The French Socialists and Tripartisme 1944-1947

B. D. Graham

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This book is concerned with a period of post-war economic recovery and political change when Socialists, Communists, Christian Democrats, and – until January 1946 – General de Gaulle were forced to work together to carry out basic reforms and draw up the Constitution of the Fourth French Republic.

The alliance forged in the Resistance during the war became an alliance subject to political stresses and strains in which the Socialists were the mediators between, on the one hand, the Christian Democrats and the Communists, and, on the other, General de Gaulle.

In an alliance government, conflict of party ideas and ideals seems inevitable. The Socialist leaders were convinced that parliamentary democracy would survive in France only if a régime of monolithic parties, bound together in firm alliances, were to provide the basis of stable government. The price they paid was heavy: a loss of internal stability and confidence in their organization and repudiation of the leadership that had guided the party through the ordeal of resistance against the Germans and through political reconstruction. Léon Blum, leader of the pre-war Popular Front, and Daniel Mayer tried to persuade the party of the necessity to revise its doctrine in order to command liberal middle-class support. They failed, and were succeeded by Guy Mollet. But he was soon forced to return to the policies they had laid down.

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French Socialists and Tripartisme

FRANCE

DEPARTMENTS AND CONSTITUENCIES

1945-1947

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MILES
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KILOMÈTRES

The French Socialists and Tripartisme 1944 – 1947

B. D. GRAHAM

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THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
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For L.C.W.

Tynan: Is it true that you have abandoned your novel about the French Resistance?

Sartre: Yes. The situation was too simple. I don't mean that it is simple to be courageous and risk one's life; what I mean is that the choice was too simple. One's allegiances were obvious. Since then, things have become much more complicated; much more romantic, in the literary sense of the term. There are many more intrigues and cross-currents. To write a novel whose hero dies in the Resistance, committed to the idea of liberty, would be much too easy. Nowadays, commitment is altogether harder to define.

From a discussion between Jean-Paul Sartre and Kenneth Tynan,
The Observer, 25 June 1961

Preface

This book aims at presenting the difficulties encountered by the French Socialist Party during the years 1944 to 1947, when it was involved in a series of cabinet coalitions with the Communist and Christian Democrat Parties. In one sense, this is a study of the strategies adopted by the Party's leadership to meet the special demands of the post-war situation; in another, it is an inquiry into the stresses to which the Party as a whole was subjected when it attempted to hold the balance between its two headstrong allies. The relationship between these two themes very largely defined the scope of the narrative, focusing attention on the activities of the Party's Paris executive and parliamentary group, and dealing with the general life of the Party only when that illuminated such problems as, for example, the leader's relations with the S.F.I.O.'s National Council and the various National Congresses.

The period under review has already been covered in Gordon Wright's *The Reshaping of French Democracy*, and my debt to this source, as to Philip Williams's *Politics in Post-War France*, is freely acknowledged. However, whereas Wright concentrates mainly on the period of the Constituent Assemblies and on the political compromises which underlay the Fourth Republican Constitution, this study is directed towards the Socialist Party's role in the tripartite alliance, which, having been forged during the Resistance, continued beyond the constituent period and ended, to all intents and purposes, when the Communists departed from the Ramadier cabinet in May 1947. The end of this alliance marked the final failure of the Popular Front ideal in French politics, and a significant turning point in the history of the Socialist movement.

Most of the material for this study was gathered between 1958 and 1960, during which time I was first a scholar at St Antony's College, Oxford, and then a member of the *Cycle supérieur d'études politiques* of the *Fondation nationale des sciences politiques*, Paris, and I wish to record my gratitude both to the

British Council and to The Australian National University, whose financial assistance made my stay in Europe possible.

Of the many people to whom I am indebted for assistance in my research, I wish to thank especially Mr Philip Williams, of Nuffield College, Oxford, who showed unfailing patience in helping me to define the exact limits of the topic and criticized in detail the successive drafts of the manuscript; and Professor René Rémond, of the *Fondation nationale*, who supervised my work in France, advised me on source materials, and made valuable comments on the early drafts. I am also indebted to M. Jean Touchard, General Secretary of the *Fondation nationale*, M. Serge Hurtig of the same institution, M. François Goguel, Secretary of the Senate of the French Republic, M. Daniel Mayer, President of *La Ligue française pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen*, Mme. Odette Merlat, and Mme. Robert Portillion, of the S.F.I.O., for help given me in Paris; to Dr Saul Rose and Mr James Joll, of St Antony's College, and the late Professor L. C. Webb, of The Australian National University, for encouragement and valuable criticisms of the draft; to the Publications Department of The Australian National University, for preparing the final manuscript, and to Miss Jacqueline Howard, then Secretary of the Political Science Department, who typed it. My research was made much easier by the co-operation and advice which I received from the staffs of several libraries in Oxford and in Paris, but my debt is greatest to Miss Anne Abley, of St Antony's College, to M. Nozières, of the *Fondation nationale*, and to the archives officers at the headquarters of the French Socialist Party at 12 Cité Malesherbes, Paris. I should also like to thank Mr Hans Gunther, of the Cartographic Section, Geography Department, A.N.U., who drew the maps.

Many of my friends took a great deal of trouble in reading portions of the drafts and in discussing points of interpretation. I am especially grateful in this regard to M. Jean-Claude Vatin, Dr Angus Macintyre, Miss Ruth Metzger, Dr D. A. Low, Dr Ravinder Kumar, Mr K. L. Kinsman, M. Jean-Luc Vellut and Miss Ruve Wallis (who assisted me in the preparation of translations); and finally to N.B.G., who helped me in all stages of research, preparation, and writing.

B. D. GRAHAM

Canberra, 1964

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Abbreviations

Parties and Organizations

C.F.L.N.	<i>Comité français de la Libération Nationale</i>
C.F.T.C.	<i>Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens</i>
C.G.A.	<i>Confédération générale de l'agriculture</i>
C.G.T.	<i>Confédération générale du travail</i>
C.N.F.	<i>Comité National Français</i>
G.S.E.	<i>Groupes socialistes d'entreprises</i>
M.L.N.	<i>Mouvement de libération nationale</i>
M.R.P.	<i>Mouvement républicain populaire</i>
M.U.R.F.	<i>Mouvement unifié de la renaissance française</i>
P.R.L.	<i>Parti républicain de la Liberté</i>
R.G.R.	<i>Rassemblement des gauches républicaines</i>
R.P.F.	<i>Rassemblement du peuple français</i>
S.F.I.O.	<i>Section française de l'internationale ouvrière</i>
U.D.S.R.	<i>Union démocratique et socialiste de la résistance</i>

Publications

A.C.P.	<i>Assemblée consultative provisoire</i>
A.N.	<i>Assemblée nationale</i> (elected on 10 November 1946)
A.N.C. I	<i>Assemblée nationale constituante</i> (elected on 21 October 1945)
A.N.C. II	<i>Assemblée nationale constituante</i> (elected on 2 June 1946)
A.P.	<i>L'Année politique</i> (1944-1945, 1946 and 1947)
Déb.	<i>Débats parlementaires</i>
Doc.	<i>Documents parlementaires</i>
J.O.	<i>Journal officiel de la République française</i>
L.D.	<i>Lois et décrets</i>
O.D.	<i>Ordonnances et décrets</i>
S.C.C. I	<i>Séances de la commission de la constitution. Comptes rendus analytiques</i> (First Constituent Assembly)
S.C.C. II	<i>Séances . . . , etc.</i> (Second Constituent Assembly)

Introduction

When France was liberated from the Germans in the autumn of 1944, her administrative and economic life was at a low ebb. The Vichy government had virtually collapsed, industry was at a standstill, and the large towns were short of food. When General de Gaulle arrived in Paris in late August, he immediately set himself to restore public order, revive the economy, and build up the French war effort, tasks in which he received the active support of the main parties of the Resistance – the Communists, the Socialists, and the Christian Democrats. All three, however, expected that with the return of peace the General would join them in carrying out an economic and social revolution and bringing into effect a democratic constitution. Instead of revolution 1945 and 1946 brought a sluggish economy recovery, inflation, and continued food shortages. The three parties were yoked together in a coalition alliance which, although it did carry out some economic reforms, became most unpopular and barely succeeded in winning approval for a parliamentary constitution in the referendum of October 1946. In the National Assembly established under the new Constitution an effort was made to break away from *tripartisme* but the difficulties proved to be too great. In January 1947 Paul Ramadier was obliged to form yet another coalition representing the three main parties, although he also included several ministers from the Radical Party and other groups of the Centre Right. This extension of the alliance in fact destroyed its equilibrium; the Communists found themselves being overruled in several areas of policy, especially in colonial affairs, and finally they took the opportunity of a dispute over economic policy to leave the government in May 1947.

Throughout the whole of this period, each of the main parties had taken part in *tripartisme* at considerable cost. One of the reasons for the Communists' withdrawal was the growing dissatisfaction of their associated trade unions with the government's failure to bring down prices or to raise the level of real wages. The Christian Democratic M.R.P. (*Mouvement*

républicain populaire) was a seriously divided party; its leaders, progressive, democratic, and, for the most part, former members of the Resistance, were continually at odds with their conservative and anti-Communist rank and file members, especially those of the clerical regions in the western and eastern provinces of the country. Perhaps the greatest strain was felt by the Socialist Party, which, as *le parti charnière*, or the hinge party of the alliance, was obliged to settle policy disputes between the Communist Party and the M.R.P. – in fact, to hold the coalition together. Had either the alliance been popular – which it most certainly was not – or had the S.F.I.O. (*Section française de l'internationale ouvrière*) emerged as the strongest post-war party, this mediating role might have proved an advantage. As it was, the S.F.I.O. polled fewer votes than either the Communist Party or the M.R.P. in the elections of October 1945, June 1946, and November 1946.

There could hardly have been a greater contrast between the place which the Socialists actually occupied in the three-party alliance between 1944 and 1947 and the high hopes they had entertained immediately after Liberation. When it had first appeared in open politics again, strengthened by its Resistance experience, the S.F.I.O. had attracted widespread attention; it seemed to be animated by a new spirit and vision. Its young leaders won admiration by their determination to improve the Party's organization and to prevent the re-emergence of its pre-war factions. Many middle-class people were turning to Socialism as the way to the new order. For them Léon Blum, the S.F.I.O.'s elder statesman, symbolized the humanitarian and liberal aspects of the Socialist tradition, and when the old man returned from German imprisonment in May 1945 he found himself a national hero. The warmth of his welcome, and the enthusiasm he found amongst his followers, persuaded him that his party was about to claim its heritage. 'It is socialism', he proclaimed, 'which is master of the hour; it is socialism which will one day be master of the Earth'.¹

Blum's dream of Socialist ascendancy was never realized; instead the S.F.I.O. had to suffer the indignities of a minor role in an unpopular and badly-knit alliance. The effect on the psychology of the Party was serious. Committed by their

¹Speech at the 37th Congress of the S.F.I.O., 12 Aug. 1945 (*L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum, Naissance de la Quatrième République, La Vie du Parti et la Doctrine Socialiste, 1945-1947*, p. 77).

humanitarian liberalism to the defence of parliamentary democracy, the Socialists accepted *tripartisme* as the only way, given the distribution of power in post-war France, to provide the country with strong government, a liberal constitution, and basic economic reforms. Nevertheless, as Marxists, they were bound by tradition and doctrine to think of themselves as a revolutionary party, accepting only such responsibilities within the bourgeois state as were necessary to hold the forces of reaction at bay. The tension between these two commitments became all the more serious when a large number of rank and file Socialists began to blame the leadership for the Party's attachment to *tripartisme*, and even for the fact that their exaggerated expectations of the post-Liberation period had not been fulfilled. At the Party's Congress of August 1946 a factional revolt forced the Resistance leadership to give way to a new team, headed by Guy Mollet. But a change of leaders provided no escape from the essential dilemma. Even under the Ramadier Government in 1947 the S.F.I.O. found itself acting as a buffer between the Communists and the parties of the Centre, and, when the Communists left the government in May, the Socialists seriously debated the possibility of following their example. Their decision not to break with the parties of the Centre proved to be a fateful one. By the end of the year, with the Cold War well under way, the S.F.I.O. was firmly linked to the Third Force alliance, opposed on the Left by the Communists and on the Right by General de Gaulle's *Rassemblement du peuple français*.

In several respects the ordeal of *tripartisme* tested the Socialist movement more severely than any other crisis in its history. From its early days, the S.F.I.O. had been deeply concerned with preserving its identity as a Marxist, proletarian party, despite the fact that its search for power within the bourgeois state was forcing it to cultivate a middle-class vote and to accept parliamentary responsibilities. Whenever these responsibilities became exceptionally heavy, as during the *Cartel des gauches* of 1924-6 and the Popular Front of 1934-7, a mood of passionate introspection would descend upon the Party. Its congresses would debate questions of integrity, the basic doctrines and sayings of the founding fathers, Jean Jaurès and Jules Guesde. Since *tripartisme* involved the Party in much more onerous, and much less fruitful, public responsibilities than it had ever held before, the soul searching became correspondingly more intense. At the Congresses of 1945 and 1946 the delegates discussed not so

much the immediate situation as the bearing of the past on their problems – all the doctrinal debates, the strategic dilemmas and the crises of leadership of the previous forty years were brought under fresh scrutiny. French Socialism in the years 1944-7 passed through a period of turmoil whose proper setting is the history of the European Social Democratic movement as a whole. Our first task must be to trace the outlines of that history.

European Socialism before 1914

At the turn of the century, the Social Democratic Parties of western Europe found themselves faced with a serious moral problem. Tracing their descent from the progressive forces of the great uprisings of 1848, they assumed that the transition from the capitalist to the socialist order of society could be achieved only after the proletariat had forcibly seized political power. Yet in spite of their attachment to the idea of violent revolution, they allowed themselves to be drawn into the politics of those same bourgeois states which they wanted to overthrow. Inevitably they found themselves called upon to participate in elections, to help in forming parliamentary groups, and to accept legislative responsibilities. As a result what had begun as a minor problem of strategy rapidly became a problem concerning the essential integrity of the Party; how could a supposedly revolutionary movement take part in administering a bourgeois state? In France the issue was obscured during the Dreyfus affair, in which one group of Socialists helped to defend the Third Republic against its enemies on the Right, mainly on the grounds that the bourgeois order had to become firmly established before the conditions for a proletarian revolution could arise. However, the fundamental question was not whether Social Democrats should preserve the bourgeois state from counter-revolution but whether they should normally participate in bourgeois politics for the sake of reform. Here lay the real danger. How could they ensure that such participation would not commit them to the maintenance of the established order, that the habits of electoral and parliamentary life would not grow on them, that their organization, instead of being a tightly-coiled instrument of revolutionary action, would not deteriorate into a commonplace election machine? How could they pretend to be a party with a proletarian and revolutionary identity and yet act in conformity with bourgeois standards of political behaviour, even for what were clearly defined ends?

The dilemma was fully discussed in the first years of this

century at the congresses of the Second International, but neither at these nor at the conferences of the various national movements was a satisfactory solution worked out. One trend was clear: whether or not they had planned to do so, most of the Social Democratic parties in western Europe were accepting legal and parliamentary action as a fruitful way of obtaining reforms and at the same time were showing increasing reluctance to consider violence as an instrument of policy. The principles underlying reformism could hardly be reconciled with Marxist orthodoxy, and some intellectuals in the movement were attracted to the possibility of revising Marx's social and economic theories in the light of their parties' modern practice. Revisionism received a great impetus after the publication, in 1899, of *Die Voraussetzungen des Sozialismus und die Aufgaben der Sozialdemokratie*, in which Eduard Bernstein contended that Marx's predictions about the course of the class struggle were not being confirmed by events. He denied that society was continuing to break down into two hostile groups, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. In fact, he claimed, wealth was becoming more evenly distributed amongst the owners of property, the workers were no longer on the verge of impoverishment, and the social structure was becoming more complex and interdependent. Pointing to the middle class, that mixture of artisans, small proprietors, and peasants, which Marx had predicted would be absorbed by the proletariat, Bernstein maintained that it was actually increasing and that a 'new' middle class of white-collar workers was already constituting a link between the bourgeoisie on the one hand and the proletariat on the other. Political democracy had, he claimed, provided unexpected scope for the action of Socialist parties, and through their pressure the exploiting tendencies of capitalism were being eliminated. The advances made in this field, according to Bernstein, showed that the proletariat could realize its economic and social demands within the parliamentary régime. Revolution by violence was no longer necessary.

The orthodox Marxists, of course, continued to insist that the differences in wealth between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat would continue to increase until, in a revolutionary crisis, the workers would take control of the bourgeois state and institute the dictatorship of the proletariat. In keeping with the tenets of classical Marxism, they maintained that only after the seizure of state power could the proletariat proceed to socialize the means of production, distribution and exchange, thereby providing the

conditions for the growth of a society free from class divisions. Thereupon the state as an instrument of political coercion would wither away. Having accepted such a view of the political future, the orthodox Marxist's main task was to prepare himself for the final crisis; he could hardly be expected to take much account of the problems which might arise for a Socialist party in the pre-revolutionary period. Its only task was to prepare itself for the final crisis, and protect its integrity in the interim. In the words of the *Communist Manifesto*:

The immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: Formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat.²

While both Marx and Engels admitted that a Socialist party could realize some of its demands by legal means within the parliamentary framework, by forcing the ruling classes to grant piecemeal concessions, their theory was based on the assumption that the bourgeoisie would never voluntarily surrender their political power and privilege. These could be taken from them only by violent revolution. Marx refused to consider the state as anything other than an instrument for the domination of one class by another; he certainly did not regard it as an institution within which classes could settle their differences by negotiation. True to this conception, the orthodox Marxists were insisting in 1900 that Socialist parties, despite their unexpected success in winning votes and parliamentary seats, should neither form alliances with bourgeois parties nor appoint ministers to bourgeois cabinets. There could be no co-operation with the class enemy.

The debate between the orthodox Marxists and the revisionists was conducted most fully within the German Social Democratic Party. In 1891, one year after Bismarck's anti-Socialist law had lapsed, the party had adopted the Erfurt programme, a reaffirmation of the traditional Marxist point of view. Bernstein's book provided the revisionists in the party with a firm doctrine from which to criticize the theses of the Erfurt programme, but the main orthodox theorists, Karl Kautsky and Rosa Luxemburg, still wielded considerable influence, and persuaded the Party's 1903 Dresden Congress to declare its disapproval of revisionism

²Karl Marx, *Selected Works* (2 vols., second English ed., Moscow, 1946) I, p. 123.

and its opposition to the participation of Socialists in bourgeois ministries. However, the revisionists were allowed to remain members of the Party, which in fact continued to devote most of its efforts to building up its electoral and parliamentary strength. By 1914, with a representation of 110 members in the Reichstag, it was thoroughly reformist in practice even if it pretended not to be revisionist in theory.

If it was in the German Social Democratic Party that the doctrinal issues at stake emerged most clearly, it was in the French Socialist movement that the actual problems of strategy came to the fore. In France between the years 1898 and 1905, the question of whether a Socialist party should work constructively within the parliamentary régime became linked with a wider question, whether or not it was the duty of a Socialist party to defend the bourgeois state against the forces of clerical and conservative reaction. During this period, the Dreyfus affair became the occasion for a concerted attack on the Republic by the army, the Church, and the counter-revolutionary Right. The *Parti socialiste français* gave its support to the Republican government on the grounds that, since socialism could evolve only within a liberal democratic régime, it was the duty of Socialists to defend such a régime against reactionaries. As its leader, Jean Jaurès defended the Party's action in supporting the Waldeck-Rousseau ministry of 1899-1902 and justified the action of another important Socialist, Millerand, in accepting a post in that government. On the other hand, Jules Guesde argued from the orthodox viewpoint that Socialists must leave the bourgeoisie to settle its own civil wars, even if the Republic were destroyed as a result. Guesde's principles of non-intervention were accepted by the *Parti socialiste de France*, formed in 1901 by dissident members of the older party, which denied that Socialists had any reason for helping bourgeois parties or joining their governments. The two Socialist parties remained on bad terms during the Combes ministry of 1902-05, which enforced, against the opposition of the Right, several laws directed against certain religious congregations. While the *Parti socialiste français* gave Combes every support, the Guesdist party officially remained in opposition, although some of its deputies voted for the government on close divisions. By April 1905, however, much of the bitterness had been removed from their rivalry, and in that month they combined to form the S.F.I.O., *Parti socialiste, Section française de l'internationale ouvrière*. The debate between the Guesdists and

the revisionists then continued within the unified Party, flaring up every now and again.

Both the German and French movements, then, had sacrificed doctrinal clarity at the altar of organizational unity, although few were willing to admit that the divergence between the revisionist and the orthodox schools was in fact the surface trace of a fundamental cleavage. Only men such as Bernstein recognized that the time had come to rethink those parts of Socialist theory which concerned parliamentary and electoral activity, especially as regards problems of alliances with bourgeois parties. They saw that it was no longer good enough to formulate short-term strategies on the assumption that either a revolution or a great electoral victory would occur on the morrow; if a Socialist party absorbed a large proportion of the middle class vote, thereby weakening the parties of the Centre, it was obliged to help those parties to defend themselves against the Right. Similarly if a Socialist party found that it was achieving many of its objects through parliamentary activity and with the support of progressive elements of the bourgeoisie, it had to consider the possibility of carrying out a revolution by legal rather than by violent means. Jaurès, speaking in 1899, was quite prepared to suggest that victory at the ballot boxes would be more satisfactory than victory at the barricades:

We have been obliged to abandon the false hypothesis of the iron law of wages, which had prevented the workers from struggling for the immediate amelioration of their condition; we must now abandon the iron law of government, which still sets the revolutionaries in opposition to the bourgeois state.³

By 1903 he was saying that the penetration of the French state by 'Socialist and proletarian influence' had already begun, and that it would become:

so full, deep, and decisive, that in time, by accumulated efforts, we shall find the proletarian and Socialist state to have replaced the oligarchic and bourgeois state.⁴

Although Jaurès paid lip-service to the idea of revolution, much as a comfortable Christian might speak of the Second Coming, most of his writing was in fact revisionist in its implications. By nature he was reluctant to condone violence as a technique of

³Cited by Aaron Noland, *The Founding of the French Socialist Party (1893-1905)*, p. 105.

