relationship with Libya's Col. Muammar Qaddafi and of his state visit to the Soviet Union last October, nonetheless continued to fund development projects in Burkina Faso. The country is among the world's five poorest nations, and depends heavily on foreign aid.

According to radio statements and reports from Burkina Faso, Compaore and two other top-level officials under Sankara have formed the new government, which calls itself the ``Popular Front.'' They say they seized power because Sankara had become ``autocratic,'' and because his ``whimsical and immature political style'' was leading the country into political and economic chaos. Last Thursday's coup was the fifth since Burkina Faso (formerly Upper Volta) became independent from France in 1960.

Sankara had set up a Marxist-oriented National Revolutionary Council with ``Committees for the Defense of the Revolution.'' The CDRs were modeled on similar systems in Ghana, Cuba, and Libya, and have markedly reduced the influence of the formerly strong labor unions.

Sankara had stifled political dissent and imprisoned the leaders of many political parties and trade unions. He had also alienated the educated urban elite, especially civil servants, by cutting their pay and dubbing them ``enemies of the revolution.''

His initial goal was to clean out corruption. He sold off the government's fleet of Mercedes and required all officials - including himself - to open their bank statements to a public tribunal. He sought to redirect the money saved by ending corruption to the rural areas. It is not clear whether significant amounts of money ever really reached the impoverished countryside.

Although he was extremely popular at first, opposition to Sankara's regime had grown during the last year. Most of his critics, while admitting that Sankara was well-intentioned, complained that his plans were badly executed.

Among the more unpopular policies was an effort to resettle populations away from disease-infested river-bottom lands, a recent decree that civil servants should wear a pajama-like uniform made of home-grown cotton, and a requirement that government workers must donate free time to help build railroads and clean the streets.

During Sankara's rule, many private businessmen went into self-imposed exile. Among other things, they were especially unhappy with two of the President's policies: one eliminated a landlord's right to charge rent; the other eliminated interest that the banks charged on loans.

Sankara's highly publicized policies at liberating Burkinabe women were beginning to draw criticism from the nation's men. Women hold one-quarter of the ministerial portfolios, are allowed to own land, borrow money, and practice birth control.

But Sankara's effort to outlaw polygamy, which is an accepted practice in Burkina Faso, especially among the country's minority Muslim population, stirred a great deal of public debate.

``Sankara pays too much attention to women and not enough to the problems of men,'' said a Burkinabe official recently. It is not known how Sankara's precedent-setting policies toward women will fare under the new government.