

**ABOUT BURKINA FASO AND
THE AFRICAN PARTY FOR INDEPENDENCE
(PARTI AFRICAIN DE L'INDEPENDANCE – P.A.I.)**

A - ABOUT BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso is the name taken in 1984 by the country called previously Upper Volta, and which was, from 1896 to 1960 a french territory in West Africa.

Due to the change in international environment and to the struggle of the political movements and of the trade unions, all over African countries, during the fifty's period, Burkina Faso got its independence in 1960.

Burkina Faso is a country of about 274 000 km², entirely landlocked, having common boundaries with Mali in the West and in the North, Niger in the East, and Benin, Togo, Ghana and Ivory Coast in the South. Ouagadougou the capital, which is almost at the center of the country, is far from the ports of Abidjan (by railway and by road), Tema (by road) and Lomé (by road) for about 1 000 kilometers.

The climate is rather hot (25 to 45°C according to the seasons) and there mainly two seasons : the dry season from October to may, and the rainy season from June to September. The total rainfall is of an average of 700 mm per year, but it grows from 400 mm in the North-Eastern part of the country to 1 100 mm in the south-western part.

The population of the country was 14 Millions in 2 006, growing at the rate of 3%. But there have people from Burkina Faso living outside in Ivory coast (3,5 Millions), in Ghana (2 millions) and in Sudan. Urbanism is growing up and almost 24% of the population are now leaving in towns. In the two big towns of Ouagadougou (1 500 000 inhabitants) and Bobo-Dioulasso (500 000), the growth is about 8% per year, while in the secondary towns it is of about 5%.

There are three (3) major ethnic groups in Burkina Faso : the Mossi (speaking more language), who are mainly in the central part and in the north of the country, forms 55% of the population ; the dioula language is spoken by 20% of the people (ethnic groups of Bobo and assimilated, living in the western part) ; the fulani language is spoken by the Fula (10%), mainly in the north eastern part of the country.

About 80% of the population is working in agriculture and cattle breeding. The remaining are employed in services (administration, education, health, banking, transport, food services, employees, etc.) and in the secondary sector (industry, mining, construction, craftsmen, etc.).

B - HISTORY AND EVENTS IN BURKINA FASO

During the fifty's, before the independence, and in the last period of the colonial rule, there was about 6 political parties in Burkina Faso. After the country got the so-called independence on August 1960, the government decided one year later, that there will be only one party, arguing that he wanted all people gather in the same direction for the construction of the country. But this government of the first republic was thrown down by the officers of the army in January 1966, after protests of trade unions workers and secondary schools pupils against a severe cutting of the salaries decided by the government. Colonel Sangoule Lamizana became the head of state.

In 1970, the military government decided to return the power to civilians. They wrote a new Constitution (2nd Republic), where the highest ranked man in the army should be the President, and the officers should have five (5) of the most important departments in the government. The Constitution allowed the creation of political parties : about eight (8) parties were created at that time. But the military took again the power in February 1974, arguing contradictions in the largest party. General Sangoule Lamizana announced the creation of the regime of the Renewal National Movement (**Mouvement national du renouveau – MNR**).

After large protests organized in December 1975 by the trade unions, the military regime decided again to write a new Constitution and to limit at 3 the number of authorized parties after the elections. It was the 3rd Republic, which started in 1977 but failed in 1980 by a new coup d'Etat lead by Colonel Saye Zerbo who installed the CMRPN regime.

In 1982, officers lead by Commandant Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo throw down the regime of Saye Zerbo and installed the Council of People Salvation (**Conseil du salut du peuple - CSP**). One year later, after he has been arrested and after this released, Capitaine Thomas Sankara made a coup d'Etat against CSP, and proclaim the revolutionary regime of National Council of the Revolution (**Conseil national de la révolution – CNR**). But in 1987, the second leader of the regime, Capitaine Blaise Compaoré, who was also a friend of Thomas Sankara, killed him and took power, installing the regime of the People's Front (**Front populaire**). In a first time he said he wanted to deepen the revolution. But after one year, the changes he gave to the regime showed that he was willing to let the revolutionary way.

In 1990, Blaise Compaoré decided that Burkina Faso should be ruled by a new democratic Constitution. He sat a Commission for the Constitution or 114 members, among which 12 members representing parties working with the People's Front, 4 members representing the PAI, 16 members representing the associations created by the People's Front, 10 members representing the trade unions, 2 members representing the human rights associations, about 10 members representing the advocates, the judges and the University. After many discussions, the Commission finally write a democratic project of Constitution which was adopted by referendum in June 1991. So, since 1991, Burkina Faso is under the regime of the 4th Republic.

So former Captain Blaise Compaoré, who was President of People's Front, was elected as President of Burkina Faso in 1991, 1998, and 2005. Presidential elections are again to take place in November 2010.

C - ABOUT THE AFRICAN PARTI FOR INDEPENDENCE

The PAI was founded in august 1963 by Amirou Thiombiano, a former student in Dakar and Paris, when he returned from his studies. At that time, although our country was formally independent, french imperialism continued to have a great influence on all its internal, economical and foreign policies. The PAI was established as a communist party, and its official aims were to reach :

1. real independence of Burkina Faso (Upper Volta at that time) from neocolonialism domination ;
2. democracy and socialism ;

3. progress and social justice for the people, especially for the workers and the peasants ;
4. african unity.