⁴Cited by Noland, p. 154.

political action. He believed that the 'good life' of Socialism could be attained only if economic democracy were not achieved at the expense of humanist values and traditions.

Though one cannot consider man apart from his economic relationships, neither can one consider economic relationships apart from man; and while history is from one aspect a phenomenon evolving in accordance with mechanical laws, it is at the same time an aspiration working itself out within the framework of an ideal.⁵

Jaurès was reluctant to pursue the idea to its logical conclusion, and it remained for Bernstein to examine fully the strategic implications of the revisionist approach and to argue strongly that liberal democracy could in fact form a prelude to socialist democracy.

Feudalism, with its unbending organizations and corporations, had to be destroyed nearly everywhere by violence. The liberal organizations of modern society are distinguished from those exactly because they are flexible and capable of change and development. They do not need to be destroyed, but only to be further developed. For that we need organization and energetic action, but not necessarily a revolutionary dictatorship.⁶

Bernstein therefore emphasized the necessity for Socialist parties to change their attitude and to work systematically for parliamentary and governmental power.

The whole practical activity of social democracy is directed toward creating circumstances and conditions which shall render possible and secure a transition (free from convulsive outbursts) of the modern social order into a higher one.⁷

But even he did not proceed to the next point in this line of reasoning and argue that a Socialist party, in order to win a majority in parliament, would have to win a large middle class vote, which it could do only by changing its character as a party. As Peter Gay has pointed out,

We must assume that Bernstein believed that the new middle class, along with sizeable sections of the old middle class, would join with the proletariat in voting Socialism into power. Further,

⁵Cited by Noland, p. 37.

⁶Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, New York, 1909, pp. 164-5, cited by Harry W. Laidler, *Social-Economic Movements*, p. 253.

⁷Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism*, pp. 146-7, cited by Laidler, p. 252.

these groups would have to acquiesce in the actions of the new Socialist regime and eschew a violent counter-revolution no matter how strongly opposed they might be to individual Socialist measures. It is perfectly evident that this assumption of a radicalized and democratic middle class is essential to Revisionism. For without it, how could the Socialists ever come to power legally and then hold it without violence?⁸

The intellectual and doctrinal dimensions of this dilemma were not fully appreciated by the rank and file, who used rough and ready criteria to decide whether their representatives were remaining true to their cause. Their caution had a sound historical basis. When the first radical deputies had been sent to Paris in the seventies and eighties, many of them had soon identified themselves with the attitudes of the centre and conservative deputies. Jean Jaurès, writing in 1887, had noted with disdain:

The workers' deputies who come to Parliament quickly adopt bourgeois values (*s'embourgeoisent vite*), in the worst sense; they lose their vitality and their early energy, and all that they retain is a tribune's kind of sentimentality.⁹

To prevent the *embourgeoisement* of their representatives, the early radicals and Socialists had developed a variety of sanctions. It became the custom for radical deputies to sign election pledges, to which they were held responsible by permanent electoral committees, and experiments were made in the possibility of supervising deputies through extra-parliamentary executives of various parties. As proof of their good faith, workers' deputies were expected always to dress and speak like working men, even in Parliament and certainly when addressing their constituents. Jaurès understood this and observed the conventions faithfully; his heartiness and assumed coarseness (he created a great impression by spitting into his handkerchief) have ensured for him a reputation, even in Communist lore, of being a genuine *fils du peuple*. Blum, on the other hand, was not prepared to make concessions of this order and failed to win the unreserved affection of the Party's membership. The ordinary Socialist's demand that his leaders should conform to a crude public style was in many ways unwarranted, but it reflected a concern that

⁸*The Dilemma of Democratic Socialism, Eduard Bernstein's Challenge to Marx*, p. 207.

⁹Robert Michels, *Political Parties, A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, p. 305.

his Party, while taking part in bourgeois politics, should nevertheless retain its proletarian identity.

Ideas about a Socialist Party's integrity were founded on similar considerations. The orthodox Marxists argued that if a Socialist party became too respectable, and co-operated with bourgeois parties, its corruption would only be a matter of time. Its practical acceptance of the bourgeois régime would enable professional politicians and time-servers to use it as an avenue to power; it would lose its revolutionary enthusiasm; its supporters would become dispirited. Bebel once expressed such fears in these terms:

When a socialist party forms an alliance with a section of the bourgeoisie, and institutes a policy of co-operation with the government, not only does it repel its own best militants, driving them into the ranks of the anarchists, or into isolated action, but it also attracts to itself a swarm of bourgeois of very dubious value.¹⁰

French Socialism between the Wars

The precarious balance between revisionism and orthodoxy which European Socialists maintained with difficulty until the first world war was broken by the Russian Revolution. At the First Congress of the Communist International, held at Moscow in 1919, the traditional revolutionary thesis was restated in a Manifesto which denied that Socialism could ever be realized through parliamentary means. While admitting that useful purposes could sometimes be served by legal forms of political activity within the bourgeois régime, the International laid down that there could be no compromise in the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. As Stalin asserted:

The essential questions of the labor movement within the capitalist order are settled by force, by open struggle, the general strike, the insurrection of the proletarian masses.¹¹

By 1921 this line was being pursued in nearly all west European countries by the newly formed Communist parties, which were already beginning to alienate working class voters from the Socialist and Social Democratic parties.

Naturally, in a situation such as this, the Socialist parties were at an extreme disadvantage. Whatever course they took – whether they formed an alliance with the parties of the Centre or with the

¹⁰Ibid., p. 213.

¹¹Cited by Laidler, p. 372.

Communists – they would offend important sections of their own rank and file without at the same time decisively checking the Communists' electoral advance. Reactions varied from country to country. The German Social Democratic Party, having collaborated with the Catholic and liberal Centre parties to establish the Weimar Republic, willingly supported or participated in the coalition governments of the twenties and early thirties. This policy was violently opposed by the German Communists, who insisted on regarding the 'social fascists' as their main enemies until 1933, when the Nazi revolution was already beginning. In Belgium, the Socialists joined coalition governments with bourgeois parties in 1919 and 1925 and took part in a series of national union cabinets which held office between 1935 and the outbreak of war in 1940. The Belgian Communists consistently repudiated such collaboration with the bourgeoisie.

In Germany and in Belgium, the Communist parties had begun as small breakaway movements from the Social Democratic parties; in France the position was reversed. At the S.F.I.O.'s Tours congress of 1920, it was decided by a majority of the mandates that the organization should be called the *Parti communiste français* and that it should affiliate with the Communist International. The dissenters then formed another Socialist party, to which they gave the old title of S.F.I.O. Throughout the twenties they steadily built up an organization and a parliamentary party, while refusing either to deny their proletarian origins, moderate their economic radicalism, or participate in coalition governments.

After the victory of the *Cartel des gauches* in the 1924 election, the French Socialists refused on several occasions to join the Radicals in forming a coalition ministry of the Centre-Left, with the result that the Centre governments which followed each other between June 1924 and July 1926 were unable to pursue progressive economic policies. Finally, in July 1926, Poincaré formed a conservative government which held office for the next two years. Léon Blum drew on this experience to suggest that the S.F.I.O. needed to be more flexible in its strategic thinking, and that it should consider the possibility of taking part in a cabinet coalition based on a Left-wing parliamentary alliance. Blum was careful to point out that this course would involve the Socialists only in the 'exercise of power' as distinct from the 'conquest of power', which he agreed could be realized only in a revolutionary situation. However, he warned the Socialists that

if they were to accept the responsibility for exercising power, they would have to accept the obligation of governing on behalf of the bourgeoisie as well as of the proletariat; they could not use their access to governmental power to foment a revolution. Blum's idea remained out of favour for several years, and when the Left won the 1932 election the S.F.I.O. again declined to form a coalition with the Radicals.

Until the early thirties the French Communists had made the S.F.I.O. the target of their most bitter attacks. However, once the full implications of the Nazi Revolution became apparent and the Communists saw the ease with which Hitler had established his dictatorship, abolished all parties except his own, and dissolved the trade unions, they realized how greatly they had underestimated the coercive power of fascism and overestimated the revolutionary capacity of the workers. Alarmed by an outbreak of Right-wing street riots in Paris on 6 February 1934, which they regarded as an attempt at a fascist insurrection, the Communists and Socialists were forced to settle their differences to meet a common danger. By June of that year they were discussing what steps they could take to meet the threat – *le fascisme ne passera pas* – and by 1935 they had linked up with the Radicals in a powerful Popular Front movement, which soon attracted widespread support. The Seventh World Congress of the Communist International, held in July and August 1935, praised the French Communists for their initiative in joining the Popular Front and at last conceded that alliances with liberal parties had become necessary,

because, in countries of bourgeois democracy, we want to block the road in the way of reaction and the offensive of capital and fascism, prevent the abrogation of bourgeois-democratic liberties, forestall fascism's terroristic vengeance upon the proletariat, the revolutionary section of the peasants and the intellectuals, save the young generation from physical and spiritual degeneration.¹²

At the French elections of 1936 the Popular Front parties between them won about 380 of the 618 seats, and Blum then formed a government composed mainly of Socialists and Radicals;

¹²Resolutions of the Communist International, Seventh Congress, 1935, p. 7, cited by Laidler, p. 461. See also James Joll, 'The Making of the Popular Front' in *The Decline of the Third Republic*, ed. Joll, St. Antony's Papers Number 5, pp. 36-66, and John T. Marcus, *French Socialism in the Crisis Years, 1933-36. Fascism and the French Left*.

the Communists had refused to accept cabinet posts, assuring Blum only of their conditional support in parliament. In keeping with his doctrine of the 'exercise of power', Blum made clear that his intention was 'to administer the bourgeois State', 'to put into effect the Popular Front programme, not to transform the social system'.¹³ During the weeks immediately following the election he pushed through an impressive list of reforms, including measures which gave the state improved controls over the Bank of France, raised wages by an average of 12 per cent, introduced a forty-hour working week, and provided the workers with paid holidays. Disturbed by this bout of progressive legislation, the Radicals became reluctant to consider any further changes and Blum felt obliged to call a halt to his reform programme early in 1937. At once the Communists and the Left-wing Socialists accused Blum of being over-sensitive to the feelings of the conservative middle classes, and added to this the charge that he had prevented France from intervening in the Spanish Civil War. Blum's fall came rapidly. In June 1937 he tried to persuade parliament to grant his government special financial powers, but the Senate rejected his proposals and, unwilling to press the issue to the point of provoking a constitutional crisis, he resigned his mandate.

From this time onwards the morale of the S.F.I.O. deteriorated rapidly, and Blum found increasing difficulty in holding together its factions. There was a basic disagreement between a strong pacifist group, headed by Paul Faure, the Party's General Secretary, and a militant, anti-fascist Left-wing group. The pacifists approved the Munich agreement and opposed the idea of going to war with Nazi Germany, but the anti-fascists, who had earlier wanted France to intervene in the Spanish Civil War, pressed for international reprisals when Germany occupied Austria in March 1938 and Czechoslovakia in March 1939. At first Blum made the unity of the Party his main concern, and in consequence he did not take a strong line against the Munich agreement; however, by mid-1939 he was becoming increasingly sympathetic to the view of the anti-fascists, and outspoken about the need for stronger measures to halt German aggression. At a deeper level within the S.F.I.O., the old division between revisionists and orthodox Marxists still persisted, finding its expression in a conflict between

¹³Dorothy M. Pickles, *The French Political Scene*, p. 130, cited by J. P. T. Bury, *France 1814-1940*, p. 285.

those who approved the 'exercise of power' doctrine and those who continued to maintain that the S.F.I.O. should not participate in bourgeois ministries.

As more and more of its energy was absorbed in factional disputes, and as the focus of governmental power shifted slowly from the Centre-Left to the Centre-Right, the S.F.I.O.'s influence on political events declined. Socialist ministers were appointed to the Chautemps ministry in June 1937, but withdrew in January 1938 after a policy disagreement. Two months later, Blum formed his second ministry, but this lasted only four weeks and was followed by Daladier's Centre-Right government, which held power from April 1938 until March 1940. The subsequent Reynaud ministry, which governed France during the German military victories of May and June, contained six Socialists. Two Socialists were also included in the Pétain government and thus shared the dishonour of negotiating an armistice with Hitler in June. By this stage, democratic government had virtually come to an end in France; the Germans had occupied the west coast and the northern half of the country, and Marshal Pétain's government was administering the central regions and the south coast.

On 10 July 1940, in the tourist town of Vichy, a special joint meeting of deputies and senators voted by 569 votes to 80, with 17 abstentions, to grant Marshal Pétain full powers to promulgate a new constitution, and only 36 of the 131 Socialists present voted against the government's proposal. The S.F.I.O. had reached its lowest point. Vincent Auriol, one of the Party's leaders, has described the scene in the Vichy Casino as the parliamentarians gathered for the vote.

Here is Léon Blum with a few faithful friends around him. Where are the 175 Socialist parliamentarians? Some, doubtless, couldn't come – but the others? Where are those deputies who not so long ago would stand up to cheer him – in the parliamentary party, or the Chamber, or our congresses, or public meetings? Where are those who, whether for election or re-election, would call him to their constituency to support them with his oratory, his authority, his prestige? Where are those who crowded the ante-rooms of the Hôtel Matignon to ask favours, those who owe him everything – positions, benefits, even a semblance of honour as with M. Paul Faure?

I can certainly see some of them here, quite close to us. Utterly shameless, they pass by with indifference – some, with an arrogant pretence of independence. They wait for a few

crumbs of new bread from the victor's table, for one or another of those promised missions.¹⁴

That scene marked the collapse of a tradition. Blum and Auriol had seen their Party go to pieces before their eyes.

¹⁴See Vincent Auriol, *Hier . . . demain*, I, p. 129.

1

The Socialists and the Resistance Front

The Search for a New Order

The fall of France in the summer of 1940 involved much more than the collapse of the French army. Military defeat brought with it the disintegration of a political order, of an established way of life. The armistice, the German occupation of the northern plains and the western coastal zone, the creation of the Vichy state in the south – these events marked for Frenchmen a complete break with the past. Each individual, each social group, each political party was faced with a situation entirely outside experience, in which protest was of no value except as an affirmation of principle. Saint-Exupéry saw in the dejection of the soldiers a symbol of national despair.

There is but one principle of unity, and that is victory. Defeat not only splits men off from other men, it creates a split within the individual himself

Today, in the midst of defeat, each man is concentrated upon a stubborn or shattered vulgar detail – a broken-down lorry, a road bottled up, a throttle stuck fast, a sortie that is a patent absurdity. The absurdity of the sortie is a sign of the collapse. The very act performed to arrest the collapse is a sign of absurdity. For every element stands divided against itself: there is no unity.

. . . Collapsing France has become a deluge of fragments none of which has any identity¹

The S.F.I.O. was no exception: it had virtually ceased to exist as an organized institution. Its local sections and federations no longer functioned and its parliamentary members were scattered throughout the four corners of the land. Paul Faure and many of the former pacifists were prepared to tolerate the Vichy régime, and Spinasse and Paul Rives actually went to the length of collaborating with the new government. The Party's leaders, marooned at Vichy and faced with the threat of imprisonment

¹Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Flight to Arras*, trans. Lewis Galantière, Penguin Books, London, 1961, p. 96.

and exile, gave little thought at first to the possibility of establishing an underground organization. Both Léon Blum and Vincent Auriol have described their feelings during this period as they waited for the Vichy authorities to move against them. To quote Auriol again:

The rag newspaper of Carbuccia, Béraud and company called for the arrest of a certain number of political figures. After Daladier's arrest they had just taken Mandel and Paul Reynaud. I went to see Léon Blum on the 1st September: 'Let's get our suitcases ready,' I said to him, 'It will soon be your turn, then mine, then the others' . . .'

'Why, Vincent?' he asked me with astonishment, 'What on earth for?'

'Why not? Laval and his accomplices hate you. They need scapegoats. Besides *Gringoire* demands it. It has published a first list of suspects. Here it is.'

To please me, he agreed to take this possibility into account and to consider how and through which lawyers we would be able to correspond freely. At all events, he refused to leave for London, as Renée Blum and I advised him to in the interests of the country.

'No,' he said, 'I shall remain, come what may. Should the need arise, I must defend the Republic and socialism before their accusers.'²

André Weil-Curiel, who came on a secret mission to France in the autumn of 1940, found isolated groups of Socialists in the provincial towns and Paris, talking earnestly about their predicament but uncertain what to do next.³ Gradually, however, a Socialist underground began to take shape. In the northern industrial towns, in Paris, in Lyons, in Marseilles, in Toulouse, the younger generation of Socialists began to meet secretly, widening their round of contacts and taking stock of their resources. One man would distribute so many copies of a certain pamphlet, see a certain person to test his sympathies, and post coded instructions to an address in another town. Another would spend weeks journeying the countryside armed with an out-of-date list of party members. By 1941 the work had begun to bear fruit. In January an executive, consisting of Henri Ribière, Jean Texcier, and Elie Bloncourt, was appointed to administer the northern

²Auriol, *Hier . . . demain*, I, pp. 140-1.

³André Weil-Curiel, *Le Temps de la honte*, II, *Eclipse en France*, pp. 43-4, 98, 114-15 and 198-200.

zone occupied by the Germans, and in June a special conference at Toulouse elected Daniel Mayer, Georges Buisson, André Philip, Robert Lacoste, and Just Evrard as the executive for the southern, or Vichy, zone. Each executive divided its zone into three sub-regions, within which special delegates were entrusted with the task of setting up local organizations. Within each department, the basic administrative unit of the country, small clandestine federations were laboriously constructed. The Party's newspaper, *Le Populaire*, was printed secretly in regional editions, and large numbers of pamphlets were distributed, including the famous *De la capitulation à la trahison*, in which Charles Dumas condemned Marshal Pétain for having sold out to the Germans. Yet all the time the new underground leaders moved cautiously, as if uncertain of their ground. Reluctant even to form their own para-military groups, they encouraged many of their supporters to join more aggressive Resistance organizations such as *Libération-Nord* and *Libération-Sud*.⁴

The military purpose of the Socialist underground was clear – the expulsion of the Germans from France – but its political ideas were vague and contradictory, and characterized by a confusion of aims which disheartened its followers. At this crucial stage Léon Blum spoke at the Riom Supreme Court in defence of his public record. Denying his accusers' charge that his Popular Front government had been partly responsible for French military weakness in 1940, Blum used the opportunity to proclaim his faith in the Socialist ideal.

In a most perilous time, we personified and invigorated the genuine tradition, the democratic and republican tradition, of our country We were not some kind of monstrous departure from the history of this country since the Revolution. We have not interrupted the chain, nor broken it. We have repaired and strengthened it.⁵

Blum's Riom speeches became the testament of the Socialist

⁴For the Socialists' Resistance record, see Robert Verdier, *La vie clandestine du Parti Socialiste*; René Hostache, *Le Conseil National de la Résistance*, pp. 58-61; Alfred Spire, *Inventaire des socialismes français contemporains*, pp. 153-6; Henri Michel, *Histoire de la Résistance (1940-1944)* pp. 36-7; Jules Moch, *Le Parti socialiste au Peuple de France*, pp. 23-4; Jacques Soustelle, *Envers et contre tout*, p. 310; *Le Populaire*, 31 Aug. 1944 (special edition); 11 Sept. and 10 Nov. 1944.

⁵Léon Blum, *L'Histoire jugera*, p. 331.

underground; the texts were printed in a special pamphlet and distributed widely throughout the whole Resistance network. With new confidence the members of the Party's secret executive declared:

No, Socialism is not dead. It has not abdicated. Purged of the traitors, the cowards and the half-hearted, it resumes the fight. Come what may, it will fulfil the whole of its historical mission.⁶

The 'spirit of Riom' came just at a time when the Socialists were facing a challenge for which they were ill-prepared – the resurgence of the Communist underground. It was only after the Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941 that the Communists, who had followed a pacifist line after the signing of the Russo-German non-aggression pact of August 1939, had begun to take an active part in resisting the Germans. From that time onwards, however, their participation in underground work was wholehearted and effective, so effective indeed that the Socialists became alarmed at the possibility of the Resistance movement as a whole falling under Communist domination. Unlike the Socialists, who had been forced to build their Resistance organization from almost nothing, the Communists had gone underground early in the war with their organization relatively intact, and their switch to a policy of active resistance immediately transformed the power situation in the underground movement as a whole. The Socialists' insecurity in their dealings with the Communists helps to account for their readiness to welcome the limited backing of the Christian Democrats and the Radicals within the different Resistance organizations and their willingness to accept General de Gaulle as 'the natural and necessary symbol of the Resistance and the Liberation'.⁷

As it happened de Gaulle was at that time very anxious to establish closer links with the underground movement inside France. When he had gone to London in June 1940, his main concern had been to rally French soldiers to continue the fight against Germany and to gain control of as many French overseas possessions as possible. At Brazzaville in October 1940, he claimed that the National Assembly of Vichy had acted illegally in voting full powers to Marshal Pétain, and pledged that the Free French movement would overthrow the illegal Vichy régime and

⁶Léon Blum devant la Cour de Riom, février-mars 1942, p. 7.

