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ARTICLE

Pain et liberté pour le peuple! Burkina Faso's Underground Communist Party PCRV, and its Public Presence in the Anti-Imperialist Struggle

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Abstract

Revolutionary movements operated underground before and after national independence in many African countries. A communist party in Burkina Faso, the *Parti communiste révolutionnaire voltaïque* (PCRV), continued its underground political practice, despite democratic breakthrough. On the basis of long-term research engagement on popular struggle and the fight against impunity, the author used participant observation in street marches, meetings, sit-ins, and so on, and text analysis of pamphlets, declarations, and tracts to analyze how the PCRV is present in anti-imperialist struggles, while being absent in the public sphere.

Résumé

Les mouvements révolutionnaires ont opéré dans la clandestinité avant et après l'indépendance nationale dans de nombreux pays africains. Au Burkina Faso, un parti communiste, le *Parti communiste révolutionnaire voltaïque* (PCRV), a poursuivi sa pratique politique clandestine malgré la percée de la démocratie. Sur la base d'un engagement de recherche à long terme sur la lutte populaire et la lutte contre l'impunité, l'auteur a utilisé l'observation participante dans les protestes, les réunions, les grèves, etc. et l'analyse textuelle de pamphlets, déclarations et tracts pour analyser comment le PCRV est présent dans les luttes anti impérialistes, tout en étant absent dans la sphère publique.

Resumo

Em muitos países africanos, houve movimentos revolucionários a operarem na clandestinidade quer antes quer depois das independências nacionais. Apesar de a democracia ter vingado no Burquina Faso, o Parti Communiste Révolutionnaire Voltaïque (PCRV), um

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partido comunista deste país, prosseguiu as suas actividades políticas clandestinas. Com base numa longa e empenhada investigação sobre as lutas populares e o combate à impunidade, o autor recorreu à observação participante em marchas de rua, encontros, manifestações passivas, entre outras situações, bem como à análise textual de panfletos, folhetos e declarações, com vista a compreender como é que o PCRV se enquadra nas lutas anti-imperialistas, ao mesmo tempo que se mantém ausente da esfera pública.

Keywords: Burkina Faso; revolutionary movement; communist party; underground

Introduction

Revolutionary movements played a significant role before and after the independence of many African countries. Cold War politics forced newly independent African countries to align with either the Western bloc or the Eastern bloc. Some African countries took a Marxist-Leninist turn, including those taking up armed struggle in liberation wars against the colonialists, whereas others stayed in the Western bloc. Others, like Mali and Burkina Faso, joined the Non-Aligned Movement. Yet independent of the country's official position in the Cold War, there were revolutionary leftist movements in most, if not all, African countries. In a recent edited volume, *Revolutionary Movements in Africa: An Untold Story*, Bianchini, Sylla, and Seilig (2024a) remind us that the story of underground revolutionary movements on the continent still remains to be narrated. They point out that even though there exist some published memoirs, most activists, and even some leaders, died without having told their stories. The scarcity of original documents may seem somewhat paradoxical, because much militant activity focused on the dissemination of pamphlets or leaflets (Bianchini, Sylla, and Seilig 2024b, 2). Furthermore, Bianchini, Sylla, and Seilig (2024b, 3) highlight several important features in African revolutionary movements of which two are particularly relevant to this paper. First, colonial rule and postcolonial state-building obscured the classic cleavages between proletariat and bourgeoisie. Instead, anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist struggles were central factors in emerging political arenas across Africa. Second, the initial social basis of leftist organizations was among urban workers and student movements, the latter of which "increasingly initiated and occasionally led the struggle against colonialism and neocolonialism and which were in a specific position to nurture internationalist relationships" (Bianchini, Sylla, and Seilig 2024b, 3). It is worth reflecting on the way Marxist-Leninist theories played a key role in articulating African anti-imperialist struggles. In discussing the entanglement of anti-imperial dissent with underground politics in Senegal, Fatoumata Seck points out that "many Africans were inspired by the Vietnamese, Cuban, and Algerian revolutions to express their opposition to imperialism in various ways, including culturally, socially, and through armed or unarmed resistance, both before and after nominal independence" (Seck 2023, 288). Joe Pateman points to the centrality of Africa in Lenin's theory of imperialism. Even though Lenin displayed some Eurocentric assumptions, and racist perceptions of Africa and its peoples, these did not characterize his theoretical thinking, according to Pateman. "Lenin was a militant critic of colonialism in Africa and a consistent defender of African

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liberation. It was precisely these positions that earnt Lenin a substantial degree of prestige among African socialists" (Pateman 2022, 290). The centrality of Marxism-Leninism in African revolutionary movements in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s is not surprising. But that Marxist-Leninist thinking continues to play a key role in popular struggles is intriguing; through the lens of anti-imperialist struggle, Marxist-Leninist thought still shapes political movements.

This paper focuses on the public presence of the underground, notably through the analysis of a hard core Marxist-Leninist party in Burkina Faso, namely the *Parti communiste révolutionnaire voltaïque* (PCRV). The main purpose is to analyze PCRV's ideology with a particular focus on its underground political practice. The country has a long history of revolutionary struggles, including the regime led by Captain Thomas Sankara in 1983–87, when the country's name, Upper Volta, was changed to Burkina Faso, the land of the upright people, and, more recently, the 2014 popular insurrection that chased President Blaise Compaoré from power.

The paper is based on my long-term research engagement in Burkina Faso, and it draws on a combination of sources and entry points.[1] By means of participant observation in street marches, meetings, sit-ins, and so on since 2014, as well as the careful reading of pamphlets, declarations, and tracts, I analyze the public presence of the underground PCRV in anti-imperialist struggles in order to understand how this party engaged in, adjusted to, and acted upon the regime change after 2014. I also scrutinize the party's written declarations and the official party organ *Bug Parga*, distributed clandestinely at specific meetings at the Place de la Révolution[2] in central Ouagadougou. However, while these unpublished documents may offer insights into the ideology of the party, they do not give much information about the underground as a political practice. I therefore complement participant observation, and text analysis, by describing cases of underground practice. But beyond the specific case of PCRV in Burkina Faso, I also hope to contribute to the study of political revolutions as cultural processes, and, as it were, of the decolonization of the underground. In Bjørn Thomassen's words, political revolutions are "processes that ritualistically bring together people in a sort of intimate bonding while also, at the same time, creating new schisms and divisions" (2018, 167).