Due to the political situation in the country (dictatorship of the first President and neocolonialism), due also to its weakness, it was decided that the party should be non official, non legal until the conditions change. But its members were called to recruit such as new members as they can, and to be active in trade unions, or even to create new trade unions.

In 1965, the party members played a great role in the success of the big strike of December, which finally succeeded in throwing down the regime of the first Republic of Maurice Yameogo, with the help of the army.

In 1974 was created a new trade union, the Upper Volta Confederation of trade unions (**Confédération syndicale voltaïque – CSV**). By chance one of the members of PAI was designated at its head by the trade unions which the Confederation. This gave PAI members a great opportunity to give political formation and mobilize the workers at different occasions. In November 1975, CSV proposed to the other trade unions to go on strike on 17 and 18 of December to protest against the decisions taken by the government to install its new political party (MNR). The success of the strike was so complete, even among the ordinary people outside the trade unions, that the government decided to listen to the demands of the trade unions and started a large consultation of different part of the population. So came the 3rd Republic.

In 1980, there were also great strikes against many arbitrary decisions taken by the government of the 3rd Republic. After a long strike of the trade union of the teachers which was part of CSV, this last union called all its members to go on strike against the regime. Sticking on its decisions, the government refused to concede anything to the trade unions. The social climate was bad and Colonel Saye Zerbo exploited the situation to take over the power and install **the CMRPN regime**. But quickly, the workers saw that CMRPN was against the trade unions, and specifically against CSV. After a strike in april 1982, hundreds of members of CSV union lost their jobs in the administration, and the CMRPN regime became more and more anti-popular. A coalition of officers linked to different political parties, including PAI, whiped of the regime in november 1982, and installed the **Council of the people salvation (CSP)**. Capitaine Thomas Sankara wa nominated as Prime Minister in january 1983.

But contradictions appeared quickly among the right and the left wings of the officers inside the CSP regime. In may 1983, Captain Thomas Sankara and some of his friends in the army were arrested, but not Captain Blaise Compaore who was out of Ouagadougou and succeed joining his commandos troops in the military camp of Po (south of Burkina Faso, near the Ghana border). Big demonstrations organized by PAI members occurred at that period, to ask for releasing of Sankara and denounce the actions of the right wing of the army. After negotiations, Capitaine Sankara and his friends were finally released. In august of the same year 1983, they decided to take the power and to install the **National Revolution Council (CNR)**.

PAI members got important responsibilities in the government, at the head of 5 departments (Information, Foreign affairs, Education, Equipment and communications, Youth and

Sports). The party had also representatives in the CNR. But after some months, PAI didn't agree with the methods and the way many decisions were taken and imposed by the President of CNR, Thomas Sankara. In may 1984, the clash comes more officially between PAI and the ret of CNR, and after the dissolution of the firs government of CNR in august 1984, PAI decided to retreat himself from he regime of CNR.

Since that date, we became an enemy for the regime of CNR which denounced PAI and made it the target of its daily attacks. Our leaders in the trade unions lost their jobs and were obliged to leave their positions in the directions of these workers organizations. But many people approved the positions of PAI and reinforced the party.

Contradictions between CNR members grew at the same time, mainly between Sankara and Compaore, his second. In October 1987, Compaore killed Sankara and took the power, installing the People's Front. Some civilian leaders of CNR went in exile, while the majority of the men responsible in CNR structures decided to support the new regime. Compaore asked PAI to join the People's Front but PAI refused and asked for settling a democratic state in Burkina Faso.

Finally, in 1990, Compaore decided to established in Burkina Faso a Constitution. In the Commission he settled, the work of PAI members helped much to turn the project of Constitution in a democratic one. In June 1991, the people approve the new Constitution.

Since April 1991, PAI has become a legal party and except in the period of 1998-2000 where PAI and other parties boycotted elections to have more transparent elections, participated in all elections held in the country.

But in 1993 and 1998, there were scissions inside PAI. In 1998, the government of Compaore helped the secessionists lead by a former leader of trade unions, Soumane Touré. As this one, suspended from PAI, called for a PAI irregular congress in 1999, the government gave him irregularly the receipt of PAI. PAI went on trial to deny the receipt.

Although in the different judgments, the Courts gave reason to PAI, the government refused to obey the decisions of the Court, up to now. Members of PAI decided in 2001 to form a new party (**PDS – Party for democracy and socialism**), so that they could be able to work legally, while the leaders of the party, elected by the congresses of PAI, remain officially members of PAI. It is the way we have been obliged to follow to be part of the elections, while continuing to pursue in justice the irregular decisions of the government against PAI.

At all the elections for members of the Parliament, PAI (or PDS after 2001) got two (2) members elected and had about 3% to 5% people voting for it. In the elections for municipalities held in 2006, PAI got many members of the municipalities elected under its banner, and was able to win the head of 7 communes.

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