⁷Le Populaire, 15 June 1942, cited by Verdier, op. cit., p. 16.

restore the Third Republic.⁸ As far as the General was concerned, the London Committee (*Comité National Français* – C.N.F.) which he formed in September 1941 was legitimate and representative because, in repudiating the armistice and Pétain's dictatorship, it accurately reflected the national will of France. However, as his claim was based mainly on emotional rather than strictly legal grounds, the British and American governments were able to ignore it and to continue their efforts to dissuade the Vichy authorities from allowing either the French fleet (stationed at Toulon) or the French territories in North Africa to come under German control. De Gaulle, anxious to prove that he truly represented France and that his power was legitimate, realized that he must obtain the firm support of the metropolitan Resistance organizations. With that object, he entrusted to one of his most able civilian advisers, Jean Moulin, the task of making contact with the various underground groups and of unifying their direction. Moulin was parachuted into Vichy territory near Lyons in January 1942.

He found that he had to deal mainly with eight Resistance organizations, which varied widely in their structure and political character. Of the groups in the occupied zone, three (*Organisation Civile et Militaire*, *Ceux de la Résistance* and *Ceux de la Libération*) were almost purely para-military bodies, while *Libération-Nord* (formed by trade unionists of the northern industrial area) and the *Front national* (dominated by the Communists) were interested also in questions of economic and social reform. On the whole, the northern Resistance, being more anti-German than anti-fascist, lacked the ideological bias of the underground groups in Vichy territory, which opposed Pétain's government not merely because it was pro-German but because it was politically authoritarian, notoriously open to clerical influence, and corporatist in its economic policies. Two southern groups, *Libération-Sud* and *Franc-Tireur* (the first of which was composed mainly of Socialist and Christian Democratic trade unionists and the second of Communists), were anxious to formulate systematic proposals for post-war economic and

⁸See his 'Organic Declaration' of 16 Nov. 1940 (Charles de Gaulle, *Mémoires de Guerre*, I, pp. 313-17) and his 'Manifesto' of 27 Oct. 1940 (*ibid.*, pp. 303-5).

For a definitive statement of early Free French doctrine see an article by Professor René Cassin in *La France Libre*, I, pp. 172 et seq.

constitutional reforms; only Major Frenay's *Combat* shared the technocratic outlook of the northern para-military groups. While the Vichy government remained in administrative control of its territories the difference between the northern and southern movements remained quite marked, and it persisted to some extent after the Germans occupied the whole of the country in November 1942.

These, then, were the bodies with which Moulin had to deal in his attempts to win the allegiance of the metropolitan Resistance for de Gaulle's London Committee. Those Resistance leaders who visited London to talk with de Gaulle and those who spoke with Moulin made it quite clear that they would support de Gaulle only if he endorsed their revolutionary objectives. The General was not slow to take the hint; in April 1942, in the course of a speech in London, he said that France was involved in a 'revolution'⁹ and on 23 June 1942 he made his famous 'Call to the Resistance', in which he declared that the French people condemned both the Vichy and Third Republican régimes and that, after the war, the country's future would be determined by a freely elected national assembly.¹⁰ Legend has it that de Gaulle's first broadcast of 18 June 1940 had made him the spiritual head of the Resistance, but however true this may be it was the 'Call' which made him a revolutionary leader, and not just the emotional rallying point for Free France, in the eyes of the underground Resistance leaders. They valued the 'Call' as de Gaulle's first definite promise to lead a revolution rather than a military revival, to build a new order rather than restore the Third Republic. De Gaulle himself seems to have acknowledged his new responsibility. 'We have become . . .', he wrote to President Roosevelt, 'a French moral entity. These facts create for us duties which weigh heavily on us, but which we feel we cannot shirk without breaking faith with the country and without betraying the hopes that the people of France place in us.'¹¹

The Socialists had played an important part in bringing de Gaulle into sympathy with the metropolitan Resistance movement, partly because they needed his support to offset the growing influence of the Communists in the underground organizations but also because they saw in him a great leader, capable of

⁹Speech in London, 1 April 1942 (de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, I, pp. 532-3).

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 678-80.

¹¹Letter from de Gaulle to Roosevelt, 26 Oct. 1942 (*ibid.*, II, p. 383).

establishing the widest possible Resistance Front. 'If de Gaulle hadn't existed,' a British journalist was told later, 'we would have created him.'¹² Blum sent a personal letter from his prison to encourage de Gaulle in his political aims. By the early months of 1942 both the northern and southern Socialist executives were in touch with the C.N.F. and several prominent Socialist leaders such as Christian Pineau, André Philip, Félix Gouin and Jean Pierre-Bloch had made the hazardous journey to London in order to see de Gaulle. Other Socialists, including P. O. Lapie, Pierre Brossolette and Louis Vallon, had been working with the Free French organization since 1940. A mutual confidence was the result; de Gaulle grew to rely on the Socialists who in their turn became ardent Gaullists.

However, in spite of the fact that the General's understanding with the metropolitan Resistance had strengthened his claim that the C.N.F. should be recognized as the provisional government of France, the United States Government remained unimpressed. After the invasion of French North Africa in November 1942, the Americans refused to admit the C.N.F.'s alleged jurisdiction over the liberated territories and recognized Admiral Darlan, the former Vichy representative, as the French civilian head in Algeria. When Darlan was assassinated by a young extremist they installed in his place General Giraud, an escaped prisoner of war but a conservative in politics, who began to make plans for restoring the Third Republican régime in post-war France. He proposed, once the Allies had occupied metropolitan France, to restore order in the liberated areas under the Tréveneuc Law of 1872, which provided that the departmental councils should appoint a provisional assembly to govern until regular elections could be held. De Gaulle and his Committee maintained that there was no case for reviving the Tréveneuc Law and that the proper course of action would be to form a provisional government and an appointee consultative assembly. Moreover, referring to the immediate dispute, de Gaulle asserted that the C.N.F., as the embodiment of the French national will, should be entrusted with the handling of French civil and military affairs in North Africa. Six months of claims and counter-claims were to pass before sufficient agreement could be reached between the C.N.F. and Giraud's Council for them to decide to amalgamate. On 3 June 1943 they combined to form a new executive, the *Comité*

¹²Maurice Edelman, *France: The Birth of the Fourth Republic*, p. 62.

français de la Libération Nationale (C.F.L.N.), of which for a time the two Generals acted as co-presidents. Gradually, however, de Gaulle established the upper hand until on 3 October 1943 he became the C.F.L.N.'s sole head.

De Gaulle's dependence on the metropolitan Resistance was never so real as during his protracted struggle with Giraud. The Resistance organizations themselves were concerned about the ideological implications of Algiers politics, for they saw in Giraud a conservative under the influence of Americans and reactionaries. At the same time, they wanted reassurance that de Gaulle would not deny his revolutionary mission now that his own position was more secure. There were hopeful signs; in April 1943, during a B.B.C. broadcast, de Gaulle promised that after the war the nation would administer or control 'the main sources of wealth' and that all Frenchmen would earn enough to support their families.¹³ Daniel Mayer, who visited London about this time, reported the General as saying to him, 'We shall muzzle the trusts', and he returned to France convinced that under de Gaulle 'The State would be liberated from the tutelage of capital and man from that of wage-earning'.¹⁴ Such encouragement made the Resistance leaders inside France more willing to deal with Moulin, who was able in May 1943 to establish the National Council of the Resistance (C.N.R.), which promptly declared its allegiance to de Gaulle. Its members included representatives not only of the eight principal Resistance groups but also of the trade unions and, more significantly, of fully six political parties – the Communists, the Socialists, the Christian Democrats, the Radicals, the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation. De Gaulle had chosen to have delegates of the political parties included in the C.N.R. to increase its value as a representative symbol, and thereby to strengthen his hand in dealing with the Americans and Giraud. Nevertheless it was obvious that the Radical Socialist Party, the Democratic Alliance, and the Republican Federation had no real influence; the real power in Resistance politics lay with the alliance of Communists, Socialists, and Christian Democrats.

In Algiers, meanwhile, steps were being taken to strengthen the representative basis of the C.F.L.N.'s authority. To help in framing legislation a Consultative Assembly was established by an

¹³Cited by Auriol, *Hier . . . demain*, II, p. 156.

¹⁴*J.O. (A.C.P.)*, *Déb.*, 2 Mar. 1945, p. 271.

Ordinance of 17 September 1943.¹⁵ Of its members, forty were to be appointed by the C.N.R., twelve were to represent the overseas Resistance, twenty were to be former deputies and senators, and twelve were to represent the departmental councils of North Africa and other French territories. Additional underground representatives were then appointed to the C.F.L.N., which after reorganization in November 1943 consisted of five delegates of the metropolitan Resistance, seven party representatives (including three Socialists and two Radicals), and five members who belonged to de Gaulle's personal following (two Communists were admitted in April 1944). Finally, on 3 June 1944 the C.F.L.N. was renamed the Provisional Government of the French Republic.

The Socialists had good reasons for satisfaction with their place in the new institutions. Inside France, their position had been strengthened by the formation of a Central Executive Committee to co-ordinate the work of the whole of the Socialist underground. Its General Secretary, Daniel Mayer, was the Socialist representative on the C.N.R. Socialists were also well placed at Algiers; André Philip, Adrien Tixier and André Le Troquer were members of the C.F.L.N. after November 1943 (Philip had been a member of the former C.N.F. from July 1942 onwards), and seven Socialists were amongst the first appointees to the Consultative Assembly.¹⁶ Throughout the spring and summer of 1943, the Socialists remained on good terms with de Gaulle, whom they helped considerably during his difficulties with Giraud.¹⁷ De Gaulle in his turn made it clear that he looked to the Socialist Party to play a central role in post-war politics.

While de Gaulle and the Resistance leaders had been able to talk about general ideals and broad objectives, their alliance had worked fairly well, but once they became concerned with practical, detailed policies they found themselves at cross-purposes on a wide range of issues. This stage was reached in the winter of 1943-44, when, with the invasion of France ahead, attention became focused on the involved problems of administering liberated French territories until such time as regular political

¹⁵Ordinance of 17 Sept. 1943, *J.O., O.D.*, 23 Sept. 1943, pp. 139-40.

¹⁶The seven accredited Socialist delegates were Félix Gouin, Vincent Auriol, Jules Moch, Jean Pierre-Bloch, Just Evrard, André Le Troquer and Edouard Froment (see *Le Populaire*, 13 Oct. and 11 Nov. 1944).

¹⁷Daniel Mayer, *Evidences*, no. 12, Aug.-Sept. 1950, cited by Hostache, pp. 92-3.

institutions could be formed. De Gaulle now showed his concern to keep power in his hands; he insisted on treating the C.F.L.N. as if it were his executive, rather than that of the Resistance movement as a whole, and tried to confine both the C.N.R. and the Consultative Assembly to purely advisory roles. His policy was to have the C.F.L.N. return to France after Liberation as the recognized provisional government, and then to work through it to control the French war effort and to make certain that the process of liberation did not deteriorate into a Communist-dominated insurrectionary movement. Having consolidated his authority at Algiers, he became increasingly sceptical of the political reliability of the metropolitan Resistance, which he felt was far too subject to Communist influence and control. The underground groups, on the other hand, were convinced that the Resistance network, with its revolutionary aspirations, accurately reflected the national will and that therefore it should be entrusted with wide legislative and administrative powers after the Liberation. They wanted the provisional government made responsible to the C.N.R. and to the Consultative Assembly, which they felt should have legislative as well as advisory powers.

As this basic disagreement came out into the open, it became more and more a conflict of principle. De Gaulle saw the Resistance, not so much as an ideologically inspired revolutionary movement as a nationalist revival, a 'spontaneously Gaullist' phenomenon arising from the desire of the French people to expel the Germans, disband the Vichy régime, and rebuild the state along traditional lines.¹⁸ When de Gaulle spoke of 'revolution' he was thinking more in terms of reforming the pre-war order than of creating a new society, of renovating the traditional political and economic institutions rather than building anew. Naturally the three main parties inside the metropolitan Resistance, the Communists, Socialists and the Christian Democrats, held quite a different view; although they disagreed with each other on several points, they were generally agreed that, before a stable polity could be established, France must have a new economic and social order, in which the main industries and transport concerns were under state control. Only a revolution aiming at the creation of that order could give France a chance of greatness in the modern world. They felt that the old state, having proved its incompetence, should be swept away and

¹⁸Soustelle, p. 307. See also pp. 267-8.

replaced by a new democratic state based firmly on principles of social and economic justice.

While the growing strain between the two wings of the Resistance soon had an effect at Algiers, where de Gaulle began to have trouble with Left-wing groups in the Consultative Assembly, it was inside France that the real break occurred. The General had taken pains to make clear to the C.N.R. that although it would have important responsibilities as an advisory body in liberated France it could not expect to share executive power with the C.F.L.N.¹⁹ Moulin pointed this out at the C.N.R.'s first meeting in May 1943 but he was arrested by the Gestapo and shot in the following month, after which the C.N.R. came under the virtual control of the most powerful of the underground groups. It was they who appointed Georges Bidault, a Christian Democrat, to succeed Moulin as President of the C.N.R. and who established a small five-member executive to perform many of the Council's functions.

In March 1944, as if to assert its independence of the Algiers government, the C.N.R. issued a detailed manifesto outlining its policy for the administration of France after Liberation. It advocated the formation in towns, villages and business concerns of small local committees which it suggested should be controlled by departmental committees (*Comités départementaux de la Libération* - C.D.L.) and, through them, by the C.N.R. itself. In the same manifesto, the C.N.R. announced its desire to 'establish' (*établir*) de Gaulle's provisional government, to purge the civil service of collaborators, to confiscate the property of traitors and black marketeers, and to carry out social and economic reforms.²⁰ De Gaulle's growing distrust of the C.N.R. led him to concentrate on increasing the authority of the General Delegation in Paris, a small underground group of his personal representatives. Although Moulin had doubled as the head of this body and as the President of the C.N.R. the two offices had been separated after his death, and his successors as Delegate General had little influence on the politics of the metropolitan Resistance. Parodi, who assumed the office in March 1944, tried hard to assert his authority but he was unable to prevent the C.N.R. from making most of the crucial decisions for

¹⁹See for example his message to the C.N.R. on the occasion of its formation, 10 May 1943 (de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, II, pp. 473-4).

²⁰Hostache, pp. 457-73.

administering the country immediately after Liberation. The C.N.R.'s advisory groups, such as the *Commission des C.D.L.* and *Noyautage des Administrations publiques*, had a great deal of influence in the appointment of those leading civil servants, prefects and Commissioners of the Republic who were to set the administrative machinery running after the German retreat, while at the local level the C.D.L., supposedly responsible to the Delegation, were dominated in most cases by Communists and Socialists, and were under the effective control of the C.N.R. On the para-military side, although the *Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur* (F.F.I.) were nominally answerable to the Delegation's *Délégué militaire national* and through him to General Koenig's London command, the local units were in most cases under the control of *Comité d'Action militaire* (C.O.M.A.C.), a general staff attached to the C.N.R.²¹

De Gaulle was enough of a realist to avoid an open clash with the C.N.R.'s demands before he had the power to enforce his will. His early willingness to compromise is reflected in the apparently liberal terms of the important Ordinance of 21 April 1944, which provided for the restoration of civil administration and government in liberated France.²² This had been approved by the Consultative Assembly at Algiers but had been drafted by the C.F.L.N., certainly in accordance with de Gaulle's wishes. It laid down three stages for the restoration of representative government: firstly, the Consultative Assembly was to be enlarged by the inclusion of new delegates appointed directly by the individual Resistance organizations; secondly, the Consultative Assembly was to be converted into a Representative Assembly as soon as it became possible for at least two-thirds of the metropolitan departments to elect representatives; thirdly, within one year of Liberation, elections were to be held for a Constituent Assembly, to which would fall the task of drafting a new constitution. The provisional government was to relinquish its powers to the Representative Assembly once this body had been established. In its turn, the Assembly was to elect a new president, who, having formed his cabinet, would then ask the Assembly for a vote of confidence. In the field of local administration the C.D.L. were to be given important tasks; their advice was to guide the prefects in purging municipal and departmental councils

²¹Ibid., pp. 236-87 and 405-28.

²²Ordinance of 21 April 1944, *J.O., O.D.*, 22 April 1944, pp. 325-7.

of Vichyites and collaborators, and they were to assist the prefects in general matters until regular departmental councils could be established.

On the surface, then, the Ordinance seemed to satisfy the C.N.R.'s demands for a thorough-going political revolution in which the people, acting through responsible and representative institutions, would decide the form of the new state; in which the Resistance organizations, through their control of the C.D.L., would ensure that a new order was established at the local level as well. Closer examination revealed, however, that important powers were reserved for de Gaulle's provisional government. There would be no check on its authority until the Consultative Assembly could be changed into the Representative Assembly, and even the latter was expected to do little more than appoint a new president, declare its confidence in his cabinet, vote on the budget and give advice about international agreements and the arrangements for electing the Constituent Assembly. In the meantime the provisional government would have complete authority to deal with the armed forces, to decide on provisional economic and social policies, and to supervise the restoration of normal national and local administrative services. Its only rival in these fields of action would be the C.N.R., which was accorded no official status under the terms of the Ordinance and which, presumably, was expected to pass out of existence once additional representatives of the Resistance groups had been included in the enlarged Consultative Assembly. The Ordinance, in one respect, was practically an admission that the competition for executive power between the C.F.L.N. and the C.N.R. had still to be settled, and that this would be the first major conflict in the politics of liberated France.

One of the most important effects of the war had been the extent to which it had divided the French community and distorted its politics. During the Vichy régime the clerical and authoritarian Right had been able to put into operation its most extreme policies, while in the underground Resistance the Left had recaptured the Jacobin fantasies of the people's war and political revolution. The implications were obvious: either Right and Left had to be reconciled or post-war France would live in a state verging on civil war. De Gaulle wanted to restore a sense of community to the French people by purging the Resistance movement of its Jacobinism and the bourgeoisie of its lingering regrets for Vichy. A quite different moral purpose

inspired the core Resistance alliance of Communists, Socialists and Christian Democrats. They saw themselves as a revolutionary vanguard representing a profound popular desire to build a France which would bear little resemblance either to Pétain's order or to the order of the Third Republic, and they committed themselves to this enterprise with enthusiasm, despite certain misgivings. By the spring of 1944, however, concealed tensions had become more obvious. At one level, as we have seen, the C.N.R. and the Algiers C.F.L.N. became suspicious of one another, just as the leaders of the metropolitan Resistance began to have doubts about de Gaulle's enthusiasm for revolution. At a deeper level still there were difficulties within the underground framework itself: the Communists began to manoeuvre more openly for power and the Socialists grew more cautious in their dealings with the Christian Democrats, uncomfortably aware that anti-clerical feeling was still strong amongst their rank and file.

Just as these problems were beginning to make themselves felt, the Resistance as a whole became involved in the work of Liberation. On 6 June 1944 Allied troops established bridgeheads on the Normandy coast; in the last week of July the Americans drove eastwards from the Peninsula; on 15 August French and American forces landed on the Mediterranean coast east of Marseilles; by 25 August Provence, Brittany and most of the country between the Seine and the Loire had been liberated. On that day General de Gaulle arrived in Paris in the wake of Leclerc's armoured units.

De Gaulle Establishes his Authority

August 1944 was a wonderful month for the Parisians. Its events succeeded one another like the scenes in some great patriotic drama: the popular insurrection, the liberation of the city by Leclerc's troops, the installation of the C.N.R. in the Hôtel de Ville, and finally, General de Gaulle's triumphant return to the capital. However, it soon became clear that the main actors were reading from different scripts. When he arrived in the city on 25 August, de Gaulle did not drive to the Hôtel de Ville where the Resistance Council awaited him; instead he went straight to the Ministry of War. It was 7.30 in the evening before he eventually called on the restless councillors and then he was to dismay them even more: Georges Bidault, the C.N.R. President, invited him to proclaim the Republic from the balcony of the Hôtel de Ville but de Gaulle declined.

The Republic has never ceased to be. Free France, Fighting France and the French Committee of National Liberation have incorporated it each in turn. Vichy always was, and remains, null and void. I myself am the President of the Government of the Republic. Why should I go and proclaim it?²³

With dampening cautiousness, de Gaulle spoke only of 'renovation' in his reply to Bidault's speech of welcome – the word 'revolution' had obviously been dropped from his vocabulary.²⁴ This incident became a central point in the recollections of those present; for the first time de Gaulle had clearly shown his lack of sympathy with the leaders of the metropolitan Resistance. Three days later de Gaulle insisted that the C.N.R. recognize the Provisional Government's 'entire responsibility' for running the country and agree to the dissolution of C.O.M.A.C., to the absorption of the local F.F.I. units into the regular army, and to the maintenance of public order by the normal civilian authorities rather than by unofficial Resistance militia.²⁵

For the first fortnight after the Liberation of Paris political interest centred on de Gaulle's preparations for reorganizing his Provisional Government. When the General announced his reconstructed cabinet on 9 September, the parties of the Resistance were disappointed to find that many of the non-party ministers had been retained and that only one C.N.R. member, Georges Bidault, had been included in the new team. Its members were as follows:²⁶

²³De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, II, p. 308. See also a statement by Louis Sallant in *Le Figaro*, 19 June 1945.

²⁴Claude Bourdet, 'La politique intérieure de la Résistance', *Les Temps Modernes*, p. 1837. ²⁵De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, II, pp. 317-18.

²⁶Lepercq was killed in a motor accident on 9 Nov. 1944. Pleven became Minister of Finance, while the portfolios of Food and Colonies were given to Paul Ramadier (Socialist) and Giacobbi respectively.

Mendès-France resigned on 5 April 1945 and Pleven took over his portfolio, thus becoming Minister of Finance and National Economy.