The use of the concept of the underground needs to be clarified. According to the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (2001), one definition of the underground is that which is "beneath the surface of the ground," like an underground passage. Another definition, more applicable to this paper, refers to a group or a movement organized secretly to work against an existing regime by means of underground literature, newspapers and so on. A synonym for underground is clandestine, which denotes what is kept secret or done secretly, especially because it is illicit—for example, secret meetings, underground organizations, or acts of espionage. In this paper, I use underground and clandestine invariably to denote people and organizations that go under the radar and operate secretly for radical political change. In the case of PCRV, the underground is also related to a government decision. In 1980, when then Prime Minister Issoufou Joseph Conombo violently accused communist groups "without faith or law" of "destabiliz[ing] the country" (Toguyeni 2018, 124), PCRV

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militants and sympathizers went underground while continuing to act publicly. Since then, the underground political practice of the PCRV has revealed the paradox of the absence of the presence, or the presence of the absence. On the one hand, the public presence of the party's absence, by means of other social movements and civil society organizations, is evident for those who know what to look for. On the other hand, the party's absence of public presence implies that the PCRV is neither leading demonstrations nor participating in normal liberal democratic life, which in turn offers a particular space for its leaders to claim the party's hardcore political line.

Even though different Burkinabe leftist movements share many aspects of political and social struggle, fissions have been common (Martens 1989; Ouédraogo 2022; Toguyeni 2018). One reason is that their analyses—or "readings" (*lectures* in French)—of the political situation are very different. Since the split of the leftist movements in the last years of the 1970s, they have taken different stances when it comes to political militancy and popular struggle. The PCRV represents the core, far away from any *realpolitik*. But while its influence in terms of membership is small, the party seems to play a cathartic role for many activists beyond its hard core. The PCRV's "reading" of the national situation contrasts radically with any mainstream political discourse. The party is not engaged in mundane political practice, but in underground struggle. Hence, to study underground political struggles we need to reflect upon *what* to document and analyze. Seck suggests that we might approach "the cultural underground of decolonization" as an archive of citizen-making: "As clandestine modes of politics develop in response to neocolonial and authoritarian regimes, desires to develop a countercultural discourse meet with a drive to disseminate it at all costs" (Seck 2023, 289). In this paper, my take has been to read what is disseminated, and to observe what is visible, rather than interviewing leaders and activists in/of the underground. That said, I draw on my long-term observation and analysis of Burkinabe politics to contextualize the public presence of the underground. Activists have often paid a high price for their political engagements. Bettina Engels, who has analyzed Burkinabe revolutionary movements with a particular focus on the PCRV, points out:

> Until today, the party is formally and in its self-understanding clandestine. Nevertheless, it is well-known in the Burkinabé political scene, and by now —and increasingly so since the popular insurrection of 2014—PCRV letterings can be seen painted on the walls of Ouagadougou, on placards held up in demonstrations, etc. (Engels 2019, 121)

While I agree with Engels' observations, it must be remembered that most Burkinabe do not know about the existence of the PCRV. Even in demonstrations, where PCRV placards have been held up, many demonstrators do not recognize the party. And yet, for those who know what to look for, the party is present. Therefore, I argue that the PCRV is continuously present, while also being absent, in the Burkinabe public sphere. It is in the anti-imperialist struggles that the public presence of the PCRV is evident, despite its clandestine *modus operandi.* In

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other words, while discursively the PCRV represents hardcore revolutionaries with an uncompromising reading of Burkinabe society, its militants and sympathizers are strongly engaged in struggles against imperialism and authoritarianism.

This paper is organized as follows. First, by describing the postcolonial history of the Burkinabe left, I analyze how different movements took shape in the 1970s and the 1980s. With the help of ideological texts and declarations, militants' memoirs, and a few academic studies, I show how the revolutionary movements have been an important force in democratic struggles. And yet, the revolutionary period of Sankara's regime deepened the cleavage and violence between former comrades. I end the section by elaborating on the political line of the PCRV on the basis of photocopied documents collected during demonstrations and meetings. Second, I describe the fall of Compaoré and how different movements positioned themselves vis-à-vis the 2014 popular insurrection. The analysis is geared towards the PCRV and its declarations distributed at street demonstrations. Third, I seek to unfold the way in which PCRV is publicly present, while being in/of the underground. I particularly describe three examples of underground political practice. Fourth, I conclude by discussing the underground in present-day Burkina Faso, following the two *coups d'état* in 2022. Today, the country is torn between the anti-imperialist rhetoric of a military regime and the crackdown on trade unions, human rights organizations, and other leftist organizations. The public presence of the underground is changing dynamics, as leaders of movements close to the party are obliged to resort to outright clandestine political practice.

The history of the Burkinabe left: The emergence and political line of the PCRV

The political history of Burkina Faso is marked by popular uprisings and military regimes, often in combination and sometimes intercepted by periods of liberal democratic rule.[3] On January 3, 1966, President Maurice Yaméogo was overthrown in a popular upheaval that paved the way for a military takeover by Chief of Defense Staff General Sangoulé Lamizana. Since then, the armed forces have played—and continue to play—a key role in the country's politics. On the one hand, many see the army as the sole stable institution in the midst of political instability. On the other hand, far from being "neutral," the army is a major political player. In the following, I summarize the emergence of the revolutionary left, with particular attention paid to the way different movements took shape in the 1970s and the 1980s.

Since the emergence of African student movements of 1950s, particularly the *Association des Étudiants Voltaïques en France* (AEVF), and the de facto one-party state in the 1960s, leftist movements and parties have been obliged to work underground. The link with the student movements is evident in this regard; political parties were built up and led by former student leaders (Bianchini and Korbéogo 2008; Hendrickson 2022; Monaville 2022). The first president of the AEVF was Joseph Ki-Zerbo, who was to become a major figure in Upper Volta.

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The AEVF was a territorial section of the *Fédération des Étudiants d'Afrique Noire en France* (FEANF), which would later serve as an organizational model for the *Union Générale des Étudiants Voltaïques* (UGEV), a student union with strong leftist orientation. In 1957, Ki-Zerbo founded the *Mouvement pour la Libération Nationale* (MLN) in Dakar and campaigned for "No" in de Gaulle's 1958 referendum. In Dakar, Voltaic students were among the core founders of the supranational *Parti Africain de l'indépendance* (PAI), which also opposed the 1958 referendum (Bianchini and Korbéogo 2008, 36). In 1963, the PAI established a branch in Upper Volta, and ten years later the party launched the *Ligue Patriotique pour le Développement* (LIPAD) as its mass organization.[4]

In the early 1970s, the student union UGEV became increasingly revolutionary and came under the dominance of the PAI, while excluding MLN activists. Soon, however, scissions between Soviet, Chinese, and Albanian orientations became apparent. Bianchini and Korbéogo capture the way Marxism-Leninism not only dominated the UGEV but also favored dissidence and conflict.

