

World Socialism

FRENCH SOCIALIST CONFERENCE

By HERBERT ZAM

The main question which confronted the recent special conference of the French Socialist Party was the tactics to be followed in the parliamentary elections which will take place April 26 and May 3. In view of the strong likelihood that the People's Front will obtain a majority in these elections, the tactics bearing upon them are obviously important. Two main questions were involved: Relations with the Communists and relations with the Radicals.

The majority, headed by Leon Blum, favored the proposal that for the first ballot, which requires an absolute majority for election, the Socialist Party have its own candidates. The Party must appear under its own flag, with its own slogans and program. So long as there is no united Party, any other course would be tantamount to liquidation, Blum pointed out. The minority, led by Marceau Pivert, wanted a common ticket with the Communists even on the first ballot, in order to encourage the unity sentiments of the masses. The majority proposal was carried by 2,971 votes to 412. A concession was finally made to the minority to the effect that in exceptional cases, joint tickets may be arranged. This will probably be the tactic in the city of Paris.

Tactics for Second Ballot

A lively discussion also took place on the tactics to be followed on the second ballot, which requires only a plurality. The majority proposal was to support the candidates who supported the People's Front program and who had the greatest chances of defeating the reactionary. (Usually, the candidate on the Left having the largest vote on the first ballot is supported by all other Left parties on the second ballot.) The minority amended that no candidates who had voted for Laval's emergency decrees should be supported. This was aimed at a section of the Radicals, headed by Marchandeau, mayor of Rheims, and to a certain extent Herriot, who stood by Laval up to the last minute. In the election these elements are usually supported by the more moderate right parties on the second ballot. They thus want to be both in the left and right camps at the same time. After Blum explained that it was not intended to amnesty this element for its support of Laval, but only to permit the district organizations to decide which specific candidate, within the limits of the above policy, to support on the second ballot, the majority proposal was carried almost unanimously.

This decision may have to undergo some modifications, however, as a result of the voting in the Chamber on the law introduced by the Socialists to establish proportional representation. The Radicals broke with the left camp, and by voting against the proposal, succeeded in defeating it. The present method of election is favorable to the reactionaries, and the vote of the Radicals is a clear manifestation of their willingness to make agreements with the reactionaries on the second ballot, and not stick to the People's Front. Should this happen, the Socialists and Communists will very likely withdraw their support from the Radicals in such cases.

The Conference also adopted the agenda for the regular Convention, to take place May 20 in Nantes as follows:

1. The Party Statutes.
 2. Conditions of the native population in North Africa.
 3. The Political Situation and policy of the parliamentary group after the elections.
 4. National Council elections.
- A motion by the minority to

add to the agenda the position of the Party toward foreign policies and the war danger was defeated by a vote of 2,419 to 825.

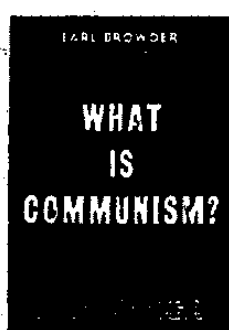
Another item which aroused great interest was a report by Leon Blum on the progress of the unity negotiations which had begun April, 1935, on the initiative of the Socialist Party. The unity commission has worked actively since October and has made great progress. The realization of trade

union-unity should prove a great help in accelerating the movement for political unity. Four main points are to be settled:

1. Conception of proletarian dictatorship; 2. Attitude of the united party to the Russian Revolution; 3. International affiliation; 4. The question of ideological centralization in the united party (monolithic party or inclusive party). Agreement had already been reached, Blum reported, on the first two points, but after the recent Congress of the French Communist Party, they came into the unity commission with new reservations. The Congress has unsettled the hitherto friendly relations between the two parties. Blum ended by declaring that in spite of the existing difficulties, he is convinced that there will be a united political party of the working class in France.

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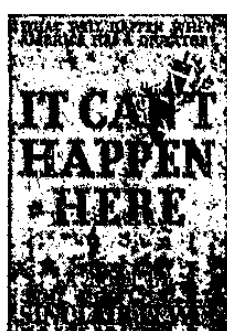
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