A further cabinet reshuffle was effected on 31 May 1945: Ramadier was replaced as Minister of Food by another Socialist, Christian Pineau; P. H. Teitgen became Minister of Justice in place of de Menthon; Jacques Soustelle, a Gaullist, became Minister of Information.

Finally, on 26 June 1945, Eugène Thomas (Socialist) succeeded Laurent as Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.

These changes left the party composition of the Ministry as follows: nine non-party ministers and technocrats, two Communists, five Socialists, two M.R.P., two Radicals, one *Républicain de gauche*, comprising a total of twenty-one.

Non-party or technocrat members

General de Gaulle	President
René Pleven	Colonies
René Mayer	Transport and Public Works
Henri Frenay	Prisoners
General Catroux	Delegate Minister in North Africa
Aimé Lepercq	Finance
Alexandre Parodi	Labour and Social Security
André Diethelm	War
René Capitant	National Education

Communists

Charles Tillon	Air
François Billoux	Public Health

Socialists

Adrien Tixier	Interior
François Tanguy-Prigent	Agriculture
Robert Lacoste	Production
Augustin Laurent	Posts and Telegraphs

Christian Democrats

François de Menthon	Justice
Pierre-Henri Teitgen	Information
Georges Bidault	Foreign Affairs

Radical Socialists

Jules Jeanneney	Minister of State
Paul Giacobbi	Food
Pierre Mendès-France	National Economy

Républicain de gauche

Louis Jacquinot	Marine
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De Gaulle's intention of governing both through his non-party ministers, the so-called 'technocrats', and through the Socialist and Christian Democratic parties was obvious from his distribution of important posts. Technocrats held the ministries of Finance, War, Colonies, Transport, and Education; Socialist and Christian Democratic ministers shared between them the portfolios of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Production, Agriculture, and Information. The number of Socialist ministers had been increased from three to four, and the number of Christian Democratic ministers from one to three, increases which had the effect of swelling the proportion of party representatives in the cabinet from ten out

of twenty-one (including de Gaulle) in the Algiers ministry to thirteen out of twenty-two. It was significant that de Gaulle, by including Communists and Radicals in his ministry, had shown his concern to keep in touch with as wide a range of parties as possible, but only in a very limited sense could his government be called a coalition of parties. He insisted that his ministers, whatever their affiliations, should remain responsible to him alone and not to any outside body, whether to the Consultative Assembly, to the C.N.R. or to an alliance of parties. He was determined that the Provisional Government should have a monopoly of executive and legislative powers so long as the war with Germany continued.

The parties now shifted their attention to the possibility of extending the powers of the Consultative Assembly, whose composition was being reviewed by the government. On 4 October the Socialists requested that its functions 'be enlarged so as to ensure a permanent supervision of the government's actions',²⁷ but de Gaulle refused to make any such concession. The government's Ordinance, promulgated on 12 October, increased the Assembly's membership but did nothing to increase its powers beyond the limits already fixed by the Ordinance of 17 September 1943 and the Decree of 29 April 1944.²⁸ As if to emphasize its purely advisory status, de Gaulle insisted that the Assembly should meet in the *Palais du Luxembourg*, the old Senate chamber, and not in the *Palais Bourbon*, which had formerly housed the Chamber of Deputies. The Resistance leaders still clung to the hope that, since the Allies were liberating France much more quickly than had been expected, it would not be long before elections could be held for the proposed Representative Assembly under the provisions of the Ordinance of 21 April. However, on 3 October the government had announced that the difficulties involved in compiling the electoral rolls had made it

²⁷*Le Populaire*, 5 Oct. 1944.

²⁸The Ordinance of 17 Sept. 1943 obliged the government to refer important loan bills and the general budget to the assembly and to consider amendments to the latter at the assembly's request. The Decree of 29 April 1944 required the government to consult the assembly about legislation affecting individual liberties, the organization of public powers and the economic and social structure of the country. Under the Ordinance of 11 Oct. 1944 (*J.O., O.D.*, 12 Oct. 1944, pp. 916-19), however, such matters were to be referred to the assembly, except in cases of necessity decided by the government. In practice, the government decided that most important cases were naturally cases of necessity.

necessary to postpone regular local elections until February 1945, and it was obvious that the same reason could be given for delaying elections to the Representative Assembly also. In fact, that body was never formed.

De Gaulle, meanwhile, was taking steps to ensure that his authority was established at the local as well as the national level of government. Having authorized the establishment of special tribunals to replace those formed by the local Resistance forces for dealing with cases of alleged collaboration and black marketeering, he instructed Tixier, as Minister of the Interior, to ensure that the C.D.L. confined their activities to the advisory tasks prescribed for them by the Ordinance of 21 April.²⁹ This assurance could not be given so long as the C.N.R.'s para-military organization, based on the irregular F.F.I. groups, the *gardes patriotiques*, remained in existence under the control of C.O.M.A.C. Consequently, on 28 October, the *gardes patriotiques* were ordered to lay down their arms and to prepare for integration with the regular army. Although the C.N.R. issued a strongly worded protest, which was later endorsed by the Communist Party,³⁰ de Gaulle stood his ground and, in the absence of widespread popular support for the C.N.R.'s position, he was able to carry his instructions into effect.

By November 1944, then, the General could pride himself on having successfully 'restored the state'. He had kept the Provisional Government under his control, had limited the powers of the Consultative Assembly and had decisively checked the ambitions of the C.N.R.; at the same time he had constituted the Provisional Government, the regular army, the civil administration and the police as the real powers in the land. The Resistance organizations, dislocated by the rapid transition from clandestine to open politics, had proved unable to offer an effective resistance to de Gaulle, let alone provide an alternative government. Of course the Left-wing parties had provided token resistance to every move in the General's game (the Executive Committee of the S.F.I.O., for example, had sent delegations to protest to him, and *Le Populaire* carried leading articles criticizing his policies) but at no stage had they stood up to him firmly, threatened to withdraw their ministers from the government, or suggested to

²⁹Letter from de Gaulle to Tixier, 4 Oct. 1944 (de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 319-20).

³⁰See *ibid.*, pp. 344-5 and p. 39; *Le Figaro*, 31 Oct. 1944.

the C.N.R. that it should wage a determined public campaign against the General. The truth was that they all realized the extent of their dependence on de Gaulle and on the political unity which his leadership made possible. For the Socialists, Gaullism was an escape from dependence on the Communists; for the Communists it was an escape from isolation and an access to influence; for the Christian Democrats it was an avenue to unexpected power; for the Radicals, a welcome amnesty. Before the Liberation the dependence relationship between de Gaulle and the Resistance groups had been a mutual one; he had needed their help against Giraud and the Americans as much as they had needed his to escape from immediate isolation and the long-term prospect of civil war. But after his return to Paris, the General was able to broaden his support far beyond the narrow confines of the metropolitan Resistance. He soon won the approval of the middle classes, of the bourgeois press, and of the Allied governments, who recognized his Provisional Government on 23 October.

In France, support for de Gaulle was of two kinds. The parties of the Left continued to support him as a war leader and as a man who might yet help them carry through important economic reforms if not a revolution. The middle classes, on the other hand, saw in him the means of restoring peace and social stability, even if this involved reviving the old order of the Third Republic. De Gaulle himself sympathized with the desire for normality. In his memoirs, written fourteen years after these events, he recalled the nation's faith in his mission.

On that day [the nation] attached itself to de Gaulle to escape from subversion as previously it had done the same to be rid of the enemy. Consequently I felt myself invested by liberated Frenchmen with the same signal and unprecedented responsibility which I had assumed right throughout their servitude.³¹

Again in his memoirs, he recalled his suspicion that the Communists were planning to exploit the unstable Resistance alliance to gain control of the country, and his decision to offer himself as 'a guide and a rallying point' for a wide national union, for a social and political alliance extending far beyond the Resistance groups to the middle class forces of the Centre-Right. He liked to believe that in him the nation had seen

the ways and means to go back to its calling of liberty and

³¹De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, p. 21.

grandeur. To achieve this purpose, there has been formed amongst our people, in the midst of its trials, an extraordinary national unity.³²

National unity, order, stability, the restoration of the state – these objects de Gaulle held to be more important than the radical aims formulated by the metropolitan Resistance. Life under his régime was to become a frustrating experience for the parties of the Left, bound to him in the national struggle against the Germans yet at issue with him over the policies to be applied in the economic and social reconstruction of France.

Le Socialisme, c'est l'avenir

Straight after Liberation, the S.F.I.O.'s leaders began the task of restoring their Party's organizational activity. They held the first open meeting of the Central Executive on 30 August;³³ brought delegates from the federations of liberated departments to a special conference in Paris, held between 9 and 12 September; and made arrangements for holding a special national conference later in the year to discuss proposals for changing the Party's constitution and platform. An active campaign for recruiting new members was put into operation. Apart from such administrative work, they gave their attention to the problem of adapting the Party to the complicated politics of the Liberation period. For this task they were especially well qualified, for the post-war Socialist leadership contained several men of outstanding ability and wide experience.³⁴

³²Speech at the *Palais de Chaillot*, 12 Sept. 1944 (*ibid.*, p. 306).

³³The members of the Executive Committee on 30 Aug. 1944 were: Daniel Mayer (General Secretary), Robert Verdier (Deputy General Secretary), Edouard Depreux, Charles Dumas, Edouard Froment, Gérard Jaquet, André Le Troquer, Tanguy-Prigent, Henri Ribière and Elie Bloncourt (President of the northern *Comité d'action socialiste*). At this time five other members (including Gaston Defferre and Augustin Laurent) were still in occupied territory while two others had been deported to Germany. (*Le Populaire*, 31 Aug. 1944.)

³⁴A good collection of biographies is given in *Le Populaire*, 17 Dec. 1946. See also *A.P.*, 1947, p. 3 and *Le Populaire*, 17 Jan. 1947 (Auriol); *ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1944 and 19 Feb. 1946 (Tixier); *Le Figaro*, 19 Sept. 1944 (Lacoste).

Another useful source is *Dictionnaire Biographique Français Contemporain*, Paris, 1950.

Vincent Auriol, who had just turned sixty, was in Blum's absence the recognized elder statesman of the Party. He had worked with Blum in rebuilding the S.F.I.O. during the twenties and had served as Minister of Finance in the Popular Front government of 1936-7. In 1943 he had escaped from a Vichy prison to join de Gaulle in London; later, at Algiers, he had led the small Socialist group in the Consultative Assembly and had done more than anyone else to persuade de Gaulle that the Socialists could be dependable allies. A neat person, careful in his dress and manners, he epitomized the diplomatic Socialism of the Third Republic, under which he had learnt the arts of parliamentary management. Auriol was above all a cautious man, well versed in the practices of negotiating political understandings and alliances. But although he was to serve the post-war S.F.I.O. well as a parliamentary tactician and a constitutional expert, he failed to comprehend the changes which the Resistance had wrought in the life of his Party. He remained very much a man of the Third Republic coping earnestly with the problems of the Fourth.

Félix Gouin, another prominent pre-war figure and President of the Consultative Assembly, was the same age as Auriol and shared his legal background as well as his attachment to pre-war parliamentarianism. Gouin had been one of Blum's lawyers at the Riom trials, and had later helped to organize the Socialist underground in the Vichy zone before flying to London in August 1942. He had served as President of the Consultative Assembly both at Algiers and, after the Liberation, at Paris. In the same way that Gouin and Auriol personified the Party's parliamentary experience, André Philip and Jules Moch represented its intellectual traditions. Philip, who was now forty-two, had been a Professor of Law at Lyons before the war, and Moch, who was fifty-one, had been elected to Parliament in 1928 and had served in Blum's Popular Front ministries. They had worked together in the southern Resistance before making their separate ways to London, where they had played a leading role in drafting the economic and social plans for the post-Liberation period. As economists they both favoured a controlled economy with a large nationalized sector; as constitutional lawyers they wanted a state founded on a strong popular assembly and an orderly party system.

Robert Lacoste, Augustin Laurent and Adrien Tixier, all in their late forties, represented the Party's trade union connection. Before the war, Lacoste had been a member of the C.G.T.'s

Administrative Committee and Secretary of its Civil Servants' Federation. He and Laurent, a northern trade union leader, had been actively involved in the northern Resistance. Tixier, a slight man, had been Deputy Director of the International Labour Organization before the war, had represented de Gaulle in Washington between 1941 and 1943 and had joined his Committee in June 1943. Edouard Depreux, who was forty-six, and André Le Troquer, who was sixty, were amongst the Party's seasoned local politicians whom the Resistance had brought to prominence. Depreux, a lawyer, had been elected to the Seine departmental council in 1938 and had refused to accept appointment on the Vichy government's Administrative Committee of the Seine in 1941. Although arrested and interned he had escaped to play a leading role in the northern Resistance. Le Troquer, also a lawyer, had been a municipal councillor in Paris before the war and had helped Gouin to defend Blum at Riom. He was later sent by the Socialist Executive to Algiers, where he became a member of the C.F.L.N. The younger generation of Resistance leaders was represented by Daniel Mayer and François Tanguy-Prigent, both in their middle thirties. Mayer, the Party's new General Secretary, had been a leader of the *Jeunesses Socialistes* during the depression, had later served on the staff of *Le Populaire*, and had been the principal organizer of the southern Socialist Resistance and of the unified clandestine party during 1943 and 1944. As a young man, Tanguy-Prigent had worked for the S.F.I.O. in Brittany and had led a peasant Resistance in that region during the Occupation.

Mayer's temperament and his idealism drew him close to Blum, with whom he shared a passionate concern to give the Socialist Party a new lease of life. He looked back on the Third Republic more with shame than regret; in his estimation, the glory of the Popular Front had been diminished by the old S.F.I.O.'s failure to take a strong line against Nazi Germany in 1938 and 1939, a failure which he attributed to doctrinal obscurantism and the demoralizing effect of factional quarrels. He was determined to base the new S.F.I.O. on a strong, centralized organization, to revise its doctrine along humanitarian lines, and to accustom it to working with progressive Christian Democrats. During the Resistance, Mayer had been an outstanding success at maintaining the fine network of personal relationships on which the clandestine Socialist Party had depended. His was the type of personality

ideally suited to the politics of small groups; he talked quickly, gesturing with his hands from time to time, his expressive face revealing his enthusiasm. Unfortunately, however, when he had to adapt himself after Liberation to the atmosphere of mass meetings and party congresses, he found it difficult to develop the techniques of a platform orator and a certain aloofness in his public bearing made it hard for him to win the sympathy of the older militants. Yet he refused to compensate for his lack of popularity by back-stairs intrigue. As General Secretary, Mayer was by no means the party boss who builds up a personal following by the crude methods of favour and patronage; nor did he take sides in disputes between different groups within the Party. Having sworn to do away with factions, he insisted on being treated as an impartial administrator representing the whole Party rather than any part of it. Like Blum he wanted to lead with honour or not at all.

During the Occupation, Mayer and the other Socialist leaders had become the prisoners of a revolutionary myth which had the unfortunate effect of clouding their judgment of political realities in the post-Liberation period. Under the Vichy government it had been very easy for them to identify the French Right with the national enemy, and from here it was only a step to endowing the Resistance with revolutionary significance, and to equating their struggle against fascism (in the shape of the German invaders) with a struggle between the forces of revolution and reaction. Consequently they were far too ready to assume that the end of the war would bring victory and power to the Left, and that, the Right having been thoroughly discredited, French people would accept the inevitability of a socialist revolution. They greatly overestimated the extent to which popular sympathy for the Resistance movement implied support for its political objectives, above all else, the urban middle classes after Liberation were looking for a return to stability and order. De Gaulle realized this and knew that although the French people were willing to accept a measure of necessary reform to speed the process of economic recovery, they certainly had no desire for revolutionary change. The Socialists did not realize this soon enough. With boundless enthusiasm, they presented their Party as having been purged of its impurities by the experience of the Resistance, and renewed in its structure and in its leadership. The men in charge had risen during the Resistance. Traitors and cowards had been

'pitilessly excluded'.³⁵ According to its leaders, the S.F.I.O. stood for revolution, not in the Bolshevik sense, but in the manner propounded by Jaurès, whereby economic justice would be attained without loss of personal liberty. It was the party at one with the progressive spirit of the time. *Le Socialisme*, cried out André Philip at one meeting, *c'est l'avenir*.³⁶

In the heady atmosphere of liberated Paris it was easy for Mayer and Philip, who attached an almost mystical significance to their experience during the Resistance, to forget that even a large proportion of their own Party's pre-war membership had been left untouched by the ideological excitement of the underground movement. This failure to realize how little the faith in the Resistance ideal had permeated the rank and file was an error of judgment which was to cost them more dearly than their miscalculation of the wider climate of opinion. More than one commentator warned that:

account must be taken of the average militant. The latter has not known the widespread contacts of the underground. Sometimes he was a 'non-active resister', full of good will, but finding no opportunity to show it. Often he belonged to a Resistance group composed solely of his friends, his political comrades of pre-war times. Nothing has broken his habits of thinking and talking. There's the Right, and there's the Left; there are republicans, and there are reactionaries; he wants to stick to his opinions.³⁷

In fact, many members returned to the life of the Party without understanding the new values which their leadership wished them to adopt. Mayer wanted the S.F.I.O. to work with the Christian Democrats and the Communists for the realization of the economic and social demands embodied in the C.N.R.'s programme; many of the traditionalist militants, blinded by anti-clericalism, expressed violent opposition to the idea of co-operating with a party associated with the Church in any way; others were equally against the idea of any alliance with the Communists. Again,

³⁵Jules Moch, *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 1, Jan. 1945, p. 4. For the Socialist view of the war and its origins see: Charles Dumas, *La France trahie et livrée*; Léon Blum, *A l'échelle humaine*, pp. 89-90; Auriol, *Hier . . . demain*, I, Avant propos; Mayer, *J.O. (A.C.P.)*, *Déb.*, 2 Mar. 1945, p. 271; Ernest Labrousse, *Le Populaire*, 31 Aug. 1944; Marcel Bidoux, *ibid.*, 22-23 Oct. 1944; Mayer, *ibid.*, 10 Feb. 1945.

³⁶*Ibid.*, 17-18 Sept. 1944.

³⁷*Esprit*, April 1945, p. 755.

Mayer hoped that the Party, while retaining its working-class character, would appeal openly to progressive sections of the urban middle class; the old militants feared that this course would weaken further the Party's ties with the proletariat and would commit it to the defence and maintenance of the bourgeois state.

Lack of sympathy between the Resistance leadership and the traditionalist militants slowly became a source of friction within the Party, particularly after it had become obvious that de Gaulle was determined to keep power in his own hands. While Mayer and his colleagues continued to praise the General as a progressive leader, as indeed they had to if they were to project the wartime alliance of Socialists, Communists and Christian Democrats into peacetime politics, many of the older militants began to suggest that de Gaulle's republicanism was a façade. This difference of opinion created serious difficulties for Mayer, particularly since his defence of de Gaulle was in fact the defence of a complicated political strategy. Had the traditionalists been sure of their ground they might have obtained considerable support within the Party for withdrawing the Socialist ministers from the government, for breaking with the Christian Democrats, and for adopting a stronger line with de Gaulle. An awareness of this possibility must have weighed heavily with the Party's leadership.

Such differences underlay the apparent unanimity at the Party's Extraordinary National Congress, held at the *Palais de la Mutualité* between 9 and 13 November.³⁸ Mayer opened the proceedings by restating his theses about the Resistance and the new revolution. He recalled the hopelessness of 1940 – the shattered Party tainted with defeatism; the decadence of the bourgeoisie; the country's betrayal by the Right – and went on to praise the new spirit of unity which had arisen during the Resistance. The S.F.I.O. of the future, in his view, would be 'a great republican and revolutionary rally' for all men who wished to transform society without sacrificing liberty in the process. He came out openly in favour of the Party's maintaining its links with the Christian Democrats on the one hand and with the Communists on the other. An understanding with the Christian Democrats would become possible, he suggested, once that Party undertook to respect the *laïcité* of school and state. As for the Communists, he was willing to have them join the

³⁸See *Le Populaire*, 10 to 15 Nov. 1944; and Jules Moch, *Le Parti socialiste au Peuple de France*. *Le Figaro*, 10 Nov. 1944, gives a useful summary of Mayer's opening address.

S.F.I.O. in forming a committee for working class unity, and declared that the Socialist Party would never form part of an anti-Communist bloc. It was significant that he avoided making any detailed references to the parties' recent brushes with de Gaulle, and that he spoke of the dissolution of the *gardes patriotiques* as a source of 'minor' difference between the government and the C.N.R.

As the business sessions of the Congress began, it seemed likely at first that the leadership would obtain support for all of its policy proposals. The delegates approved the principle of the Party's supporting the Provisional Government, accepted the suggestion that the Communists be invited to join a *Comité d'entente* to discuss the problems of unity between the two proletarian parties, and endorsed the proposal that the Executive should continue its negotiations with the *Mouvement de Libération Nationale* (M.L.N.), a large Left-wing Resistance organization, as well as with other Resistance groups 'animated with a democratic and socialist spirit'. Since local elections were to be held early in 1945, the Congress laid down the principle that Socialists should present their own lists on the first ballot and form coalition lists with other 'anti-reactionary' parties on the second ballot. The Congress also adopted an impressive manifesto which, in keeping with the spirit of Mayer's opening speech, affirmed the Socialist Party's intention of working with other Resistance organizations to realize the C.N.R.'s programme and of supporting de Gaulle in his efforts to restore to the country its independence and 'to effect its social liberation'. A decision was taken to exclude from the Party eighty-five Socialist parliamentarians who on 10 July 1940 had voted for granting full powers to Pétain or had been absent without good reason.