> The 1977 [UGEV] congress explicitly condemned the LIPAD-PAI students, officially assimilated to a "new reformist current" (NCR)—to distinguish them from the "old reformist current" (ACR), a term that refers to MLN activists—also sometimes treated as "unrepentant reformists" (UGEV, Jeune Volta special VIIIe congrès, 1977: 94-102). These ideological jousts took place first in France within the framework of the FEANF, where the Voltaics were then largely represented. In 1977, the hegemony of Marxism-Leninism within the FEANF and the AEVF was translated on the political level by the emergence of the Voltaïque Communist Organization (OCV). (Bianchini and Korbéogo 2008, 41)[5]

In other words, the LIPAD-PAI activists of the student union UGEV were expelled at the 1977 Congress, and the *Organisation communiste voltaïque* (OCV) emerged within student organizations such as the FEANF and the AEVF. Yet the OCV would not exist for long; soon it experienced a split between those who supported the communist model of Enver Hoxha (Drissa Touré) and those who rejected that model (Valère Somé and Basile Guissou). While the former created the PCRV on October 1, 1978, the latter created the *Union de Luttes Communistes* (ULC) on October 1, 1979. The PCRV pursued the political line of the Albanian Party of Labor—anti-revisionist Marxism-Leninism (Hoxhaism)—and promoted "the National Democratic and Popular Revolution" (RNDP). The party held that the country was still a colony. For the ULC, however, the Upper Volta was politically independent, and capitalism was the fundamental issue, not the absence of political independence. Hence, the source of exploitation and oppression was the capitalism of the neocolonial regime, not a distant foreign enemy. Therefore, the ULC promoted the "Democratic and Popular Revolution" (RDP).

This ideological split came to have important consequences a few years later. The PCRV did not support the revolutionary government of Captain Thomas Sankara, who took power on August 4, 1983 in the Democratic and Popular Revolution led by the *Conseil National de la Révolution* (CNR). In contrast, other

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communist organizations, like the PAI and the ULC-R, gave support to Sankara.[6] In August 1984, the *Groupe communiste burkinabè* (GCB) was founded to support Sankara's revolutionary regime, while the PAI left the government (Martens 1989).

On October 15, 1987, the revolution was ended by a bloody *coup d'état* that killed Sankara and brought Captain Blaise Compaoré to power. After a few years of severe and bloody political repression and violence (assassinations, tortures, extra-judicial jailing, etc.), Compaoré initiated a process of democratization in 1990 to end the long period of the state of emergency in the country (Otayek, Sawadogo, and Guingané, 1996) and a new Constitution was adopted in 1991. Compaoré was elected in 1991, 1998, 2005, and 2010, always receiving an overwhelming majority in the first round.

Yet popular struggles intensified with strong mobilizations by leftist movements, oftentimes reproducing past cleavages. One example was the assassination of journalist Norbert Zongo in December 1998 that led to a widespread mobilization against the Compaoré regime (Hagberg 2002; Loada 1999; Ouédraogo 1999). The *Collectif des organisations démocratiques de masse et de partis politiques* (CODMPP), led by Halidou Ouédraogo, the president of the *Mouvement burkinabè des droits de l'Homme et des peuples* (MBDHP), was founded. This struggle resulted in political reforms, including the limitation of the presidential terms to two. Another important mobilization was that against the high cost of living in 2008; the *Coalition contre la vie chère* (CCVC) was born with Chrysogone Zougmoré, the president of the MBDHP, as CCVC president (Chouli 2012). In 2011, protest movements mobilized against the killing of the pupil Justin Zongo while in police custody. This mobilization occurred in the months after the Arab Spring, but the Burkinabe mobilization was first and foremost grounded in the country's own political dynamics. In April 2011, President Compaoré almost lost power (Hilgers and Loada 2013).

The PCRV played a key role in all these mobilizations, not as a leading actor on the forefront, but as an underground party that worked through other movements in the public sphere. Although publicly present, the PCRV consistently engaged in clandestine political activity, choosing not to participate in elections. But how does the party motivate its refusal to run for elections?

As a way to gear the analytical focus towards more recent political struggles, it seems important to unfold the ideological and political standpoints of the PCRV. I would like to argue that such standpoints provide the backbone of the party's "readings" (*lectures*) of Burkinabe society. In a document dated in January 2004—like all other documents produced by the PCRV it is only available in the form of an unpublished manuscript—the party's political line is defined. The PCRV views the liberating revolutionary struggle in Upper Volta as an integral part of the broader revolutionary process aimed at establishing socialism and communism globally through the dictatorship of the proletariat (PCRV 2004, 1). It identifies three fundamental contradictions: first, between the imperialist powers; second, between imperialism and the people; and, third, between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Today, the PCRV asserts, "apologists and zealous defenders of capitalism" talk about "the end of socialism and communism," and the superiority of capitalism as the only viable system

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bringing progress, but everyday reality shows that "capitalism is the most vile, barbarous, and cynical system of exploitation and oppression that humanity has ever known" (PCRV 2004, 2). The document contains citations of Engels, Lenin, and Stalin before embarking on characterizing the specific situation of "Upper Volta."

> Upper Volta is a backward agricultural neocolonial country with the persistence of vestiges of feudal forces which have a significant impact, particularly on the ideological level, on the populations, notably in the North and East of the country (Central Plateau, Yatenga, Gourma, Liptako, Djelgodji). (PCRV 2004, 3)[7]

In this country, the PCRV holds, foreign capitalism, mostly French imperialism, determines economic, political, social, and cultural life. The party maintains that there are three main revolutionary forces of Upper Volta. First, the working class is the most revolutionary class of society and the only capable class to lead the combat for national and social liberation. Second, the peasantry is the main force of the revolution. Third, the petty bourgeoisie (teachers, nurses, pupils, and students) is an important ally to the working class (PCRV 2004, 7).

PCRV's analysis of "la Haute-Volta dite Burkina Faso" leads to the current status of the combat: the National, Democratic, and Popular Revolution (RNDP). The revolution is *national* because it aims to stop imperialist domination and to conquer national independence and sovereignty. It is *democratic* because it must bring down the reactionary social classes in power and put in place the democratic revolutionary dictatorship of the working class, the peasantry, and other exploited and oppressed workers. It is *popular* because it will require the work of the revolutionary combat of the popular masses (PCRV 2004, 9).

