

# World Socialism

## FRENCH SOCIALIST CONGRESS

By HERBERT ZAM

The Mulhouse Congress of the French Socialist Party was expressive of the continually new problems which the rapid advance of history is placing before the workers. The

Party weighed the results of a year's joint activity with the communists, bringing to the fore the problem of organic unity. The Party's struggle against French fascism, carried on against the background of the events in Germany, Austria and Spain, placed on the agenda the question of the seizure of power and the establishment of a workers' government.

The formal decisions of the Congress can only be considered tentative,—as the Party is going through a historic process whose results cannot be judged from a single Congress. In the ranks, clarification and crystallization is continuing—the best sign that the Party is alive and vital and is preparing to solve its difficulties in a revolutionary fashion.

The Mulhouse Congress disclosed the fact that the shift to the right of the French communists, reflecting the shifts in policy of the Soviet Union, had become so pronounced that on all important questions the French CP was to the right not only of the revolutionary wing of the SP but of the SP as a whole.

### Coalition Government

Comrade Blum thus disclosed that the communists had not only assumed the initiative in the formation of a parliamentary "left" cartel (What has happened to "class against class?"); but had pressed for the formation of a *coalition government with the participation of the Socialists and supported by the Communists*. Fortunately, the Socialists avoided such a trap. The determined anti-coalition viewpoint was expressed in the unanimous expulsion of Frossard. The united front with the communists was unanimously approved and continued for the future, but a considerable amount of criticism was offered. The "left" (Zyromski, Pivert) criticized the leadership for lukewarmness and pointed to the neglect of direct Socialist propaganda and organization.

From the right Faure and Lebas pointed out that in actual practice, united front activity accommodated itself to the ideas of the entire anti-fascist mass (the broad "Peoples' Front") which aims to draw in the petty bourgeois masses. In order not to frighten them, the goal of Socialism was not mentioned. The communists were practically insistent upon giving the united front activities this general direction.

### Organic Unity

The Congress adopted the recommendation of the National Committee to work for organic unity with the communists. It was pointed out by the speakers that this must be the logical goal arising from united action between the two parties and their drawing together on questions of policy. In this connection the activity of the delegation on the International Executive was approved, including a proposal that negotiations be undertaken with the Communist International looking toward united action and eventual unity.

The subject at the Congress which aroused the most heated discussion, was the question of the seizure of power. Two main tendencies manifested themselves:

The solution of Blum-

Faure-Severac majority proposes to elaborate an economic program and organize a mass movement embracing the Socialists, communists, trade unions and petty bourgeois masses to place the Party in power. If the fascists and the generals seize Paris, a general strike and the mobilization of the suburbs (the "red ring" around Paris) would compel them to capitulate.

The left minority laid the main emphasis on the preparation for a direct struggle for the seizure of power. It demanded a reorganization of the Party to prepare it for extra-parliamentary struggles and more energetic action against fascist aggression.

In the voting on these two general policies, the left showed great strength. They cast 965 votes for three resolutions of this general character, against 2,025 for the Blum-Faure-Severac resolutions. The supporters of Vincent Auriol (the parliamentary secretary), 229 strong, abstained from voting but united with the Blum majority in the elections of the National Committee.

The Congress majority therefore consisted of three groups, two of them being to the right of Blum. The left also consisted of several groups, including the Trotskyists, who agreed with the general thesis of the left for a workers' government but added their own special viewpoint (4th International, etc.). They obtained 105 votes.

### Left Gets Ten

In the elections of the National Committee, the majority secured 21 members, the left obtained 10 members, and the Trotskyists secured one.

An incidental, not direct, issue was "national defence." Blum hailed the latest communist policy as an acceptance of his 1920 position and declared that organic unity would now be easier. Zyromski agreed with Blum, but Marceau Pivert of Paris took issue with them. He declared against "national defence," but said he didn't want that issue to interfere with the achievement of unity which is absolutely necessary. The Trotskyists, also came out against "national defence," and they were threatened by Blum that if they interfered with the achievement of organic unity, they would be left out of it.

### "National Defence"

If "national defence" becomes an important issue in the French Party, there will undoubtedly be tremendous opposition to it. The revolutionary workers in the French Socialist Party, having had their experience with social chauvinism in 1914, did not discard it only to adopt the more modern, more militant and more dangerous version, communo-chauvinism. This latter is nothing but petty-bourgeois patriotism cloaking itself with the red toga of "defence of the Soviet Union" (not Belgium). The French Socialists will find little reason for organic unity if it is to be used for "national defence" rather than for capturing power.