The traditionalists for the most part seemed to be biding their time. Occasionally a veteran would sound a word of caution (one suggested that the Socialist ministers should remain in the government only so long as it was carrying out the C.N.R.'s programme³⁹) but there were no important attacks on the policies being pursued by the leaders. The executive did meet with resistance, headed by anti-clerical delegates from federations in the Normandy-Brittany area, when it proposed that the Congress should adopt a resolution on secular education which was noticeably milder than those adopted by pre-war congresses. The

³⁹*Le Populaire*, 11 Nov. 1944.

motion was adopted by the drafting committee, but was opposed in the congress session by the traditionalists, who brought forward an amendment expressed in anti-clerical terms. As neither side felt confident enough to press the issue to a conclusion, the Congress ended by adopting both the original motion and the amendment. Thus the resultant resolution, an incongruous hybrid, began by stating the Party's faith in secular schooling and in the principle of freedom of belief, and expressed the hope that the understanding established between Christians and Socialists during the Resistance would result in their future co-operation; however, it went on to maintain that the educational system, should be nationalized and that the annual subsidy of 700 million francs for church schools, begun by the Vichy government, should be discontinued. The Party's leaders were left uncomfortably aware that the resurgence of anti-clericalism in the S.F.I.O. could easily destroy the whole basis of their understanding with the Christian Democrats.

Criticism was also directed by the traditionalists at Mayer's proposals for changing the Party's constitution. Mayer claimed that factionalism, the great weakness of the pre-war S.F.I.O., had been encouraged by the use of proportional representation in the election of the National Council and the Permanent Administrative Committee (C.A.P.). Under this system, Mayer suggested, even the smallest of factions had been able to present lists of executive candidates, with the result that elections to the Council and the C.A.P., instead of being the occasion for careful policy debates, had often deteriorated into a sordid scramble for votes. Represented proportionately on the two executive bodies, the main factions had jealously cancelled out each other's influence to such an extent that they had prevented the Party from playing an effective role in the wider political struggle. To prevent a recurrence of factionalism, Mayer wanted to abolish the National Council and the C.A.P. and to replace them by a single executive committee elected directly by Congress under a secret-ballot, simple-majority voting system. He was anxious that the new executive should have wide powers, particularly over the party press and the conduct of internal party debates. While he agreed that differing points of view should be discussed before and during a national congress, he wanted the decisions then taken to signify the end of the debate, for he considered that unity of action was necessary even at the expense of some freedom of discussion between congresses. Further, he wanted the executive

to remain detached from policy debates and to act for the Party as a whole. As General Secretary, he was determined to make his office an independent one; he had no desire to create a 'ruling' faction under his leadership.⁴⁰

When this scheme was put to the Congress the traditionalists complained that it was designed not only to prevent the emergence of factions but also to cut down the considerable powers which the departmental federations of pre-war years had enjoyed within the old S.F.I.O. Their main grievance was the proposal to abolish the National Council, through which the federations had been able to control the C.A.P., and they recommended that it be replaced by another council composed of regional representatives. After much discussion, however, they agreed to drop the matter until the 1945 congress, and Mayer's proposals were adopted without further difficulty. The new executive, to be known as the *Comité directeur*, was to consist of twenty-five members (with an extra place reserved for Blum) elected from an alphabetical list of candidates by simple-majority voting, the same system being used in executive elections at the levels of the federations and the sections. Until the holding of a full congress, at which it would make proposals for new rules and a new Declaration of Principles, the *Comité directeur* was to exercise all the powers formerly shared between the C.A.P. and the National Council. In the meantime, liberty of discussion was to be provided within the Party and its press for questions of doctrine and method, although the Congress noted that, if unofficial groups were formed to consider a special point of view, these would have 'no legal existence with regard to the Party's constitution' nor would they be allowed to replace its regular bodies. Federations and sections were forbidden to consider any statements emanating from such groups.

The Congress then elected the twenty-five members of the *Comité directeur*,⁴¹ two-thirds of whom had belonged to the

⁴⁰See Moch, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-6; and a speech by Mayer, *Le Populaire*, 11 Sept. 1944.

⁴¹Vincent Auriol, Elie Bloncourt, Gaston Defferre, Edouard Depreux, Charles Dumas, Just Evrard, Paul Favier, Edouard Froment, Félix Gouin, Salomon Grumbach, Gérard Jaquet, Pierre Lambert, Augustin Laurent, André Le Troquer, Mme Andrée Marty-Capgras, Daniel Mayer, Mistral, Jules Moch, Mme Emilienne Moreau, Marcel Naegelen, André Philip, Jacques Priou-Valjean, Henri Ribière, François Tanguy-Prigent, Robert Verdier.

Mme Renée Blum was given a special place on the Committee.

Party's clandestine Central Committee during the Resistance. In its turn the *Comité directeur* elected Mayer as General Secretary, Robert Verdier as his deputy and Gérard Jaquet as Treasurer, and appointed a small Permanent Delegation (consisting of Mayer, Verdier, Mme Renée Blum, Auriol and Le Troquer) to take care of urgent business.⁴²

These changes made the Party's organization very different from what it had been in 1939. Then it had been a decentralized hierarchy of sections, federations, the National Congress, the National Council and the C.A.P., in which the effective power had resided in the executives of the federations and had been delegated upwards to the C.A.P. In the new centralized system, the *Comité directeur* controlled the federations and sections through its virtual *intendants*, the federal secretaries. As at the national level the exigencies of clandestine politics had created unprecedented powers for the Party's executive, so at the local level they had transformed the federal secretaries from delegates of their departmental congresses into 'Socialist prefects' with a quite new prestige and independence. Mayer relied on them a great deal,⁴³ and, at periodic congresses of federal secretaries such as those held on 28 January and 20 May 1945, he used to consult them and acquaint them with the executive's detailed policies. It appeared, at this point, as if Mayer had imposed on the S.F.I.O. his own version of 'democratic centralism'.

Plans for rebuilding the Party and for extending its influence were also discussed by the Congress. Already ninety-six of the one hundred and one pre-war federations had begun working again. In the countryside, the Party was carefully infiltrating the local committees of the *Confédération générale de l'agriculture* (C.G.A.), which had taken over the organization of farming activities from the Vichy government's *Corporation paysanne*. In the trade union sphere it was establishing a network of *Groupes socialistes d'entreprises* (G.S.E.) as a counter to the Communists' system of work-place cells. The whole G.S.E. organization was to be built up under a National Administrative Committee, which was eventually established in mid-1945.

To many contemporary observers, the Socialist Congress of

⁴²*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 1, Jan. 1945, p. 1.

⁴³See *ibid.*, no. 3, Mar. 1945, p. 3, for a special article dealing with their powers. They are likened to army generals receiving instructions from a general staff.

November 1944 appeared as an impressive demonstration of unity and purpose; their policies and strategies approved, Mayer and his colleagues seemed to be secure in the leadership. However, when one looks back on this Congress from the serious divisions of 1946, it is possible to recognize the signs of inner-party conflict. Mayer's setback on the clerical issue and the difficulties he had encountered in carrying through his organizational reforms were important indications that traditionalist sentiment remained strong in the Party, despite the effect of the Resistance. Had things gone well for Mayer in 1945 he might possibly have won the traditionalists over to his point of view. Unfortunately, events were to work very much against him.

Conflicts over Economic and Monetary Policies

Although the early tension between de Gaulle and the Resistance parties had arisen in a specifically political context, from November 1944 onwards economic and monetary questions became a much more basic source of friction. The main differences of opinion centred around how far the nationalization of important industries should be taken; the Resistance parties and groups wanted the state to make possible, in the words of the C.N.R.'s programme,

the reversion to the nation of all the main monopolized means of production, which are the product of common labour; of the sources of power; of mineral wealth; of insurance companies and the large banks.⁴⁴

De Gaulle had certainly given the impression that he favoured such reforms, not only in his famous message of 23 June 1942 but also in several later speeches, including that at Algiers on 14 July 1943 and that before the Consultative Assembly on 18 March 1944. On his return to France, however, he showed marked reluctance to carry out the nationalization of many industries, despite the firm insistence of the Communists, Socialists and Christian Democrats that he should do so.

While these three parties were united in demanding such 'reforms of structure', they and the Left-wing Resistance groups, who together constituted the Resistance Front, were by no means agreed about what monetary and financial policies they should recommend to the Provisional Government. One of the few

⁴⁴Hostache, p. 462.

men with clear ideas in this field was Pierre Mendès-France, a former Radical Socialist who had served as Commissioner of Finance in de Gaulle's Algiers Committee. He was greatly concerned about the excessive money supply (four and a half times the pre-war volume) which had been built up in France under German occupation and Vichy rule and argued that, unless the volume of money in circulation could be drastically reduced, a thriving black market and a serious price inflation would jeopardize the country's chances of rapid economic recovery. To curb inflation he recommended an exchange of paper notes and Treasury bonds, a blockage of bank accounts and the imposition of a capital levy severe enough to drain the excess money from circulation. As a necessary complement to these measures, he outlined a policy of rationing, backed (after an agreed wage increase had been granted) by rigid controls over price and wage levels.⁴⁵ Unfortunately there were very few party leaders who supported his policies; the Communists and Christian Democrats refused to endorse them — although the Socialists liked his capital levy proposal, they were reluctant to support his equally important recommendations for wage and price controls, possibly because these would have offended their working-class and peasant supporters.

After Liberation, then, debates about economic policies proceeded at two separate levels. In the Left-wing press, the emphasis was on the need for an economic revolution in keeping with the C.N.R.'s programme; *L'Humanité*, *Le Populaire* and *L'Aube*, the main Communist, Socialist and Christian Democratic newspapers respectively, kept pressing the government to proceed at once to the nationalization of industries on a large scale. The government, meanwhile, was almost wholly absorbed in the formidable tasks of restoring administrative order and of getting the economy working again, by no matter what methods, to tide the French people over the winter shortages of 1944-5. Agricultural production was stagnant; the transport system had all but broken down, and industry was paralyzed by an acute coal shortage. In January 1945 the mines were still working at only seven-tenths of their pre-war capacity and there were no supplies of imported coal; after the railways and the gas and electricity companies had taken their share of the coal stocks available there

⁴⁵See Mendès-France, *J.O. (A.C.P.)*, *Déb.*, 21 Mar. 1945, pp. 631-3; and Jacques Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, p. 37.

was little left for industry or for the domestic consumers. To make matters worse factory machinery was in poor shape and port and railway facilities had been badly damaged during the fighting. Also by January 1945 industrial production was still only 32 per cent of the 1938 volume, and four months later the monthly outputs of cast-iron and steel were still one-sixth and one-fifth respectively of the 1938 levels. The state of the farming industries is indicated by the fact that agricultural production for the whole of 1945 was only 64 per cent of the production for 1938.⁴⁶ While the Resistance Front was calling for the nationalization of nearly all the key industrial and financial organizations, from fertilizer works to the large banks, the government's essential problem was how to keep these institutions functioning at all.

Between September and December 1944, the government did take over a group of northern coal mines, some merchant marine companies, and the Renault motor works, but de Gaulle gave the impression that he had no intention of extending the process much further. On 1 October, at Lille, he suggested that the state should manage 'the great sources of common wealth' without 'excluding in any way the great levers which are, in man's activity, initiative and just profit'.⁴⁷ The dilemma of the Resistance parties in this situation was a very real one, for while their press clamoured for more 'reforms of structure', their ministers were bound to justify the cautiousness being displayed by the Provisional Government. In the case of the Socialists, there appeared to be little relation between the statement of their Robert Lacoste, the Minister of Production, that 'a wide free sector remains the fundamental condition of French activity and economic recovery'⁴⁸ and *Le Populaire's* demand that action should be taken before the capitalists had repaired their defences.

The country would be justly angered if the hopes of the people were disappointed, if the work which had been announced and

⁴⁶See Jean Chardonnet, *Les conséquences économiques de la Guerre, 1939-1946*, pp. 237-49; idem, *La crise du charbon en France*, Paris, 1945; M. Cépède, 'Agriculture et ravitaillement', in *La France sous l'Occupation*, Paris, 1959; *A.P., 1944-1945*, pp. 15-19; Report from the Ministers of National Economy, Production, Agriculture, Transport, and Food, on the Economic Situation, 15 Dec. 1944 (de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 412-18).

⁴⁷*Le Figaro*, 3 Oct. 1944. See also his *Palais de Chaillot Speech*, 12 Sept. 1944 (*Mémoires*, III, pp. 308-9).

⁴⁸*Le Figaro*, 17 Oct. 1944.

promised were to be deferred. We do not doubt that General de Gaulle wants to avoid this.⁴⁹

Of course, the Resistance parties could have given their protests meaning by withdrawing their ministers from the government and then openly opposing de Gaulle. This they did not do, partly because they recognized the need for political unity in the interests of the French war effort, and partly because they knew that a move into opposition would be a useless and costly gesture under the circumstances.

Each party had something to gain from association with the General. The Socialists realized that many of the men who had joined the S.F.I.O. because of its apparent attachment to de Gaulle would soon withdraw their allegiance if the Party became anti-Gaullist. There was also the danger to the Socialists that by acting precipitately they might find themselves alone with the Communists, a situation which they wanted to avoid at all costs. Moreover, their hold over the ministries of Production, Interior, Food, Agriculture, and Posts and Telegraphs provided them with important means of administrative and local influence, even if it did not enable them to exert much control over government policies. As for the Communists, they were aware that their association with de Gaulle helped them greatly in their efforts to present themselves as a patriotic party. Particularly after the return of Maurice Thorez from Moscow, they fully supported the General's war aims and his policy of friendship towards Russia. The third group, the Christian Democrats (constituted as the *Mouvement républicain populaire* (M.R.P.) after their Congress of 25-6 November) were aware that de Gaulle's patronage of their movement was an important advantage to them in their effort to become a major party. Not one of the three main parties of the Resistance Front, then, was willing to face the uncertainties of moving outside de Gaulle's régime.

Apart from the issue of nationalization, on which they gave a quite striking impression of solidarity, there were few fields of economic policy on which the Resistance parties could agree. In particular, they were quite unable to produce a sound common policy to deal with inflation, a failing which was to have important political repercussions. The progressive financial policy of this period was in fact formulated by Mendès-France, who now held

⁴⁹Marcel Bidoux, *Le Populaire*, 22-23 Oct. 1944. See also Albert Gazier, *ibid.*, 18 Oct. 1944.

the portfolio of National Economy. Having in September 1944 brought into effect the wage increases promised earlier, he had proceeded to institute strict wage and price controls on the assumption that the government would shortly approve drastic measures, including his proposals for an exchange of bank notes and a severe capital levy, to cut down the volume of money in circulation. He was greatly disturbed when the cabinet sided instead with the Minister of Finance, Aimé Lepercq, who recommended that capital holders be invited to subscribe to a special Liberation Loan, for which the government should offer perpetual bonds at 3 per cent interest. Lepercq suggested that this loan would draw sufficient money out of circulation to check inflation without at the same time damaging the confidence of investors. When he launched the loan in November, he told radio-listeners that the government expected 'the French capital holders and propertied classes to show today that they are worthy of being treated as free citizens in a free country.⁵⁰ Mendès-France insisted that Lepercq's 'call to confidence', reminiscent of Poincaré's financial conservatism of the late twenties, would prove quite inadequate as an anti-inflationary measure.

A few days later, on 9 November, Lepercq was killed in a car accident. His portfolio was taken over by René Pleven, a former industrialist and an admirer of de Gaulle, who supported the principle of the Liberation Loan without hesitation and showed no signs of coming to terms with Mendès-France, despite the fact that on 23 November the latter was entrusted with 'the direction of the whole of the government's economic policy' and with authority over the ministers of Production, Agriculture, Food and Reconstruction and Town Planning.⁵¹ The justice of the earlier criticisms made by Mendès-France was borne out when the results of the Liberation Loan became known, for, although it had attracted investments totalling 164,400 million francs, the money in circulation fell only slightly from 632,000 to 572,310 million francs, or still four times the pre-war volume.⁵²

Strangely enough, in his disputes with Lepercq and later with Pleven, Mendès-France received little support from the Resistance parties, and least of all from the Communists. During September and October, the Socialists had had little to say about financial

⁵⁰*Le Figaro*, 7 Nov. 1944.

⁵¹Ordinance of 23 Nov. 1944, *J.O., O.D.*, 7 Dec. 1944, pp. 1724-5.

⁵²*A.P.*, 1944-1945, p. 525.

questions apart from suggesting that wartime profits should be confiscated. When in November the public gained some inkling of the issues at stake, Socialist spokesmen still remained equivocal in their statements. They publicly supported the Liberation Loan when it was first proposed, but soon began to attack Plevén for his policy of 'confidence' and for his concern 'to reassure the propertied classes'.⁵³ Finally they presented the dispute between him and Mendès-France as a clash about whether or not the C.N.R.'s programme should be fully applied, Mendès-France being represented as the champion of state controls and Plevén as the Machiavellian partisan of economic liberalism.⁵⁴ By constructing this morality play, the Socialists were able to attack Plevén without actually accusing de Gaulle himself of being an economic conservative.

Perhaps the inability of the parties to agree on a progressive monetary and financial policy was one of the reasons for their failure to give the Resistance Front real effectiveness and to make the Consultative Assembly an important means of influencing government policy. By the Ordinance of 11 October 1944, the government was required to consult the Assembly about the general budget and loan bills for sums over 500 million francs, and to consider its requests for increased taxes or for reductions in public expenditure. These were its only guaranteed legislative rights. It was, however, entitled to give an opinion on legislation affecting 'the regulation of individual liberties, the organization of public powers and the economic and social structure of the country' with the exception of 'cases of necessity established by governmental decision'. In fact the government judged most cases to be exceptional ones. For instance, although the Assembly was sent an early draft of the Ordinance setting up the *Comités d'entreprises* (which admitted workers to a share in industrial management), it was not consulted about such important ordinances as those nationalizing the northern coal mines and the Renault works.

The Resistance parties were also handicapped by their numerical weakness in the Assembly. Of the 248 delegates designated to attend the Assembly's first meetings in November 1944, there were only 14 Communists, 22 Socialists, 6 Christian Democrats

⁵³See, for example, Marcel Bidoux, *Le Populaire*, 16 Nov. 1944.

⁵⁴Jules Moch, *J.O. (A.C.P.)*, *Déb.*, 27 Dec. 1944, p. 615, and *Le Populaire*, 5 Jan. 1945 and Marcel Bidoux, *ibid.*, 11 Jan. 1945.

and 27 Radicals. Consequently, they competed in an effort to extend their 'spheres of influence' amongst the loose groups of delegates ranged around the half circle of benches at the *Palais du Luxembourg*. As late as March 1945 the membership of the various groups was still relatively low, being approximately 30 Communists, 45 Socialists, 25 Christian Democrats and 50 Radicals.⁵⁵ Because of its loose group structure, the Assembly was ineffective as a vehicle for protest. On 28 December 1944, for example, the whole effect of a 'unanimous' resolution urging the government to continue nationalizing industries was destroyed by the fact that only half the delegates were present to vote for it (some of the absentees had stayed away deliberately).⁵⁶

During the Assembly's second sitting, from 6 February to 31 March 1945, the parties made further efforts to extend its powers. On 3 February Gouin, as President of the Assembly, had protested to de Gaulle that the government should, in keeping with the provisions of the Ordinance of 11 October 1944, have referred to the Assembly about thirty-four ordinances affecting individual liberties, public powers and the economic and social structure of the country. De Gaulle replied that the government had simply not considered such consultation necessary.⁵⁷ Annoyed by the government's persistent refusal to take the Assembly's views into account, the delegates tried to censure one minister and to cut down an expenditure estimate, for which attempts they were chided by the General himself.⁵⁸ Although Mayer defended the Assembly as 'the only body which . . . can restore to France the taste for parliamentary institutions – linked in the popular mind with the very idea of democracy – and public life,'⁵⁹ the

⁵⁵An excellent list of delegates (with their affiliations) is given in de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 325-31, but there is no readily available source giving the group strengths at later stages in the Assembly's development. As far as the largest parties are concerned, there are some good newspaper estimates (see, for example, *Le Figaro*, 2 Jan. 1945), and a fairly accurate idea of the Assembly's composition may be obtained by analyzing the important division lists of July 1945 and by noting the lists of signatories to party bills. There were, for example, thirty signatories to a Communist bill of 28 Feb. 1945 (*J.O. (A.C.P.), Doc., Annexe* no. 343, pp. 435-7).

The composition of the Socialist group is analyzed in Appendix 1, pp. 266-7.

⁵⁶*J.O. (A.C.P.), Déb.*, 28 Dec. 1944, p. 650.

⁵⁷See a statement by Jules Jeanneney, Minister of State, *ibid.*, 20 Feb. 1945, pp. 138-9.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, 2 Mar. 1945, pp. 265-7.

⁵⁹*Le Populaire*, 6 Mar. 1945.