Strategically, the PCRV is held to be the only trustworthy party on the side of the working class in its struggle for bread and freedom for the people, recalling the motto *Pain et Liberté pour le Peuple* (PCRV 2004).[8] In addition to the vanguard party, a People's Revolutionary Front is needed to unite the working class with other social forces, notably the peasantry and other oppressed classes (PCRV 2004). Such a Front should include other movements: the labor unions' struggle against the high cost of living and unemployment; the popular youths' (pupils, students) fight against oppression and illiteracy, and for the right to work and to education; the peasants' struggle against neoliberal policies that impoverish them, and leave them at the mercy of foreign donors, usurers, and the neocolonial state; the struggles of women who refuse capitalist exploitation and feudal oppression, pressing for social justice; and the combat in the army for the democratic rights of the soldiers (PCRV 2004, 11).

The link between the PCRV and "other movements" is important because such movements are seen as "the associative levers" (*leviers associatifs*) of the party (Ouédraogo 2022), extensions of civil society. The PCRV remains underground, while other movements act in the public sphere. These "associative levers" include organizations such as the MBDHP, the *Organisation*

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démocratique de la Jeunesse (ODJ), the *Union Générale des Étudiants Burkinabè* (UGEB), the *Keibayina Association des femmes*, the *Association Nationale des Étudiants Burkinabè* (ANEB), the *Union Générale du Travail-Burkina* (UGT-B), the *Réseau National de Lutte Anti-Corruption* (RENLAC), and the *Coalition de lutte contre la vie chère, la corruption, la fraude, l'impunité et pour les libertés* (CCVC).[9] The presence of the associative levers are seen by many to represent the visible and public manifestation of the party. And yet, they are not merely proxies, as they have their own agency and goals. For instance, the UGT-B has its focus on workers' conditions, whereas Keibayina is fighting for women's rights. Being indexed as an associative lever of the PCRV is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the movement in question forms part of the revolutionary movement and can act together with similar movements. On the other hand, the link to the party is often used as a pretext to dismiss the particular struggle—for example, the struggle against impunity (Hagberg 2002; 2023b)—as something orchestrated by "the extreme left" or "the PCRV-istes." Lila Chouli (2009) describes how the state has always treated the student movement as an antagonistic entity. "Furthermore, seeing the PCRV as a filigree in every struggle of 'civil society,' thereby making it the 'internal enemy,' reveals the habitus of military regimes" (Chouli 2009, 13).

The PCRV that evolved from the leftist movements of the 1970s has shown a persistence and perseverance in its uncompromising standpoints, popular struggles, and hardcore political line. Despite remaining a small party with unknown members, its influence has been far more important thanks to the associative levers; *les rouges*, as they are often called, have been active in all major political struggles of Burkina Faso.

The popular insurrection: Revolution or *coup d'état*?

After twenty-seven years in office with multiple violent maneuvers, political moves, and legal tricks to stay in power, in October 2014 President Blaise Compaoré finally decided to modify the Constitution, allowing him to stand for a new term after 2015, and, in practice, embark upon a lifetime presidency. Faced with such a blatantly autocratic attempt to monopolize power, the Burkinabe people stood up against the president and his regime after a massive mobilization of civil society organizations, labor unions, opposition parties, as well as ordinary citizens who felt that enough is enough. As a result, Compaoré had to step down and flee the country (Chouli 2015; Engels 2015; Frère and Englebert 2015; Hagberg 2023a; 2023b; Hagberg et al. 2015; 2018).

Already in 2013, and in early 2014, tangible signs indicated that Compaoré's power was shaky (Hagberg et al., 2015). In a declaration in January 2014 entitled "La seule alternative juste à la faillite du système néocolonial, du pouvoir de la 4ème République et du CDP," the PCRV delivered an eight-page analysis of the political situation in the country. The party positioned itself against the creation of the party *Mouvement du Peuple pour le Progrès* (MPP) on January 4, 2014. Roch Marc Christian Kaboré, Salif Diallo, and Simon Compaoré[10]—three leading personalities of Compaoré's *Congrès pour la Démocratie et le Progrès* (CDP)—had

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finally left the party to create the MPP (Hagberg et al., 2015). The PCRV pointed out:

> The revolutionary crisis is thus expressed by the refusal of those below (that is to say the working class, the toiling peasantry, the poor urban layers of the semi-proletariat and the petty bourgeoisie ruined by the crisis, the high cost of living, neocolonial oppression and exploitation) to allow themselves to be exploited and oppressed as before. (PCRV 2014, 1)[11]

So, the PCRV sought to mobilize those who had not benefitted from the Compaoré regime: the working class, the peasantry, the urban poor, and the ruined petty bourgeoisie. The party criticized "the reactionary bourgeoisie," which it divided into three political groups: first, the CDP and its allies; second, the parliamentary political opposition united behind the leader of the parliamentary political opposition (Zéphirin Diabré and his *Union pour le Progrès et le Changement*, UPC); and third, the newly formed MPP born out of the explosion of the CDP. PCRV's January 2014 declaration was clandestinely distributed in the feverish weeks after the creation of the MPP, which ultimately contributed to the fall of Compaoré ten months later (Hagberg, 2023a; Hagberg et al., 2015).

By the end of October 2014, the popular insurrection took place. At the time, it was referred to as "a revolution" (Hagberg, 2023a; 2023b; Hagberg et al., 2015; Sangaré and Vink, 2015) that represented a major democratic breakthrough in a country hitherto characterized by a semi-authoritarian regime (Hilgers and Mazzocchetti, 2010) or a double-façade democracy (Hagberg, 2010). On October 31, 2014, Compaoré signed his resignation. On November 1, 2014, Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Yacouba Zida, the second-in-command of the notorious *Régiment de Sécurité Présidentielle* (RSP), took power to lead a military transition. For the PCRV, this was a military *coup d'état*:

> Upper Volta, known as Burkina Faso, is experiencing a revolutionary situation that led to a popular insurrection on Thursday 30 October, and ousted autocrat Blaise Compaoré from power on Friday 31 October 2014, despite his sordid maneuvers to maintain his position at the head of the neocolonial state at all costs.
>
> Our people, in their various components, and the popular youth have won a salutary victory in a surge of determination and political maturity, foiling the various plots and facing with heroic courage the barbaric repression that resulted in dozens of deaths and injuries.
>
> [...]
>
> But very quickly, the working class and the people realized that their hard-won gains were threatened and confiscated by the coupist clans of the neocolonial army, who carried out a reactionary military coup. Their ultimate goal is to stifle the ongoing revolutionary process and save the bankrupt neocolonial system. The opposition of the reactionary bourgeoise, while advocating change, is negotiating with the military establishment

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> with a view to establishing a "transitional government" which would allow it to retain a chance of gaining neocolonial power. (PCRV 2014)[12]

A few weeks after the fall of Compaoré, a one-year political transition was agreed upon, so as to prepare for democratic elections in the country. Retired diplomat Michel Kafando was appointed transition president. But Kafando in turn appointed Isaac Yacouba Zida—the second-in-command of the RSP, who had just acted as the de facto head of state during the military transition—as prime minister.