General showed that he regarded it as nothing more than an advisory body which expressed the attitudes of the Resistance, not those of the French people. He told one delegation that he, and not the Assembly, should be responsible to the nation until general elections could be held.⁶⁰

In many ways the parties' attempt to increase the Assembly's powers was the political aspect of their campaign to widen the scope of the government's scheme for nationalizing industry. The Socialists have left a clear record of their proposals in a series of bills wherein they recommended the nationalization of the large banks and insurance companies, the key manufacturing and transport industries, all electricity, gas, and coal companies, and the reorganization of these bodies as independent public corporations.⁶¹ Throughout January and February, *Le Populaire* carried articles condemning the government's reluctance to nationalize more industries or to widen the area of state controls, a reluctance which it attributed both to Plevin's conservatism and to de Gaulle's concern to win the middle classes to his idea of a national union. Several writers, notably Jules Moch, recommended that the General should drop the idea that 'union in inaction is better than the coherent action of a homogeneous power' and should carry out the C.N.R.'s programme.⁶² The Socialists became all the more outspoken when *Le Monde*, a liberal newspaper in the tradition of the pre-war *Le Temps*, began to suggest that the consideration of 'reforms of structure' be postponed until after the war on the grounds that 'the great mass of the nation' was not wholly in sympathy with the views of the Resistance organizations.⁶³ As the public debate on these issues became more and more animated, the Socialists were driven to co-ordinate their policies with those of the Communists, with whom they issued a joint communique on 1 March calling for the immediate appropriation of banks, of the main sources of raw materials and

⁶⁰According to his account of a meeting with a parliamentary delegation on 14 Mar. 1945 (de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, p. 106). For press speculation about this meeting see *Le Populaire*, 15 Mar. 1945; *Le Figaro*, 15 Mar. 1945; *Le Monde*, 16 Mar. 1945.

⁶¹J.O. (A.C.P.), *Doc., Annexes* nos. 421-5, 31 Mar. 1945, pp. 487-508.

⁶²*Le Populaire*, 6 Jan. 1945. See also an important series of articles entitled 'Brumes à dissiper', which ran in *Le Populaire* from 13 to 20 Feb. 1945.

⁶³*Le Monde*, 1 Feb. 1945.

power, of key manufacturing industries, and of transport firms and insurance companies.⁶⁴

When they staged this demonstration the two parties may well have known that the cabinet had already decided to make an important policy statement on the subject, for on the following day, 2 March, de Gaulle told the Assembly that his government intended to nationalize the main credit agencies, and the coal, electricity, petrol, and transport companies.⁶⁵ Although he gave no indication of when these reforms would be carried out, the mere fact of his having taken this stand encouraged the parties of the Left. Mayer took the opportunity of warning the General about those of his former opponents who were now attempting to win him over. He turned to the General, seated on the front bench of the Assembly:

I ask you, for the sake of your unblemished reputation . . . not to let them re-establish themselves under the shelter of your name. [Hear, hear! and applause.] I ask you to take the necessary economic and social measures which will make them tomorrow, as they were yesterday, 'anti-Gaullists'. [Hear, hear!].⁶⁶

For all that, the Socialists were aware that de Gaulle lacked real sympathy for the Resistance platform, and that he was open to suggestions that the government continue its moderate policies. A *Le Populaire* cartoon of 28 March shows the French version of Mr Fat, the bloated capitalist, trying to win the General away from his diminutive lady companion, Mlle Résistance. *Charmante*, Mr Fat is saying, *votre petite clandestine, mais elle a de bien mauvaises fréquentations*.

Late in March, as the budget debate in the Assembly was drawing to a close, the controversy over the nationalization programme was eclipsed by a new crisis over financial policy. Its immediate origins dated back to January, when Mendès-France had threatened to resign because of the government's refusal to consider his deflationary policies. Persuaded by de Gaulle to retain his post, Mendès-France had found that Pleven, backed by the Bank of France, was claiming more emphatically than ever that his colleague's proposed capital levy would destroy public confidence in the economy without restoring financial equilibrium.

⁶⁴*Le Populaire*, 2 Mar. 1945.

⁶⁵*J.O. (A.C.P.), Déb.*, 2 Mar. 1945, pp. 265-7.

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, p. 271.

Pleven argued that deflation would occur naturally once production expanded sufficiently to meet the existing demand for goods, and that industrial recovery would be encouraged by raising the fixed prices and by keeping taxes as light as possible.⁶⁷

Some Socialists actually accepted Pleven's approach, but others, including Philip and Moch, led a study group which in February brought out a proposal advocating measures similar to those favoured by Mendès-France – an exchange of bank notes and treasury bonds, a blockage of bank accounts, a property census and three special taxes (on total capital, on enrichment since 1939 and on increased property values) to drain off the excess money supply.⁶⁸ It also recommended a more systematic method for confiscating illicit wartime profits. However, whereas Mendès-France wanted to freeze the money taken out of circulation, the Socialist planners wanted it to serve as 'exceptional resources for the Treasury', a good indication that, unlike Mendès-France, Philip and Moch were less concerned with controlling inflation than with carrying out two traditional Socialist demands – the redistribution of incomes and the diversion of capital expenditure from private to public channels. Moreover, the Socialists remained unwilling to endorse wage and price stabilization schemes as anti-inflationary measures, probably because they felt unable, for electoral reasons, to resist the demands of the workers for higher wages and those of the peasants for higher agricultural prices.

Mendès-France took the opportunity to put his case strongly during the Assembly's debate on the budget and received qualified support from both Moch and Philip. Pleven defended his policies later and was gratified to find that both the Christian Democrats and the Communists were prepared to take his side. Jacques Duclos, the Communists' parliamentary leader, stated that Draconian anti-inflationary measures would induce 'a kind of

⁶⁷See letter from Mendès-France to de Gaulle, 18 Jan. 1945 (de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 426-36); report from Pleven to de Gaulle, 24 Feb. 1945 (ibid., pp. 440-8); letter from Mendès-France to de Gaulle, 2 Apr. 1945 (ibid., p. 460).

Fauvet (*La IV^e République*, pp. 36-40) gives an extremely full, and obviously informed, account of this dispute. See also Alexander Werth, *France, 1940-1955*, pp. 246-9.

⁶⁸J.O. (A.C.P.), *Doc., Annexe* no. 316, 20 Feb. 1945, pp. 405-11.

inferiority complex' in the country.⁶⁹ Finally the issue was decided in the cabinet on 28 March, when, according to Jacques Fauvet, the only measure of support for Mendès-France came from two Socialist ministers, Tixier and Laurent. As a result, the government decided to approve Pleven's mild proposals – an exchange of banknotes in June and the subsequent imposition of taxes on capital and enrichment. There was to be no capital levy, and, in keeping with an earlier decision, wage and price increases were to be made in April and May. Mendès-France resigned from the government on 5 April, and his portfolio was taken over by Pleven.⁷⁰ A *Le Monde* report suggests that some Socialists had wanted their ministers to resign in sympathy but that a meeting of the S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur* held on 11 April had decided that they need not do so.⁷¹

Had the measures proposed by Mendès-France been carried into effect, France might well have been spared the lingering inflation which so hindered her economic recovery. The parties of the Resistance had harmed their long-term interests by not providing him with more assistance in his long battle with Pleven and the Bank of France, for after his resignation, the government became committed to a financial policy conceived in conservative terms, and one which made unreal the demand of the Resistance Front for the nationalization of more industries. No 'reforms of structure' were possible until inflation could be brought under control, and until the government could substantially increase its financial resources by means of a capital levy. The parties of the Resistance Front, having failed to reconcile their political strategies with their economic policies, had become prisoners of a régime based on a national union. The revolution was running into the sand.

Socialist Strategies on the Eve of Tripartisme

It is a measure of the Socialists' political optimism that, in such a situation, they could continue to accept de Gaulle's régime as a disagreeable interlude before the restoration of fully responsible parliamentary government. They still based their strategies on the

⁶⁹See *J.O. (A.C.P.), Déb.*, 21 Mar. 1945, pp. 631-6 (Mendès-France); 29 Mar. 1945, pp. 902-7 (André Philip), pp. 907-16 (Pleven); and 30 Mar. 1945, pp. 956-61 (Jacques Duclos).

⁷⁰See Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, p. 39.

⁷¹*Le Monde*, 13 Apr. 1945.

belief that the post-war party system would be more coherent and purposeful than that of the Third Republic. Central to their thinking was the 'large parties' theory, according to which the basic stability of Fourth Republican politics would be provided by a system of three or four large disciplined parties, of which the foremost would be the S.F.I.O. This theory was to provide the essential doctrinal background to the Socialists' concrete strategies throughout the whole period of *tripartisme*. Its immediate origins may be traced to Léon Blum's *A l'échelle humaine*, which was circulated amongst leaders of the Socialist underground from 1941 onwards and which was derived to some extent from Blum's earlier work, *Lettres sur la Réforme Gouvernementale*, published as articles in 1917-18 and in book form in 1936. Both *A l'échelle* and Vincent Auriol's *Hier . . . demain*, which also put forward the theory, were published in April 1945, and had an immediate vogue. Jules Moch gave a good account of this theory in his *Le Parti Socialiste au Peuple de France*, written in December 1944 and published shortly afterwards. Mayer and Verdier helped to bring its main points before the Party's rank and file through articles in *Le Populaire*.

Behind the theory lay a most unfavourable judgment of pre-war politics. According to the Socialist analysis, parliament under the Third Republic had been little better than a cockpit of factions in which the deputies, made dependent on local interests by the electoral system of *scrutin d'arrondissement*,⁷² had had little time to consider general ideas and issues. Instead of parliament's representing the great ideological currents of the nation, it had consisted mainly of local representatives arranged in ephemeral groupings. Only the Socialist and Communist Parties had constituted disciplined and coherent parliamentary groups, while the loose parties of the Centre had formed brittle and unstable coalition governments, prevented by their internal differences from carrying out consistent and fully responsible policies.⁷³

The weaknesses of this system were aggravated, the theory went on, by the overlapping of political cleavages. Religious questions, foreign policy issues, and problems of constitutional reform so divided the deputies that a majority had no sooner been

⁷²The *scrutin d'arrondissement* was a two-ballot system conducted in single-member constituencies. Election was by simple majority on the first ballot and by absolute majority on the second.

⁷³Auriol, *Hier . . . demain*, II, p. 50, and *Le Populaire*, 26 Dec. 1944.

formed on one issue than it would be confronted with another and break up. Thus a coalition formed to carry out a progressive economic policy might collapse when its component parties disagreed about the objects of foreign or colonial policies. It was impossible, before the war, to form a parliamentary majority which could agree on common policies for all the serious issues facing the nation. The Socialists believed, however, that the collapse of bourgeois rule in 1940 and the subsequent formation of the Vichy State had created in the French people a revolutionary mood and the willingness to subordinate all other considerations to the realization of widespread economic reforms. No longer would the problem of divided allegiances prevent the formation of strong political fronts. The primacy of the economic question was now firmly established.

The only problem which poses itself is that of the *social democracy*, the destruction of the industrial and banking feudalism which oppresses the individual and enslaves the State. Is one for the socialization of the trusts and the direction of the national economy by the free co-operation of the 'workers of the hand and of the mind' or for classical liberalism and social conservatism? Such is the question. And it is the reply to this question which will permit the classification of the political parties and thus give strong foundations to the new Republic.⁷⁴

Most Socialist writers agreed that only about three or four parties would emerge in the post-war period. However, in *Hier . . . demain* Auriol went so far as to suggest that the S.F.I.O., having absorbed the Christian Democrats and the progressive Radicals, might then link up with the Communists, and that the old Right-wing groups, such as the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation, faced by a united Left, might be obliged to form a single conservative party.⁷⁵ Auriol argued that large parties were an essential pre-condition of responsible government, for no cabinet could be durable

unless it is formed by a representative majority at once stable and homogenous, that is to say one founded on a doctrine and on a clear, practical and long-range programme, free from any spirit of intrigue and all possibility of indiscipline. A minority built according to the same rules must keep the majority up to

⁷⁴Auriol, loc. cit.

⁷⁵*Hier . . . demain*, II, pp. 48-51.

the mark, check on it and spur it on [*l'éperonner*]. This forms the strength of the old English and American democracies.⁷⁶

Auriol's pipe-dream of a French two-party system should be balanced against more sober predictions, such as that advanced by Jules Moch.

There must normally coexist, alongside the Communist Party . . . three secular parties, one the partisan of a revolutionary acceleration of social change, the second of a slower development, and the third of a return to the old liberalism – a 'reaction' in the etymological sense of the word. Alongside these are two spiritual, basically catholic movements, one with very advanced social ideas (*tendances sociales fortement évolutives*) and the other with a background of social conservatism. In other words, to find in the political rainbow a shade very close to his own thinking, the French elector will have to choose between the Communists, the Socialists, the Radicals, the Democratic Alliance, the Popular Democrats and the Republican Federation

This list could eventually be reduced by one or two units, if the socialist-communist fusion were realized or if the Radicals transferred their left-wing contingents to socialism and their right-wing contingents to the Democratic Alliance. But it is also capable of being enlarged if certain Resistance movements transform themselves into political parties which would not be clearly distinguishable from one or another of the preceding ones. It therefore appears reasonable to reckon on the survival of half-a-dozen political formations.⁷⁷

In spite of such slight differences in detail, Socialist writers were generally agreed that social and economic factors were reducing the number of parties. However, they also suggested that constitutional and legal steps might be taken to speed the process along. Since they blamed the voting system of *scrutin d'arrondissement* for the lack of ideological content in pre-war politics, they advocated its replacement by a system of proportional representation based on large multi-member constituencies. This they felt would free candidates from the thralldom of local concerns and allow them to apply themselves to broader political questions. In order to encourage the development of a strong party system, Moch suggested that no one should be permitted to stand for election unless he belonged to an established party or had strong

⁷⁶Auriol, *Le Populaire*, 21 Sept. 1944.

⁷⁷Moch, *Le Parti socialiste au Peuple*, pp. 80-1.

popular backing within his electorate; he also recommended that each parliamentary group should be affiliated with a nationally organized electoral party which should have the power to discipline erring members.

Such a method would regularize the functioning of parties . . . but would in fact limit political action to a small number of parties already having a solid foundation in public opinion. It would give the Assembly a political composition like that of the country and would keep within bounds the changing of sides by representatives, without however prohibiting changes dictated by the individual conscience.⁷⁸

The Socialists were aware that the imposition of such constraints would appreciably narrow the range of political liberties which citizens had enjoyed before the war, but they argued that strong parties were essential if France was to have the benefit of sound democratic government, and that some loss of liberty had to be accepted for the good of the nation. If the parliamentary chaos of the Third Republic were allowed to return, the country could easily fall prey to another authoritarian dictatorship. Moreover, Auriol considered that the large parties would educate the citizens to act with a new awareness of their responsibilities.

In order that citizens may lay down common rules of action and may choose their representatives in accordance with these rules, large political parties are necessary. These parties, through their respective doctrines and programmes, should canalize the currents of ideas, undertake the political education of citizens, and initiate them into the complex problems of national and international life.⁷⁹

Verdier, too, attached importance to organization and discipline.

Yes, a party must impose a strict discipline on the men it charges with responsibility; but, in return, it gives them the strength of militants, numerous, united, and used to considering and discussing things together. It keeps them in permanent contact with public opinion, without whose support they, as

⁷⁸Cited by H. Michel and B. Mirkine-Guetzévitch, *Les idées politiques et sociales de la Résistance*, p. 321. These suggestions formed part of a large report which Moch drew up early in 1944 while he was at Algiers as a delegate of the Consultative Assembly. It was based on an earlier proposal which he had submitted to members of the southern Socialist executive and to the leaders of *Combat* in 1942. See also his *Le Parti Socialiste au Peuple de France*, pp. 82-3.

⁷⁹Auriol, *Hier . . . demain*, II, p. 115.

isolated fighters, are powerless to struggle against the cabals and the intrigues of special interests.⁸⁰

In all their discussions of the new party system which would evolve, the Socialists saw themselves as the hub of political life. Léon Blum, in *A l'échelle humaine*, compared the S.F.I.O. to a church which had outgrown its evangelism and become an established institution.

Today the phase of polemic is over. Socialism can move from its militant to its triumphant period. The social system which it attacked and by which it was attacked is now falling into ruin, and even where it still carries on it does so without belief in itself and in contradiction with its own laws. Socialist assumptions and axioms have been taken over by men and parties who have waged the most ferocious of wars against Socialist organizations. It is on the foundation of Socialist principles that societies, whether consciously or not, are everywhere being reconstituted.⁸¹

Moch went even further.

Responsibility grows with power: only small parties may confine themselves to a systematic opposition and base their propaganda on permanent criticism. This stage is, for us, long left behind . . . having become the strongest organization in the democracy, the party will have to assume more numerous and heavy charges in the reconstruction of France and the building of peace. Far from avoiding them, it will demand them with confidence and pride.⁸²

So much for the long-term prospects. In the meantime, however, the Socialists had to accept the situation as it was and work out their policy accordingly. At once their theories of Left-wing unity lost their relevance; they actively discouraged the Communists' efforts to band the various Resistance groups into a single, disciplined movement, for they believed that such a movement would be, in Auriol's words, 'a movement without doctrine, without coherence, without defined contours, destined to attract much support and to have great electoral successes, but not to achieve strong and disciplined action'.⁸³

⁸⁰Verdier, *Le Populaire*, 17-18 Sept. 1944.

⁸¹Blum, *A l'échelle humaine*, pp.176-7.

⁸²Moch, op. cit., p. 25.

⁸³Auriol, *Le Populaire*, 27 Oct. 1944. See also Mayer, *ibid.*, 11 Jan. 1945.

More fundamentally, however, they considered that even were such a union achieved, it would soon be reduced to impotence by clashes of outlook amongst its component groups. How could party unity be maintained while the Communists continued to subscribe to the doctrine of Lenin and Stalin, the Socialists to the humanitarian socialism of Jaurès and Blum, and the Christian Democrats to Roman Catholic social theory? Although these three parties could combine to realize the economic and political demands set out in the C.N.R.'s programme, their different doctrinal backgrounds impelled them to express themselves as separate philosophical entities. What was more, in the opinion of the Socialist leaders, the French people were entitled to choose between the three points of view represented by the main Resistance parties.

Mayer and his colleagues attached great importance to the S.F.I.O.'s maintaining its doctrinal integrity. This they felt would be threatened if the Party were to be drawn into too close an association with the Communist Party, especially while the latter remained pro-Russian in its sympathies, authoritarian in its organizational methods, and Bolshevik in its outlook. Moreover, close ties with the Communists would have destroyed any chance they had of extending the S.F.I.O.'s electoral base to include progressive middle-class groups. For all these reasons the Socialists wanted the Resistance Front to remain an alliance of three major parties, not a unified mass movement working under the constant threat of Communist domination. Their desire for independence, however, did not prevent the Socialists from working consistently to maintain good relations with the Communists on their Left and the Christian Democrats on their Right. Early in September 1944, Mayer publicly urged the Communists to join with the Socialists in forming a joint committee to discuss questions of working-class unity, and invited the Christian Democrats to work with the S.F.I.O. provided they respected the principles of secular schooling and the *laïcité* of the state.⁸⁴ But the Socialists responded cautiously to the proposals for forming a united Resistance Party put forward in October by the Communist Party, the M.L.N. and the *Front National*.⁸⁵ Similarly, when the Communists and the *Front National* advocated the formation of common resistance lists for the provisional local elections, scheduled at first for

⁸⁴*Le Populaire*, 11 Sept. 1944.

⁸⁵See Auriol, *ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1944.

February 1945, the Socialists kept firmly to the line that each party should contest the first ballot independently and that common 'anti-reactionary' lists should be formed only on the second. Only thus, they claimed, would the French people be given an opportunity to indicate which particular party or parties they considered to be most important.

We have seen (pp. 41-5) that this broad strategy was approved by the S.F.I.O.'s Congress of November 1944, but that that body also damaged the Party's understanding with the Christian Democrats by adopting an anti-clerical resolution. The opportunity to open a rift in the Resistance Front was immediately seized by the Parisian Radical newspaper *L'Aurore*, which began to treat the church-schools issue in a sensational manner.⁸⁶ Replying in *Le Populaire*, Robert Verdier maintained that the Socialists were not going to allow religious issues to obscure their basic agreement with the Christian Democrats on social and economic questions. A week later he made a point of applauding the decisions taken by the M.R.P.'s inaugural Congress of 25-6 November to declare its support for Republican liberties, for the nationalization of important industries and for a controlled economy.⁸⁷

The Socialists were soon to have further cause to worry about the Radicals. By December it was clear that an event which they had neither expected nor wanted was in fact occurring – the Radical Socialist Party was coming back to life. The Socialists had assumed that the former Radicals would be drawn, according to their individual temperaments, either towards the S.F.I.O. or towards the conservative parties. However, a group of former Radical deputies had held a small congress in November, and by December their preparations for reconstructing the Party were well under way. Auriol sourly noted that it was still the old mixture of radicalism and conservatism. 'Once more one sees faithful disciples of Pelletan and Buisson grouped with adherents of the old conservative opportunism.'⁸⁸

The re-emergence of the Radical Socialist Party disturbed the Socialist leaders much more than the parallel revival of the old Right-wing factions, the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation. It was evident that if the Radicals could succeed in recovering their former electoral strength, there would be a basis

⁸⁶ 17 Nov. 1944.

⁸⁷ *Le Populaire*, 23 and 30 Nov. 1944.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 Dec. 1944.

for an anti-clerical alliance of Communists, Socialists and Radicals – a new Popular Front, a formula much preferred by the Communists to the alignment of Communists, Socialists and Christian Democrats favoured by the Socialists. Communist strategy soon became directed not only towards pressing for a united Resistance organization but also towards forcing the Socialists to break with the M.R.P. and to accept the Radicals as a new third partner in alliance. To do this, they too exploited the church-schools issue.

Tripartisme as a formula of alliance really dates from the decision of the Socialists, reached over the course of several months, to remain attached to the M.R.P. rather than to the Radical Socialist Party. Several factors influenced their choice. In the eyes of Mayer, Verdier, Moch, Philip, and other young Socialist leaders, the Radicals' only progressive traits were their anti-clericalism and their vague glorification of 1789 – otherwise they were regarded as being economically and socially conservative, ready to desert the Left, as they had done in 1937, when it came to the point of carrying out important economic reforms. The Socialists suspected, moreover, that the Radicals were in favour of reviving the Third Republican Constitution, which would have meant the restoration of the Senate, the centre of Radical power in pre-war politics. Finally, as the Socialists hoped that their Party would expand electorally in areas of former Radical strength, they were reluctant to make an ally of a party they wished to supplant. Positive factors in favour of an alliance with the M.R.P. were the Socialists' sympathy with that Party's economic and constitutional radicalism and their anxiety to ensure that it was not drawn into the conservative camp. Mayer was aware that this could easily happen if the S.F.I.O. did not encourage the M.R.P.'s progressive leadership in its efforts to counter the weight of its conservative supporters in the clerical strongholds of the eastern and western regions.

From the Socialists' point of view, it was more important for the Left to implement the 'reforms of structure' and to institute a democratic, unicameral constitution than to raise issues about the status of church schools and the *laïcité* of the state. On this account, they supported *tripartisme* (a term which was not coined until much later) rather than the Popular Front formula. Another reason for their preference may have been the fear that the Radicals would provide too light a balance to the Communists in the latter arrangement, with the result that the centre of gravity

in any new Popular Front alliance might well have shifted to the Communists, to the immense disadvantage of the Socialists. A strong M.R.P., on the other hand, would provide a good counter-balance to the Communists in the alternative three-party formula, thus leaving the S.F.I.O. with room for manoeuvre as the centre unit of the alliance. Finally, the Socialists may also have calculated that an alliance which included the M.R.P. would stand a better chance of keeping contact with de Gaulle than one which contained the Radicals. Even at this stage, the General's support was an asset valued highly by the Socialists.

Obviously, the Socialists were giving themselves many problems by choosing *tripartisme*. It would be an almost impossible task to reconcile their anti-clerical militants, especially those in the Brittany-Normandy and Alsace-Lorraine regions, to a close association with the M.R.P., particularly while the Communists and Radicals were keeping the church-schools issue alive. There was always the possibility, moreover, that the M.R.P. would fail to become a major party or that, having done so, it would allow itself to be drawn towards the Right. Above all there remained the great question mark of de Gaulle's intentions. His patronage would greatly assist the Socialist and M.R.P. leaders to work the *tripartisme* formula, but only so long as he continued to accept the principles of the restoration of parliamentary democracy and the further extension of the nationalization programme.

From December 1944 onwards the Socialists' main concern was to stabilize the S.F.I.O.'s relationship with the Communist Party and to ensure that the proposed alliance did not become the first step towards a merger of the two parties. When they had put forward the idea of a *Comité d'entente* they had conceived it as a body for discussing common problems and settling differences. The Communists, on the other hand, saw the *Comité* as a means of achieving 'unity of action' between the two parties, and then a state of 'organic union', in which they would lose their separate identities. When the *Comité d'entente* first met on 19 December, this difference in outlook did not prevent the two parties from establishing several sub-committees, one to deal with 'unity of action', another to discuss the possibilities of ultimate fusion, and another to arbitrate disputes between the members or organizations of the two parties.⁸⁹ However, when the Communists proposed, as the first step towards 'organic union',

⁸⁹See *A.P.*, 1944-1945, pp. 60 and 69, and *Le Populaire*, 20 Dec. 1944.

that *comités d'entente* be formed at the departmental level, the Socialists objected and instructed their federations to have nothing to do with the scheme.⁹⁰

The problem of Socialist-Communist relations also lay at the heart of disputes within the two largest Resistance organizations, the M.L.N. and *Front National*, which were steadily widening the range of their political activities. Although the *Front National* did contain some independent elements, it was Communist-dominated, whereas within the M.L.N., Socialists constituted the most powerful group. Within the latter body, however, there were three factions, one strongly pro-Communist, one pro-Socialist and one which wanted the M.L.N. to withdraw from politics altogether. At the M.L.N. Congress of 23-8 January, the 'withdrawal' faction joined with the pro-Socialists to defeat the pro-Communists' proposal for a complete fusion of all Resistance groups and parties – a step which would have meant in the first instance the merger of the M.L.N. with the *Front National*. Relieved by this decision, the Socialist leaders nevertheless remained concerned lest the M.L.N., which claimed a membership of 500,000, should become a political party competing for the same groups of electors as the S.F.I.O.⁹¹ Quite predictably, when the *Front National* held its Congress between 30 January and 3 February, it declared for a unified Resistance party.⁹²

Already the friction between the Socialists and Communists had become quite marked, and even in the Consultative Assembly their groups often ran foul of each other. On one occasion early in March the Socialists were virtually responsible for the rejection, by 110 votes to 79, of a Communist scheme to merge the departmental and municipal councils of Paris into one body.⁹³ A fortnight later the Communists tried to block the appointment to the Consultative Assembly of a new delegate, Nicod, who had resigned from the pre-war Communist Party after the signing of the Russo-German non-aggression pact of August 1939. The Socialists joined with other delegates in accusing the Communists of pursuing a vendetta against their former comrade. After a

⁹⁰See *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 3, Mar. 1945, pp. 2-3.

⁹¹For the M.L.N. Congress see an excellent series of articles by Raymond Millet in *Le Monde*, 24 to 30 Jan. 1945. Mayer gave the Socialists' viewpoint in *Le Populaire*, 10 Jan. 1945.

⁹²See another series of articles by Millet, *Le Monde*, 1 to 5 Feb. 1945.

⁹³*J.O. (A.C.P.)*, *Déb.*, 2 Mar. 1945, pp. 233-52 and 255 (division list).

heated debate the Assembly voted the validation by 61 votes to 49, with the Socialists and the M.R.P. aligned in the majority against the Communists.⁹⁴

Until this time the main area of tension within the Resistance Front had lain between the Socialists and the Communists, and relations between the S.F.I.O. and the Christian Democrats had remained fairly cordial. Shortly after the Nicod incident, however, the church-schools issue suddenly flared up once more. Early in March the Assembly's Finance Committee recommended the immediate abolition of the Vichy subsidy to church schools; but the Education Committee, which met later in the month, suggested that the grant should be continued until July, on the grounds that the church schools needed the money urgently and that the government could not at that moment provide alternative educational facilities.⁹⁵ When the matter came before the Assembly, the Finance Committee's proposal for ending the subsidy was approved by 128 votes to 49, the Communists, Socialists and Radicals voting in the majority against the M.R.P. and the Right.⁹⁶ In fact the government ignored the vote and continued the subsidy until July, but the preceding wrangle had seriously weakened the understanding between the Socialists and the M.R.P. Matters were not improved either by a violent anti-clerical campaign in the Communist press,⁹⁷ or the attempt of one of the M.R.P.'s leaders, P. H. Teitgen, to defend the continuation of the subsidy of a radio-broadcast.⁹⁸

The church-schools issue was one of the Communists' favourite propaganda pieces during the campaign for the municipal elections, the two ballots for which were held on 29 April and 13 May 1945. Immediately the Socialist leaders were thrown on the defensive, and their concern not to antagonize the M.R.P. any further led them to tone down their references to the Vichy subsidy, a moderation which annoyed the many anti-clericals amongst their rank and file. The Communists further embarrassed

⁹⁴Ibid., 15 Mar. 1945, pp. 531-2, and 16 Mar. 1945, pp. 533-9 and 548 (division list). For the resultant controversy see *L'Humanité*, 17 Mar. 1945, and *Le Populaire*, 18-19 Mar. 1945.

⁹⁵*Le Monde*, 11-12, 28 Mar. 1945.

⁹⁶*J.O. (A.C.P.)*, *Déb.*, 28 Mar. 1945, pp. 827-67 and 880-1 (division list).

⁹⁷See Marcel Cachin, *L'Humanité*, 7 Apr. 1945.

⁹⁸*Le Monde*, 7 Apr. 1945.

the Socialist leaders during the campaign by making a great call for common Resistance lists against the forces of reaction, while the Socialists insisted on the need for separate lists on the first ballot. Despite directions from Paris, several of the S.F.I.O.'s Left-wing federations, such as Rhône, called openly for joint Communist-Socialist lists,⁹⁹ which were in fact formed at such places as Laon (Aisne), Foix (Ariège) and Besançon (Doubs). At Marseilles, Socialists and Communists joined in a common list with representatives of the C.G.T., the M.L.N., and *Front National*. On the other hand, joint Socialist-M.R.P. lists were arranged at Nevers (Nièvre) and Rueil-Malmaison (Seine-et-Oise), to name a few examples.¹

The first ballot results of 29 April indicated little beyond the fact that the Left as a whole had increased its vote, and that the Communists had gained at the expense of the Socialists. According to the Communists, there was evidence that the M.R.P. had received a disturbing amount of support from Right-wing electors, and the Communist Party's *Bureau politique* called for the exclusion of M.R.P. candidates from common Resistance lists on the second ballot.² The S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur* refused to go further than to call on its federations to join common lists so that 'the spirit of the Resistance, of Democracy, of the Republic and of Socialism' might triumph in the election.³

The results of the second ballot, held on 13 May, gave the first post-war indication of the electoral strength of the main parties. The Left as a whole now controlled 48 per cent of the municipal councils as compared with 42 per cent after the 1935 municipal elections. The Socialists had won three times, and the Communists four times, as many municipalities as they had won before the war, while the M.R.P., on its first trial, had shown definite promise of becoming a major party.⁴ In many large towns, including Marseilles, Lille, Douai, Toulouse, Roubaix, Tours, and Le Mans, the Socialists had gained large majorities.

However, in spite of these heartening returns, the parties of the Resistance were despondent. Their inability to work together in the Consultative Assembly, their failure to exercise any decisive

⁹⁹Ibid., 6 Apr. 1945.

¹*Le Populaire*, 27 Apr and 1 May 1945.

²*A.P.*, 1944-1945, p. 201.

³*Le Populaire*, 3 May 1945.

⁴*A.P.*, 1944-1945, p. 491.

influence on government policy, and the disorganization, often the sheer chaos, of their supposedly common campaign during the municipal elections, had made it clear to them that a more disciplined alliance would have to be fashioned if the C.N.R.'s revolutionary programme were ever to be carried into effect. A study of the municipal election results showed that the four main groups available for a new alliance were the Communist, Socialist, M.R.P. and Radical Socialist Parties (with the *Front National* and the M.L.N. in reserve). The outstanding differences remained; the Communists and the *Front National* favoured the reconstitution of the Popular Front; the Socialist leaders, although some of their Left-wing rank and file also favoured the latter formula, took the view that the only alliance capable of carrying out a worth-while programme of economic and constitutional reforms would be one composed of the Communists, the Socialists and the M.R.P. Mayer again drew attention to the need to encourage the M.R.P.'s progressive leadership in its tug-of-war with the Party's conservative supporters. While he admitted that the M.R.P. had attracted Right-wing votes during the municipal elections, he asked what this really signified.

Contradiction between the will of its leaders and the electoral reality? Perhaps. And this then places the leaders on the crossroads.

Are they going to follow the destiny which social conservatism offers them? Are they going to become the large party of the French Right which is lacking from the political chessboard? Or will they, resigning themselves to a less brilliant but more glorious future, remain faithful to the programme of the National Council of the Resistance . . .? Will they succeed in gathering together those Catholic elements which are not frightened by profound economic changes or alliances with the revolutionary parties?

The question is posed for them. Will the Socialist militants permit me to say that it is indirectly posed for us? Must not our role be to serve, on the left of the M.R.P., as a pole of attraction in opposition to that which presents itself on their opposite wing?⁵

Because the Communists and the M.R.P. were linked by nothing more than their vague allegiance to the Resistance myth and to the C.N.R.'s programme, it was on the Socialist Party, *le*

⁵*Le Populaire*, 4 May 1945.

parti charnière, that the stability of the proposed alliance would depend. The burdens which *tripartisme* would place on the S.F.I.O. were all too obvious; it would suffer tremendous stresses if the M.R.P. and the Communist Party continued to drift further apart, for just as Socialist anti-clericals disliked the idea of associating with the M.R.P. so the idea of an alliance with the Communists displeased the Party's more conservative militants.

It was at this crucial time that something happened which gave the S.F.I.O. new heart. On 14 May, Léon Blum returned to France. The war in Europe had been over for a week, and Blum, freed by the Allied troops in the Italian Tyrol, where he had been sent with other prisoners from Buchenwald, was being flown to Orly airport in an American service plane. It came into view at 1.40 p.m. and landed smoothly before the crowd of relations, friends, and well-wishers who had gathered there. The door in the fuselage opened and he appeared, an older, frailer Blum than the man who had led the Popular Front to power and who had defended its record with such dignity before the Riom judges, but easily recognizable with his suntan and his little white moustache. There were shouts of 'Vive Blum', and then silence. He blew the crowd a kiss, embraced his family, and greeted his old friends: *J'ai été si inquiet pour vous . . . si inquiet*. General de Gaulle had sent his car to the airport and soon, amidst the cheers of the airport workers, he was preparing to drive away.

A last wave of the hand, a general wave which, like the first, is meant for all those who had come to welcome him and we find ourselves alone, extraordinarily disturbed, feeling as we had not felt for five years what this great presence means for Socialism, for the Republic and for France.⁶

For many of the Socialists who stood there, his return had already become a symbol of a new turning point in the fortunes of the Party. Once more Blum was to become the focus of hope within the Socialist movement.

⁶Ibid, 15 May 1945.

In Search of an Alliance

The Return of Léon Blum

Blum's reputation within the Party was greater than ever on his return to France, but those who hoped that he would again play an active part in the S.F.I.O.'s affairs were to be disappointed. Weakened by his months of imprisonment, he had to place a strict limit on his activities and was unable either to join de Gaulle's cabinet or to accept the place reserved for him on the S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur*. However, he continued to act as director of *Le Populaire*, for which he regularly wrote leading articles, and his opinions carried great weight amongst the Party's rank and file. In semi-retirement he fitted easily into the role of the S.F.I.O.'s grey eminence; his house at Jouy-en-Josas, a village south-west of Paris, became a favourite meeting place for the Party's leaders, and when he visited his office in *Le Populaire* building, on the Boulevard Poissonnière, he found much of his time taken up with callers.

In fact, this was the twilight of Blum's career. Born in 1872, he had been drawn into the Socialist intelligentsia late in the 1890s after a brilliant school career and an essay into literary journalism. This was a troubled period in French history; the Dreyfus affair was coming to a head and the struggle between the Guesdist and revisionist wings of the Socialist movement was reaching its most acute phase. As the son of a Jewish merchant family, Blum must have been deeply concerned about the anti-Semitic aspects of the anti-Dreyfus agitation, while within the Socialist movement his admiration for Jaurès drew him to the revisionist camp. He took the side of the *Parti socialiste français*, which he admired for its willingness to explore the possibilities of parliamentary co-operation with enlightened sections of the bourgeoisie. The next significant turning point in Blum's career was the Tours Congress of 1920, where a majority of the delegates decided to rename the organization the Communist Party and to affiliate with the Third International. Blum and Auriol rallied the dissident minority and founded the new S.F.I.O., which they

guided to strength during the twenties. This was the decade in which Blum gained a reputation not only as a national leader but also as a parliamentary strategist of the first order, mainly because of his guidance of the Party during the unhappy *Cartel des gauches* alliance of 1924-6. Inside the Party he used his influence to persuade the rank and file that the S.F.I.O. had an obligation to participate in bourgeois governments both to obtain reforms which would benefit the workers and to maintain the republican form of government against its enemies. As head of the Popular Front government of 1936-7 Blum showed that Left-wing demands could be realized within the framework of the parliamentary régime.¹

Blum's preoccupation with questions of doctrine and strategy, and his lack of first-hand knowledge about the working of the party organization at the local level, made it difficult for him to enter fully into the S.F.I.O.'s institutional life. His relationship with the rank and file was strangely incomplete. Blum the platform orator had outstanding presence; he could hold congress meetings spellbound by his oratory. At a nod from the chairman he would rise quietly from his place and move to the front of the dais; speaking slowly and with emphasis, he would proceed confidently to the core of his speech, making his points with the assurance that everyone would accept his argument once they understood its logic. But Blum the party leader remained at a distance from his followers. Reserved, jealous of his privacy and his intellectual reserves, he contrasted with Jaurès, whose expansive personality and extravagant gestures had won him acceptance as a true son of the people and added popular colour to his legend. Certainly, Blum did not intend to be aloof, or to create the impression that he was withholding part of himself from politics, but he never fully succeeded in bridging the gap between himself and the militants of his Party. Indeed his chief flaw as a politician was his failure to comprehend fully the mentality of his followers, to appreciate the limits and terms of their loyalty, the barriers to action provided by their myths. On several occasions before the war, sudden shifts of opinion in the Party had taken him by surprise. Until the mid-thirties, the security of his own position

¹See James Joll, *Intellectuals in Politics, Three Biographical Essays*; Colette Audry, 'Tombeau de Léon Blum', *Les Temps Modernes, La Gauche*, 1955, pp. 1753-1802; Richard L. Stokes, *Léon Blum, From Poet to Premier*; Marc Vichniac, *Léon Blum*.

was partly based on the strength within the organization of a strong Guesdist group, centred on the Nord and Pas-de-Calais federations, but after 1938 factional divisions made it difficult for him to maintain unity. There was a certain lack of finesse in his handling of such situations; he did not realize how difficult it was for the rank and file to accept courses of action which involved a sharp break with the Party's traditions, and sometimes failed until too late to recognize the signs of their dissatisfaction.

As a strategist, Blum's main concern was to accustom the S.F.I.O. to act constructively within the bourgeois régime, particularly in the field of parliamentary affairs. In matters of Marxist doctrine, he was undoubtedly a revisionist, although he himself rarely used this term. Without excluding altogether the possibility of revolution, he stressed on several occasions that a socialist order could be achieved without resort to violence and without open class conflict. In his writings he often maintained that the S.F.I.O. should keep both the Communists and the M.R.P. at a distance and should make clear to the electors that Socialism was a distinctive political philosophy and not just a watered down version of Communism or a secular version of Catholic social thought. However although he insisted that the S.F.I.O. should not unite with the Communist Party (unless that Party severed its links with Russia and restored democracy in its own organization) he was by no means opposed to working with the Communists in parliament and government. Alexander Werth unfairly suggests that Blum was 'almost pathologically anti-Communist' and that he was partly responsible for the estrangement of the Socialists from the Communists in 1945 and for 'the Socialist drift towards "Third Force" conceptions, and towards a purely Western (and pro-American) line in international affairs.'² In fact, however, Blum seldom allowed his dislike of the Communists to distort his strategic thinking.

Within one week of Blum's return to Paris, an important conference of federal secretaries was held at Montrouge on 20 May to discuss the results of the municipal elections. The delegates were dispirited and listless, disturbed by the tactics adopted by the Communists during the campaign and worried about the disadvantages of the Party's alliance with the M.R.P. Had Blum chosen to spell out the Resistance myth once more, and to claim that the parties of the Resistance had a right to

²Alexander Werth, *France, 1940-1955*, p. 266.

become the main powers in post-war France, he might have rekindled the enthusiasm of autumn 1944. Instead he took the more honest course of pointing out the realities of the post-war situation and the dangers of the Resistance parties taking their political pre-eminence for granted.

I do not believe, for my part, that the Resistance has created a right to power for anyone at all. No one has a prior right to power in a democracy. The sovereign people even have the right to be ungrateful.

He then went on to suggest that de Gaulle's government was, in fact, based on popular consent and not on the Resistance Front alone.

If the power which General de Gaulle exercises today is legitimate, this is not because he was the first of the French Resistants or their head. It is because . . . it happened that he was the only man who could rally around his name all the pure and upright elements of liberated France. He derives his right from this fact and not from the Resistance.³

Perhaps no one but Blum could have given these warnings. It remained to be seen whether the Socialists could reorient their thinking and reassess their strategies to meet the peculiar demands of politics under the Gaullist régime.

The Referendum Bill Crisis

As soon as the war in Europe had ended, Frenchmen had begun to look forward to the election of a constituent assembly under Article One of the Ordinance of 21 April 1944. No one was surprised when de Gaulle announced before the cabinet on 31 May that 'it appeared necessary to him to proceed to a general consultation of the country before the end of the current year'.⁴ But there were some doubts about the General's intentions. Politicians of the Left were disturbed by reports of a conversation he had had on 22 May with Edouard Herriot, a pre-war Radical leader, and by the campaign being conducted by the main Radical newspapers (notably *L'Aurore* and *La Dépêche de Paris*) for the holding of elections, under the Constitutional Acts of 1875 and 1884, for a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate. According to the Radical press, these two bodies could then meet in joint session to revise the old Constitutional Acts, a procedure which

³*L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum*, pp. 5-11.

⁴*Le Monde*, 1 June 1945.

would avoid the formation of a special constituent assembly. Naturally *L'Humanité* and *Le Populaire* strongly attacked this proposal; 'the 1875 Constitution,' wrote Blum, 'no longer exists . . . either in fact or in law.'⁵

However, to the consternation of the Left, General de Gaulle did not appear to be so sure. In the course of a press conference on 3 June he unexpectedly threw the whole question open for public discussion. He pointed out that while the government wanted the people to be 'consulted' before the end of the year, it had not decided what form that consultation should take. He mentioned three possibilities: the election of a Chamber and Senate under the 1875 Acts; the election of a constituent assembly; and the consultation of the people, presumably by referendum, about the principles on which the constitution should be based.⁶ This was a far step from the General's earlier undertakings to hold elections for a constituent assembly. At a press conference in 1942 he had stated:

I don't think that the form of the future French constitution will be exactly the same as the pre-war one. But that is a personal opinion, and it will be for the future National Assembly to determine the French Constitution.⁷

He had been even more explicit on later occasions. Speaking before the Consultative Assembly at Algiers in March 1944, he had approved its decision to support the election of a constituent assembly.

Like the government, the Assembly has reached perfectly clear and precise conclusions about what must be considered essential.