Despite the party's enthusiastic ovations to the heroic struggle of the people in the November 5, 2014 declaration referred to above, for most observers it was obvious that the PCRV was not at the forefront of the popular insurrection. On Sunday November 2, 2014, the party would unsuccessfully attempt to retake the initiative (Hagberg et al., 2018; Jaffré, 2019). The relative absence of the PCRV during the popular insurrection created a long-lasting political rift. Ouédraogo poignantly summarizes the absence of the party during these historic days:

> Self-sufficient and self-isolated, the PCRV found itself "blind" to the pre-insurrection situation of October 2014, or unable to correctly read the pressing popular aspirations of the moment, to get involved, and to orient its associative levers accordingly. Thus, this network, via the CCVC, snubbed and challenged the call for civil disobedience launched on 28 October (by the CFOP and its allies) to organize its own demonstration the next day and launch its own call for action. (Ouédraogo 2022, 127)[13]

Furthermore, Ouédraogo (2022, 131) argues that not a single associative lever of the PCRV made a self-critique regarding "the bad reading" (*la mauvaise lecture*) of the pre-insurrection situation. For many politically engaged Burkinabe, *les rouges* had missed this historical opportunity. Instead, other movements had taken the lead: the *Balai citoyen*, the *Front de résistance citoyenne*, and other civil society organizations struggling against the Compaoré regime (Hagberg 2023a; 2023b; Hagberg et al. 2015; 2018; Jaffré 2019).

Two months later, the PCRV offered a detailed analysis of the popular insurrection of October 30–31, 2014, which, the party argued, was transformed into a *coup d'état* on November 1 that brought "the most fascist branch of the armed forces, the RSP,"[14] to power (PCRV 2015). For the PCRV, the popular insurrection was full of lessons. "It particularly showed that in our society, the revolution is posed and needs to be resolved" (PCRV 2015, 2). The insurrection showed, the party continued, that the working class and the people were capable of bringing down the oppressors of the reactionary bourgeoisie and the imperialist powers. The insurrection gave back hope to "our people," and to other West African peoples, and to proletarians and peoples of the world (PCRV 2015, 2).

Yet the party recognized that the popular insurrection also had its limitations (PCRV 2015). The first limitation was that the people did not dispose of an

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appropriate organization for the conquest and exercise of power, such as soviets or councils. Through the soviets, alliances between the working class and the peasantry, and other popular classes, would materialize to put in place "the revolutionary dictatorship of the working class and peasantry under the leadership of the proletariat and its vanguard party" (PCVR 2015, 3). Later in the document, it is clarified that "soviet" is a Russian word for "council": "but it doesn't matter what name they will have in our country" (PCRV 2015, 15). A second limitation was that the people were unarmed during the popular insurrection. For this reason, it was not possible to bring a total victory over the bourgeoisie and French imperialism. A third and related limitation was that the military apparatus and one part of the political and administrative apparatus remained untouched. Similarly, the "occupying French and American forces" that had been installed to defend Blaise Compaoré remained in place. A fourth limitation was that, even though the peasant masses did participate in the insurrection, they were not massively involved, despite the fact that the peasantry constitutes the first force of the revolution "in our backward agricultural neocolonial country" (PCRV 2015, 4). A fifth limitation was that the degree of organization and leadership of the insurrection showed insufficiencies, from which the party had already drawn lessons. Finally, due to these limitations, French imperialist forces and its allies in the reactionary bourgeoisie conducted a counter-revolutionary *coup d'état* on November 1, 2014, by means of the RSP.

In sum, the PCRV concluded that the 2014 popular insurrection was a "general repetition" for the organization of a "General Armed Insurrection" under the leadership of the party for the "National Democratic and Popular Revolution," the instauration of a "Revolutionary Provisory Government" and a "Constituent Assembly." This is indeed the party line, and these terms are often used as signifiers in PCRV's declarations. The PCRV clarified that the General Armed Insurrection was *not* a military *coup d'état*; "the experience of our country, which has had nearly ten military coups, shows that the coup has never given power to the people, nor resolved their fundamental problems" (PCRV 2015, 14).

The political line of PCRV is to apply Marxism-Leninism to the concrete conditions of the country, that is, "a backward agricultural neocolony particularly dominated by French imperialism" (*Bug-Parga* 2018, 6). In doing so, the party criticizes revisionist and opportunistic groups that, at one point in time, hid themselves behind "a pseudo-Marxist phraseology," "the bourgeois parties in power," and "the pretended opposition parties," which all nourish the dream "to liquidate the PCRV."

> The PCRV, armed with the compass of Marxism-Leninism, calls on the working class, the popular youth, the men and women of the people, in the cities as well as in the countryside to unite around it for the realization of the National Democratic Popular Revolution by the General Armed Insurrection, to drive out imperialism, notably French imperialism, and its local allies, to constitute a Provisional Revolutionary Government, to

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> convene a Constituent Assembly and to establish a Modern Democratic Republic for the application of its minimum Program, transition to scientific socialism. (*Bug-Parga* 2018, 6)[15]

The absence of presence: The underground as discourse, practice, and struggle

The PCRV is present, while being absent. In other words, the party is publicly underground. It is as if the party remains underground for the safety and security of its militants and sympathizers, as well as for the efficiency of its actions. The public presence of the underground is a way to exist and act politically while being under the radar. The underground also appears to serve as a way to galvanize the struggle, with the party communicating through declarations, underground tracts, and unpublished documents disseminated during demonstrations, meetings, sit-ins, and similar actions. The official party organ *Bug-Parga* ("the spark" in Mooré) is often a photocopied pamphlet distributed in a rush by young activists at demonstrations and meetings (e.g. *Bug-Parga* 2018; PCRV 2018). The PCRV only rarely appears publicly on banners during demonstrations or on walls in urban centers, mostly in Ouagadougou. The party does not recognize "Burkina Faso," because it sees the country as a colony; Upper Volta can only be decolonized by the National Democratic and Popular Revolution. This symbolic play with the name of the country—Upper Volta instead of Burkina Faso—is related to the political line of the PCRV according to which, first, French colonialists created this colonial territory in 1919 out of other neighboring, already existing colonies; and second, Sankara's revolution did not decolonize the country. Ouédraogo (2022, 133) nonetheless interrogates the party's refusal to recognize the value of national political independence in 1960. The implication would be that colonial and postcolonial struggles have been in vain, and that nothing has fundamentally changed between the French colony and present-day Burkina Faso in terms of national sovereignty.

A quite different aspect of the absence of the party's public presence is that no person openly admits to being a party member. While one of the party's founders, Drissa Touré, still resides in Bobo-Dioulasso, the PCRV gives no press conferences and has no named representatives. Moreover, the party has not participated in any liberal democratic elections. Instead, there are a number of actors who are generally held to be "PCRV-istes," or at least PCRV sympathizers. This absence also means that the party's leaders cannot be scrutinized by the public gaze. It offers a room for its leaders to maneuver to maintain the political line.

As clearly outlined in the PCRV's political line in January 2004, and later referred to in January 2015, the party's links to "other movements" are referred to as "the associative levers" of the party. The absence of public presence of the party—the intrinsic nature of the underground—is contrasted with the public visibility and engagement of such movements. They represent the visible and public face of the underground party. While specific individuals are talked of as being PCRV members, there is no public recognition of anyone. The underground

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is a condition, and the repression that "PCRV-istes" have experienced—and still experience today—makes the underground understandable.

One way to grapple with the underground is to analyze declarations and statements, as I have done in this paper so far. These unpublished documents can offer insights into the logic and the ideology of the party, but they do not give much information about the underground in practice. It is therefore important to describe a few cases that reveal underground political practice.

The first case of the underground in practice is the creation of the *Comités de défense et d'approfondissement des acquis de l'insurrection populaire* (CDAIP), later renamed the *Comités de défense et d'approfondissement des acquis de l'insurrection populaire et de la résistance au putsch.* The CAIDPs emerged in Ouagadougou in 2015, after the 2014 insurrection, as a way for *les rouges* to improve their organization in urban neighborhoods. It also seems to be a result of the self-critique of the 2014 popular insurrection (PCRV 2015). It was the CCVC—the coalition against the high cost of living—that put in place the CDAIPs. In September 2015, the PCRV took the lead in mounting resistance against General Gilbert Diendéré's coup (Hagberg 2015; 2023a; 2023b), and the CAIDPs played a key role in resisting the RSP coupists in Ouagadougou's neighborhoods (Hagberg 2015). A friend of mine, who used to be part of a PCRV cell when he was a student, told me that his former comrades took revenge in September 2015 after having been rather invisible during the popular insurrection the year before: "I was proud when I saw the way they resisted the coupists." Thus, the allegedly erroneous "reading" of the pre-insurrection situation in October 2014 contrasted with the uncompromising and well-organized struggle in September 2015 (Hagberg 2015; 2023a; 2023b; Hagberg et al. 2018).

A second underground practice is related to the fact that the PCRV is organized in committees and cells, meaning that each member only knows a handful of other comrades. This is eloquently described in Harouna Toguyeni's book *En quête de progrès social: Combat d'un militant* (2018). Toguyeni describes how he, as a revolutionary student in the late 1970s, read the tracts and papers disseminated by the PCRV at political meetings in Ouagadougou. He supported the analyses of the party in its anti-imperialist struggle but did not know much about it. Yet as Toguyeni recounts, this would one day change:

> I never asked to be a member of this party, whose leading members I did not even know. And generally, for this type of party, membership was not by request, but by co-option.
>
> One day, a comrade, who revealed himself to be a PCRV activist, told me about the party leaders' decision to enroll me into the party; they felt that I had what it took to join. He told me there were steps to take to become a full member. The first step consisted of completing an internship, after which one could be admitted as a full member. Interns were called aspirants.
>
> Without hesitation, I agreed. And that's how I was co-opted as an intern. (Toguyeni 2018, 117–18)[16]

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In Dori, where Toguyeni was later transferred to work as a school teacher, there were only three "PCRV-istes," that is, one aspirant and two sympathizers. These three comrades formed the Dori PCRV cell in 1980, and Toguyeni naturally became the head of the cell (Toguyeni 2018, 118). As a first activity the Dori cell planned to celebrate May 1, 1980 by distributing underground tracts. But things went wrong, and Toguyeni was arrested by the police for distributing PCRV tracts. He was jailed for two months before being released.

Yet PCRV cells do not only mobilize for protests, they also organize reading groups. A former sympathizer showed me some of the texts they used to read and discuss in his cell as part of the PCRV's "political training." One course book was *Les bases théoriques du communisme*, which introduced the communist doctrine of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin, and another was an introduction to the basic concepts of political economy. Other books were Fredrich Engels' *Principles of Communism* (1847), and Joseph Stalin's *Dialectical Materialism and Historical Materialism* (2007 [1938]). While all these titles would be the normal study material for any communist party, the interesting thing is that all these titles were compiled and photocopied by the Comité d'Arrondissement de Nongr-Masson.[17] Thus, the general textbooks of Marxism-Leninism were put together by a local arrondissement committee of the PCRV (the compilations I consulted were reproduced in 2007–08). This means that there is an active engagement in reproducing classic Marxist-Leninist texts for underground study circles. For the ordinary member of a cell, the reading of such texts constitutes their political training.

A third kind of underground practice is street demonstrations. Even though the hardcore Marxist-Leninist rhetoric is hammered out in an uncompromising position, allegedly by the party's central committee, *les rouges*, play a key role in democratic and human rights struggles.[18] As an underground party, the PCRV works through its associative levers. But movements such as UGEB, ANEB, CGT-B, ODJ, Keibayina, and CCVC, to mention a few, are by no means simple marionettes. They have their own bylaws and membership bases, and they are publicly present and officially registered by the Burkinabe state. Attempts to dismiss the claims of these organizations are common—sometimes they are called *jusqu'au-boutistes* ("die-hards"), or extreme-leftists—as was the case in the struggle for truth and justice for Norbert Zongo (Hagberg 2002; 2023b). To recall the remark by Lila Chouli (2009, 13): the fact that the PCRV appears in the margins of each civil society struggle, making them "enemies from within," is part of the habitus of military regimes (as well as semi-authoritarian ones, I would like to add).

A concrete example of how movements deal with the alleged PCRV connections in demonstrations is provided by Bruno Jaffré (2019). On Sunday, November 2, 2014, just a few days after the popular insurrection, the PCRV would try to retake the initiative. At the stage at the Place de la Révolution, one MBHDP leader wanted to speak in the microphone, but the person in charge of sound refused to let him do so. Later, Jaffré was told that the reason for the refusal was that they suspected PCRV-istes were in the audience, as a banner demanding a "Gouvernement révolutionnaire provisoire" had been unfolded (Jaffré 2019, 195). Similar observations were made by colleagues of mine who attended the meeting on that day (Hagberg et al. 2018). That day, "the street" looked for a civil president who could avoid "the confiscation" of the revolution, something that would be in line

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with PCRV's reading (Hagberg et al. 2015, 213). At the same time, as described by Jaffré (2019), many other movements were keen not to have the insurrection hijacked by *les rouges.*

These cases show the extent to which the public presence of the underground is not just discursive or ideological, but profoundly intertwined with political practice in the street, in cells, and in urban neighborhoods.

Conclusion: Decolonization and the underground in present-day Burkina Faso

In this paper, I have shown that the PCRV is continuously present, while being absent, in the Burkinabe public sphere. It is in the anti-imperialist struggles that the public presence of the PCRV is evident, despite its clandestine *modus operandi.* I have also shown that the combination of underground anti-imperialist struggles and subtle public presences is what has made the party a political force of its own. This small, seemingly anachronistic communist party seems to play a cathartic role for many activists, as its "reading" of the national situation contrasts radically with any mainstream political discourse. It brings alternative ways of looking at society and culture to the fore. In this paper, I have sought to combine historical narratives through the analysis of texts produced by the party with observations of present-day politics, while also describing cases of the underground in practice. At the time of closing this paper, the PCRV is again targeted by the current MPSR2 regime led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré.

The democratically elected president Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was overthrown in a coup on January 24, 2022 by the *Mouvement Patriotique pour la Sauvegarde et la Restauration* (MPSR) led by Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba. The latter was in turn ousted from power by Captain Ibrahim Traoré (MPSR2) on September 30, 2022. Initial expectations of change, coupled with a strong populist rhetoric of the new power-holders, were welcomed by many Burkinabe (Hagberg et al. 2023). Traoré's declarations and actions are full of anti-imperialist rhetoric; his government stopped military cooperation with France, and relations with the former colonial power are now deeply frozen. Increasingly, however, the MPSR2 government is cracking down on all opposition, underground or not. Given that the very existence of Burkina Faso is threatened, the MPSR2-government holds, these movements must show moderation. Freedom of opinion and expression is restricted, and activists have even been enlisted in the Defense and Security Forces, notably the branch of the Volunteers for the Defense of the Fatherland (Hagberg et al. 2023; Hagberg 2023b).

The case of Moussa Diallo—general secretary of the CGT-B, senior lecturer of philosophy at the University Centre of Manga, and author of one of the few recent studies of the revolutionary movement in Burkina Faso (Diallo 2024)—is striking. On January 29, 2024, Diallo was victim of a kidnapping attempt in his home by individuals with no mandate, some of whom wore national police uniforms. Diallo was saved thanks to fellow activists and neighbors but had to

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go underground. A few weeks later, however, the president of Ki-Zerbo University (to which the University Center of Manga belongs) published a communiqué urging Diallo to return to his job no later than March 1, 2024, since he had been absent since December 8, 2023. On April 24, 2024, the government decided to fire Diallo as a public servant (Lefaso.net 2024). In a declaration on April 29, 2024, the CGT-B protested against the government decision (CNEC, 29/4/2024; see also Radio France Internationale 2024). "This decision shows once again that the MPSR2 is used to lies, bad faith and perfidy. How can one require a lecturer [who had been] victim of a kidnapping attempt to return to his job, if this is not a way to kidnap him?" (CNEC 2024). The declaration presents a list of concrete demands in full support of Moussa Diallo, and it calls for the reversal of the government's decision. The declaration ends with a series of poignant slogans:

> Our labor union has never bowed to tyranny and it never will. It will actively stand alongside our people to block the establishment of any despotic power in our country.
>
> No to kidnappings and persecution!
> No to violations of court decisions and the denial of justice!
> Long live the CGTB!
> Long live F-SYNTER!
> Bread and Freedom for the People!
>
> The CNEC Board
> (CNEC 2024)[19]

It seems appropriate to conclude this paper on the underground PCRV and its public presence in anti-imperialist struggles by returning to labor union actions in support of workers, and in this case, the CGT-B's general secretary. The April 29, 2024 Declaration ends with PCRV's slogan "Pain et Liberté pour le Peuple." The public visibility of the underground is striking to those who know what to look for. In other words, when leaders of associative levers of the party —in this case the general secretary of the CGT-B—are obliged to go underground, the very dynamics shift and public presences change. And, obviously, in such contexts of crack down on dissident voices, the public presence of the underground is likely to move towards an outright clandestine political practice.

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Notes

1. Since 1988 and up to the present, I have been doing ethnographic research in Burkina Faso, in total close to ten years of living and working in the country. My regular reading of Burkinabe newspapers, online media outlets, and social media, also means that I am, in a sense, always present in Burkinabe contexts.
2. The Place de la Révolution refers to a square in the heart of Ouagadougou, in the former central market square, located opposite a military camp. It was called Place de l'Armée then later rebaptized Place de la Nation until the arrival of the Democratic and Popular Revolution led by Captain Thomas Sankara. Since then it has been renamed Place de la Révolution. Under Compaoré this square was renamed again to take up the old name of Place de la Nation. Since the popular insurrection in October 2014, the name Place de la Révolution has been used again by the insurgents, even if its official name is still Place de la Nation.
3. There are important works discussing the political history in much more detail, far beyond the scope of this paper (Chouli 2012; 2018; Hagberg et al. 2018; Harsch 2017; Hilgers and Mazzocchetti 2010; Hilgers and Loada 2013; Jaffré 2019; Kabeya Muase 1989; Martens 1989; Ouédraogo 2022; Stroh 2021).
4. LIPAD became an important movement in 1983 when Thomas Sankara seized power; LIPAD/PAI took part in the CNR government 1983–84 (Diallo 2024; Martens 1989; Somé 1990). The LIPAD was an associative lever of PAI, whose militants often had to operate underground.
5. *Le congrès [de l'UGEV] de 1977 se livre à une condamnation explicite des étudiants de la LIPAD-PAI, assimilée officiellement à un « nouveau courant réformiste » (NCR) – pour les distinguer de l'« ancien courant réformiste » (ACR), terme qui vise les militants du MLN – traités aussi parfois de « réformistes impénitents » (UGEV, Jeune Volta spécial VIIIe congrès, 1977: 94-102). Ces joutes idéologiques se déroulent d'abord en France dans le cadre de la FEANF, où les Voltaïques sont alors largement représentés. En 1977, l'hégémonie du marxisme-léninisme au sein de la FEANF et de l'AEVF, se traduit sur le plan politique par l'apparition de l'Organisation communiste voltaïque (OCV).* (Bianchini and Korbéogo 2008, 41)
6. The ULC that was dissolved in 1981 reemerged in August 1984 as *Union de luttes communistes – reconstruite* (ULC-R). Prominent leaders of ULC-R were Valère Somé, Basile Guissou, Simon Compaoré, and Roch Marc Christian Kaboré (Diallo 2024, 69; see also Somé 1990; 2015).
7. *La Haute-Volta est un pays néocolonial agricole arriéré avec la persistance des vestiges des forces féodales qui ont une incidence importante particulièrement sur le plan idéologique au niveau des populations notamment du Nord et de l'Est du pays (Plateau central, Yatenga, Gourma, Liptako, Djelgodji).* (PCRV 2004, 3)
8. Obviously, the motto *Pain et Liberté pour le Peuple* has been widely used by leftist movements across the world.
9. The CCVC was initially named "la Coalition contre la vie chère," but the organization was later renamed "la Coalition de lutte contre la vie chère, la corruption, la fraude, l'impunitè et pour les libertès." In the minds of most Burkinabe, however, the CCVC still stands for "la coalition contre la vie chère."
10. While Salif Diallo was a former activist of the student association ANEB in Dakar, hence close to the PCRV (Hagberg 2023b), Simon Compaoré and Roch Marc Christian Kaboré used to be leaders of the UCL-R.
11. *La crise révolutionnaire se traduit ainsi par le refus de ceux d'en-bas (c'est-à-dire la classe ouvrière, la paysannerie laborieuse, les couches urbaines pauvres du semi prolétariat et la petite bourgeoisie ruinée par la crise, la vie chère, l'oppression et l'exploitation néocoloniales) de se laisser exploiter et opprimer comme avant.* (PCRV 2014, 1)
12. *La Haute-Volta dite Burkina Faso traverse une situation révolutionnaire qui a débouché sur une insurrection populaire jeudi 30 octobre et chassé du pouvoir vendredi 31 octobre 2014 l'autocrate Blaise Compaoré, malgré ses manœuvres sordides pour se maintenir à tout prix à la tête de l'État néocolonial.*

Notre peuple dans ses différentes composantes et la jeunesse populaire ont remporté une victoire salutaire dans un élan de détermination et de maturité politique en déjouant les divers complots et en faisant face avec un courage héroïque à la répression barbare avec son lot de plusieurs dizaines de morts et blesses. [...] *Mais très rapidement la classe ouvrière et le peuple se rendent compte que ses acquis arrachés de haute lutte sont menacés et confisqués par les clans putschistes de l'armée néocoloniale qui ont opéré un coup d'État militaire*

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réactionnaire. Leur objectif ultime est d'étouffer le processus révolutionnaire en cours et de sauver le système néocolonial en faillite. L'opposition bourgeoise réactionnaire tout en prônant le changement mène des tractations avec la haute hiérarchie militaire en vue d'un « gouvernement de transition » qui lui permettrait de garder des chances d'accéder au pouvoir néocolonial. (PCRV 2014)

13. *Autarcique et auto-isolé, le PCRV s'est retrouvé « aveugle » face à la situation pré-insurrectionnelle d'octobre 2014, ou dans l'impossibilité de lire correctement des aspirations populaires pressantes du moment, et de s'y impliquer, et d'orienter en conséquence ses leviers associatifs. Ainsi, ce réseau, via le CCVC, snoba et défia le mot d'ordre de désobéissance civile lancée le 28 octobre (par le CFOP et ses alliés) pour organiser le lendemain sa propre manifestation et lancer son propre mot d'ordre.* (Ouédraogo 2022, 127)

14. The RSP, the presidential security forces of Compaoré, was comprised of 1,300 heavily equipped and well-trained soldiers. In 1995, the RSP had replaced the *Centre national d'entraînement commando* (National Centre for Commando Training, CNEC) that had been in charge of presidential security since 1983. The CNEC was involved in the *coup d'état* on October 15, 1987 in which President Thomas Sankara was killed. In the September 2015 coup, the RSP under the leadership of General Gilbert Diendéré took power in a coup that failed after a week, to a large extent thanks to people's resistance (Hagberg 2015; 2023a). The RSP was dissolved by the government on September 25, 2015.

15. *Le PCRV, armé de la boussole du marxisme-léninisme, appelle la classe ouvrière, la jeunesse populaire, les hommes et les femmes du peuple, dans les villes comme dans les campagnes à faire l'unité autour de lui pour la réalisation de la Révolution Nationale Démocratique Populaire par l'Insurrection Générale Armée, pour chasser l'impérialisme notamment français et ses alliés locaux, constituer un Gouvernement Révolutionnaire Provisoire, convoquer une Assemblée Constituante et instituer une République Démocratique Moderne pour l'application de son Programme minimum, transition au socialisme scientifique.* (*Bug-Parga* 2018, 6)

16. *Je n'ai pas demandé à être membre de ce parti dont d'ailleurs je connaissais pas les membres dirigeants. Et en général pour ce type de parti, on n'y entrait pas sur demande mais par cooptation. Un jour, un camarade, qui m'a révélé être militant du PCRV m'a fait partie de la décision des dirigeants de m'intégrer dans leur parti, ils ont estimé que j'avais l'étoffe nécessaire pour les rejoindre. Il m'a indiqué qu'il y avait des étapes à franchir pour être membre à part entière du parti. La première étape consistait à effectuer un stage initial à l'issue duquel on pouvait être admis comme membre à part entière. Les stagiaires portaient le titre d'aspirants. Sans hésiter, j'ai donné mon accord. Et c'est ainsi que j'ai été coopté comme stagiaire du parti.* (Toguyeni 2018, 117–18)

17. The Arrondissement of Nongr-Masson is one municipality of the Ouagadougou District.

18. It may sound rather paradoxical that a party whose political line is to install the dictatorship of the proletarians has had a fundamental impact on democratic achievements.

19. *Notre syndicat ne s'est jamais couché devant la tyrannie et il ne le fera jamais. Il se dressera activement aux côtés de notre people pour faire barrage à l'instauration de tout pouvoir despotique dans notre pays. Non aux enlèvements et aux persécutions ! Non aux violations des décisions de justice et au déni de justice ! Vive la CGTB ! Vive la F-SYNTER ! Pain et Liberté pour le Peuple ! Le Bureau de la CNEC.* (CNEC 2024)

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