The Assembly has first of all voted, in full agreement with the government, that the national sovereignty, that is to say the National Constituent Assembly, which will make the laws and the Constitution, can emerge only from a general consultation of the nation.⁸

Why, then, had he chosen to reopen the whole question? He may have had political reasons for doing so. Since his return to

⁵*Le Populaire*, 2 June 1945.

⁶*Le Monde*, 5 June 1945.

⁷Press Conference at London, 27 May 1942 (Charles de Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, p. 210).

⁸Speech to the Consultative Assembly, Algiers, 27 Mar. 1944, *ibid.*, p. 424.

Paris, the General had aimed at widening the basis of his support as far to the Right as possible. If, as seemed likely, the Radicals and other groups of the Centre-Right were to break with him should he declare outright for a constituent assembly, he would find himself once more the leader, not of the national union he obviously wanted, but of the unstable Resistance Front of the Communist, Socialist and M.R.P. Parties. He may therefore have hoped that the public debate on the alternatives he had proposed would lead to a realignment of political groups, possibly to a broad Centre alliance which included the S.F.I.O., the M.R.P. and the Radical Socialist Party but excluded the Communists and the parties of the Right. Perhaps, too, de Gaulle was disturbed by the thought that a sovereign constituent assembly, unhampered by executive restraints, might fail to provide France with strong government at a critical time in international affairs, and therefore seriously considered reviving the 1875 Constitutional Acts, which did provide a conservative Senate and a President as ready-made checks on the authority of a popular assembly.

During the first phase of the public debate on the matter, the division of opinion followed the expected lines. For once, the Resistance Front appeared to be united; the Communists' *Bureau politique*, the S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur* and the M.R.P.'s executive declared in turn that the 1875 Acts should not be revived and that a sovereign constituent assembly should be elected under a system of *représentation proportionnelle intégrale*.⁹ On 29 June the C.N.R. voted by fourteen to three to adopt a similar position.¹⁰ Ranged in the Right were the Radicals, the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation, all three in favour of retaining the 1875 Acts and opposed to the election of a constituent assembly. They wanted the government to arrange for the election of a Chamber of Deputies under the old electoral

⁹See *L'Humanité*, 15 June 1945; *Le Populaire*, 22 June 1945; *Le Monde*, 27 June 1945.

Représentation proportionnelle intégrale was the label given by the Resistance parties to a system of proportional representation with blocked lists (i.e., ones which could not be altered by the voter) and with a standard number of votes, known as the national quotient, for the election of each candidate. Each party would present not only departmental lists of candidates (the departments were to be used as constituencies) but also national lists. Votes remaining after the allocation of seats within each department were to be pooled to the credit of the national lists.

¹⁰*Le Populaire*, 7 July 1945.

system of *scrutin d'arrondissement*, and for the election of a Senate under the Organic Law of 2 August 1875 and the Constitutional Act of 9 December 1884. These two bodies could then meet as a National Assembly to revise the old Constitution. The Radicals claimed that this was the only safe method, and that a constituent assembly would open the way to political chaos.¹¹

For as long as de Gaulle refused to make his own position clear, these party manoeuvrings were bound to have about them an air of unreality. However, late in June, the General began talking with various political leaders and press rumours suggested that he had been persuaded to revive the 1875 Acts.¹² On 1 July he said at Aurillac:

If we must make new things, that does not mean that we have to sweep everything away. We shall keep the good things which existed before. Certainly there are reforms to be made, but no upheavals.¹³

The implications of such remarks alarmed the Left. If the General were to declare unequivocally for a revival of the Third Republican Constitution, and for the election of a Chamber and Senate, the Resistance Front would almost certainly break up. The M.R.P., along with several lesser groups, could be expected to side with him immediately and the S.F.I.O., with many Gaullists amongst its members, would find it difficult not to do likewise. Consequently, the Socialists did everything they could to persuade de Gaulle to accept a compromise solution.

In an effort to satisfy de Gaulle's interest in stability and strong government without sacrificing the idea of a constituent assembly, the Socialist parliamentary group, largely under the influence of Auriol and Moch, drew up a special bill, of which the essential provision was the approval by referendum of a pre-constitution specifying the respective powers of the constituent assembly and the provisional government during the constituent period. This contrasted with the previous demand that the constituent assembly, once elected, should establish its own methods of working and governing the country. By the terms of the bill, the assembly was

¹¹For a statement by the executive of the Radical Socialist Party see *Le Monde*, 20 June, 1945.

¹²See, for example, Millet, *ibid.*, 30 June 1945; and Mayer, *Le Populaire*, 27 June 1945.

¹³*Le Monde*, 3 July 1945.

to be divided into two blocs, the majority, which would support the government, and the minority, representing the opposition parties; both sides were to publish their programmes in the *Journal officiel* and to observe certain rules of conduct. As a further guarantee of stability, the pre-constitution was to establish important checks on the assembly's authority; although that body was to elect the president of the provisional government, it was not to have the power to remove him from office, and was to leave to him the responsibility for appointing and dismissing ministers, who were to be chosen outside the assembly's membership. However, the Socialists did not make clear whether final power was to reside in the presidency or in the assembly; clause 54 of their proposal permitted the president to request the assembly to read a bill a second time but stipulated that he had to promulgate it after the second reading; if the assembly rejected a measure, neither the government nor the responsible minister was required to resign; the only way in which the assembly could impose its will was to carry a motion of censure (after a 'cooling-off' period of five days) against the government or against an individual minister. In fact, this section of the bill showed hasty drafting, and its confusion was made worse by clause 60, which provided for the submission of a disputed bill to referendum (*votation populaire*).¹⁴ Nevertheless, its significance in the overall debate was marked. The pre-constitution proposal now became the centre of the negotiations, and a real basis for compromise.

June had seen the parties forming themselves into conventional lines, with the Communist, Socialist and M.R.P. Parties on one side and the Radicals, the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation on the other. In July, the hard bargaining began, and these simple alignments were broken by a series of crises as de Gaulle and the Centre parties searched for a compromise. The first crisis lasted from 3 to 6 July. Not all the details are known but we have enough evidence to reconstruct the main sequence of events. It seems that de Gaulle, at a cabinet meeting on 3 July, suggested that a revival of the 1875 Acts was the best course open to the government. Thereupon the Socialist ministers, acting on the instructions of their parliamentary group, threatened to resign and might have done so had the Communist ministers shown any inclination to do likewise. Apparently de Gaulle himself was considering resignation if his proposal were rejected

¹⁴J.O. (A.C.P.), *Doc., Annexe* no. 501, 3 July 1945, pp. 625-9.

and went into three days' retirement to think matters over. In the meantime, the S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur*, aware that the situation could develop into a deadlock, met on the evening of the 4th to decide what the Socialist ministers should do. Tanguy-Prigent, André Le Troquer and André Philip are said to have favoured resignation on the grounds that the Party should not abandon the principle of a constituent assembly's being a sovereign institution, subject to no statutory restrictions. (It seems highly probable that these same members had opposed the Party's pre-constitution bill for the same reason.) On the other hand Adrien Tixier, Edouard Depreux, Auriol and Félix Gouin claimed that the Party would be mistaken to defy de Gaulle with the elections so close, especially if the Communist and M.R.P. ministers intended to remain within the ministry. Their opinion carried the day and the *Comité* decided against withdrawal. The Communists' *Bureau politique* stated on the following day that a governmental crisis would have hindered post-war recovery and damaged French prestige abroad.¹⁵

On reflection, de Gaulle became impressed with the need for some concessions on his part. At cabinet meetings on 7 and 9 July he proposed that elections for an assembly should be held but that parallel with these elections the people should be asked in a referendum whether they wanted the revival of the 1875 Acts or the drafting of a new constitution by a constituent assembly regulated by a pre-constitution. Should the people decide to restore the old constitution, the assembly would become the first post-war Chamber of Deputies and elections for a new Senate would be held forthwith. This proposal was approved by the cabinet and was explained to the nation by de Gaulle in a radio broadcast on 12 July.¹⁶ In its final form, the government's bill proposed a double question instead of the simple referendum suggested earlier. The voters were required to state, firstly, whether they favoured the assembly's being constituent or not, a negative answer being taken to favour the restoration of the 1875 Acts; and secondly, whether they approved an appended pre-constitution, a negative answer in this case being taken as a vote for a

¹⁵See Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, pp. 47-8; Millet, *Le Monde*, 5, 6 and 7 July 1945; L. Gabriel-Robinet, *Le Figaro*, 5 July 1945; Auriol, *Le Populaire*, 14 Aug. 1945; *L'Humanité*, 6 July 1945.

¹⁶See a cabinet communiqué in *Le Monde*, 11 July 1945, a press statement by Soustelle, *ibid.*, 14 July 1945, and de Gaulle's radio broadcast text of 12 July 1945 (de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 584-7).

sovereign constituent assembly without fetters. The suggested pre-constitution, obviously derived from the Socialists' earlier proposal, provided that the constituent assembly should elect the president, who should thereupon form a provisional government which would hold office until the new constitution came into force. Apart from drafting the constitution, the assembly was to be given few other functions; it could approve, reject or amend bills submitted to it by the government but there was no provision for its bringing forward bills on its own account; it was to be consulted about bills ratifying treaties or modifying the country's economic structure; it was to vote on the budget but had no initiative in expenditure policies; its term was to expire after seven months or after the constitution came into force, whichever was earlier. There was no provision for the assembly's controlling the government, either by a vote of censure or by other means.¹⁷

De Gaulle had been saved from his immediate dilemma by the compromise embodied in the bill; the parties were no longer presented with a simple choice between 1875 and a constituent assembly – nor was the General himself any longer under pressure to choose between the Right and Left blocs of parties. He may even have hoped that the referendum scheme, which from the time of its conception had the support of the M.R.P. and the moderate section of the Socialist Party, would also win the grudging approval of the Radicals and the Communists, since it ruled out neither the restoration of the 1875 Act nor the creation of a fully sovereign constituent assembly. However, both these Parties opposed the bill on the grounds that the government should have taken a clear decision one way or the other, whereas the referendum had added a further element of confusion to the impending election campaign. Their opposition made it possible that the referendum bill might provide the basis for a Centre alliance of the S.F.I.O., the M.R.P. and the Centre-Left Resistance organizations under de Gaulle's leadership, and that the Communists might find themselves isolated on the Left and the Radicals and their conservative allies on the Right. While such an arrangement would have suited the M.R.P., which disliked its association with the Communists in the Resistance Front, it would have been a difficult one for the Socialists to accept, for the S.F.I.O.'s anti-clericals would have opposed any closer association with the M.R.P., while its Left-wing members would

¹⁷J.O. (A.C.P.), *Doc., Annexe* no. 526, 17 July 1945, pp. 680-1.

have bitterly resisted any break with the Communists at that stage. Fully aware of these tensions within the S.F.I.O., the Communists exploited the situation to the full. Although they disliked the referendum bill, they had no intention of protesting against it by withdrawing their ministers from the cabinet; their long-term strategy was to alienate the Socialists from the M.R.P. and de Gaulle and then to draw them along with the Radicals into a new Popular Front alliance. Here the Gaullist system worked to their advantage. Since de Gaulle held his ministers responsible only to himself, and for all practical purposes refused to regard them as being responsible either to the Consultative Assembly or to their parties, he could not logically require them to resign if either the Assembly or their parties opposed the government's policies. Thus the Communists were able to play the double game of adopting an anti-Gaullist position while maintaining their ministers in the provisional government, and they used their advantage to embarrass the Socialists, who still tried to criticize governmental policies in a responsible manner — as if they were indeed a party of government and not just a party whose representatives happened to be included in de Gaulle's ministry.

The differences of opinion created by the referendum proposal occurred also within the S.F.I.O. which found itself, for the first time since Liberation, a seriously divided Party. It appears that a dissident group headed by Le Troquer claimed that the Party should have maintained its earlier stand for a sovereign constituent assembly. Possibly because this group was known to have wide support within the Party, the *Comité directeur* on 11 July did not support the government's referendum proposal but merely expressed its opposition to any legislative restriction of the constituent assembly's sovereignty. It invited other political parties to join the S.F.I.O. in discussing whether the assembly's organization could not be unofficially agreed to before the elections, with a view to safeguarding executive stability during the constituent period.¹⁸

However, before any such talks could be arranged, the referendum bill came before the Assembly's State Reform Committee (*Commission de la Réforme de l'Etat et de Législation*). The thirty-six members were grouped in three broad divisions: the Radicals and Conservatives wanted the 1875 Acts

¹⁸See Marcel Gabilly, *Le Figaro*, 11 July 1945; *Le Populaire*, 10, 12, 13, 14, and 17 July 1945.

restored; the M.R.P. and Gaullist Resistance representatives approved the principle of limiting the constituent assembly's powers, but opposed the bill on technical grounds; and Communists and Socialists opposed any restrictions whatsoever on the assembly's authority. The seven Socialist members held a key position; had they stood by their own Party's pre-constitution bill, which was also before the Committee, or had they at least joined with the Centre group in supporting the principle of a pre-constitution, the compromise which their leaders had done so much to promote might have been achieved. In fact, Bruguier was the only Socialist to make common cause with the Centre group; the others, probably under Le Troquer's influence, voted with the Communists on every crucial ballot. As a result there was no majority available for any positive point of view, and the Committee's decisions were nearly all negative. It refused even to consider the government's bill and rejected by fourteen votes to eight the proposal to limit the constituent assembly's powers by referendum. In a gesture of defiance, its Left-wing members carried a vague general motion claiming that the constituent assembly alone should express the national will and that neither the government nor their own Committee was entitled 'to limit or organize' its powers beforehand.¹⁹

Angered by this pointless rejection of the referendum bill, de Gaulle expressed his own point of view in a speech at Brest on 21 July. He stated that he was opposed either to any restoration of the 1875 Acts or to the formation of a sovereign constituent assembly and advised the people to answer *Oui* to both questions of the referendum – that is, to approve the regulation of the constituent assembly by a pre-constitution.²⁰ The General had seldom stated his views so definitely and it is probable that his Brest speech was hastily put together and ill-considered. Unfortunately it had the effect of placing the whole pre-constitution proposal in jeopardy by further aggravating the differences between the parties. The Communists and Radicals were

¹⁹A list of the committee's members is given in *J.O. (A.C.P.), Déb.*, 7 June 1945, pp. 1083-5, the seven Socialist members being Blanc, Bruguier, Bourgoin, Le Troquer, Meunier, Stibbe, and Zaksas.

An account of its proceedings is given in the report submitted to the Assembly by the *rapporteur*, Marcel Plaisant (*J.O. (A.C.P.), Doc., Annexe* no. 548, 24 July 1945, pp. 719-21). The newspapers, especially *Le Monde*, also reported what was happening behind the scenes.

²⁰*Le Monde*, 24 July 1945.

quick to suggest that de Gaulle was trying to turn the referendum into a plebiscite for or against his policies. This insinuation made things particularly difficult for the Socialists, who had denied that the proposed referendum would have any plebiscitary significance. But there was no longer time for beating around the bush. On the 22nd, Mayer, having repeated his *Comité directeur's* appeal for an all-party agreement on an informal pre-constitution, stated explicitly 'the Party cannot pronounce itself against the principle of a referendum if the questions are clearly posed and if they do not have a direct or indirect plebiscitary aspect.'²¹

There matters stood when, on 27 July, the Consultative Assembly began its own consideration of the bill. Although the Assembly's membership had been increased in June to 296, its group structure still remained loose and disorderly. About half the delegates were now members of the larger parliamentary parties, whose strength had grown considerably in the previous few months; the Communists now had 39 delegates, the Socialists 49, the M.R.P. about 30 and the Radicals about 60. In June many of the unattached delegates had been drawn into one of two important intergroups, the first connected with the *Union démocratique et socialiste de la Résistance* (U.D.S.R.) and the other with the *Mouvement unifié de la renaissance française* (M.U.R.F.). The U.D.S.R., a federal union of five Resistance organizations of the Centre-Left, was closely linked with the S.F.I.O. outside the Assembly while its parliamentary intergroup, 58 delegates strong and led by Claude Bourdet, worked with the Socialists. The M.U.R.F., directly descended from the *Front National*, was aligned with the Communist Party both inside and outside the Assembly.

For the first two days as each party carefully outlined its position, the debate on the referendum bill produced few surprises. The Radicals called for a return to the old Constitution and accused de Gaulle of turning the referendum into a plebiscite. The Communists demanded the formation of a sovereign constituent assembly, while Gaston Defferre, for the Socialists, took a more cautious line, admitting that the referendum proposal as it stood had been given the character of a plebiscite by the Brest speech but not ruling out the possibility that another such scheme might prove suitable. On the third day, the delegates heard a restrained de Gaulle maintaining that France's need for

²¹*Le Populaire*, 24 July 1945.

strong government during the constituent period could be met without restricting the constituent assembly in its main task – that of drafting a constitution. At this point, as a result of intensive bargaining behind the scenes, the S.F.I.O. and the U.D.S.R., both of whom had previously brought forward bills providing for a pre-constitution, submitted a joint proposal as a fresh basis for compromise. The new plan, which became known as the Auriol-Bourdet Bill, proposed to substitute for the two questions of the government bill a single question asking whether the voter favoured the revision of the 1875 Constitution by a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate, or whether he wanted a new constitution prepared by a sovereign constituent assembly, regulated by an attached pre-constitution. The latter document resembled the government's proposal in most respects, except that it defined more clearly the relationship which the provisional government would have to the assembly. It proposed that the president should obtain the assembly's approval for the composition of his government and for his programme, and that the government, although responsible to the assembly, should resign during the assembly's term only if a vote of censure, taken after a 'cooling-off' period of two days, were carried by an absolute majority of the assembly's members.

On the evening of the 29th, the debate moved rapidly to its climax. A proposal to consider the election of a Chamber of Deputies and a Senate under the old Constitution was rejected by 187 votes to 74, but this result had been expected. The real interest was focused on the Auriol-Bourdet Bill, which Auriol claimed could bring the government once more into line with the Resistance Front if it were accepted by the main parties concerned. De Gaulle agreed that it warranted the government's 'full consideration'.²² The division, held at 8 p.m., proved to be extremely close, but the emergent Centre alliance was too weak to win through. By 107 to 98, the Assembly voted against taking the bill into consideration; the majority was composed of Communist, M.U.R.F., Radical and Conservative delegates and the minority consisted of Socialist, M.R.P., U.D.S.R., *Jeune République* and various Gaullist representatives. When the division list was published, the Socialist group was found to have been the weak link in the Centre alliance, for eleven Socialists

²²J.O. (A.C.P.), *Déb.*, 29 July 1945, pp. 1613-14, 1616, 1619-25, 1635 (division).

failed to vote on this occasion although they took part in later ballots that evening. There is a strong presumption that Le Troquer and a few others may have deliberately abstained rather than support Auriol's attempt to achieve a new compromise.²³ At the end of proceedings the Assembly adopted the resolutions passed on from the State Reform Committee, thereby rejecting the bill and declaring for the principle of ministerial responsibility and for a sovereign constituent assembly. As the delegates dispersed de Gaulle was seen talking with a small number of Socialist delegates – the search for a compromise was still on.

During the concluding negotiations, most of which were carried on inside the cabinet, the government bill was altered along several of the lines suggested in the Auriol-Bourdhet Bill, although the Ordinance, promulgated on 17 August,²⁴ retained the original principle of a double referendum. The questions now read:

1. Do you wish the assembly elected this day to be constituent?
2. If the electorate has answered 'Yes' to the first question, do you agree that, until the new constitution comes into operation, the public powers shall be organized in accordance with the provisions of the appended Bill?

In the event of a negative answer being given to the first question, the assembly was to be constituted as a Chamber of Deputies, and a Senate was to be elected two months later. The proposed pre-constitution incorporated several features of the Auriol-Bourdhet measure, including the provision for a two days' lapse between the proposal of and the vote on a censure motion, but important traces of the earlier bill remained, including the provision denying the assembly the right to initiate expenditure policies.

²³Ibid., p. 1636 (division). Of the Socialist delegates, Germinal, Ouradou and Pierre-Bloch were recorded as being absent, and P. O. Lapie did not record a vote in any of the divisions taken that evening and was probably absent also.

The eleven members who did not vote on this occasion but who did so in the other divisions were Audeguil, Blanc, Bruguier, Evrard, Gagnaire, Juvenal, Philip, Stibbe, Le Troquer, Valentino and Verdier.

Because this division was conducted according to the rules of Open Ballot at the Tribune (*Scrutin public à la tribune*), which meant that only those delegates actually present within the precincts could vote, it is not possible to decide with any certainty whether these members really abstained or whether they were absent, voting by proxy in the other ballots.

²⁴Ordinance no. 45-1836 of 17 Aug. 1945, *J.O., O.D., 19 Aug. 1945*, pp. 5154-5.

As Wright suggests, de Gaulle may have accepted many of the features of the Auriol-Bourdhet Bill because he believed that the combination of parties which had sponsored that measure in the Assembly represented the possible core of a Centre alliance sympathetic to his own constitutional ideas.²⁵ De Gaulle's intention aside, the referendum bill controversy is most significant as the first major political crisis of the post-war period. It revealed the basic instability of the political connections formed during the Resistance and Liberation periods, and showed clearly where the main tensions lay in the reviving party system. In June, before de Gaulle had made his constitutional preferences clear, there had been a straightforward cleavage between the Resistance Front on the one hand and the Radicals and the Right on the other. In July the Resistance Front collapsed like a pack of cards when the M.R.P. and a large section of the Socialist Party showed their reluctance to stand out against de Gaulle for the sake of maintaining the unity of the Left. Particularly during the debate on the Auriol-Bourdhet Bill, it seemed that a Centre alliance consisting of the S.F.I.O., the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. might take shape. A tug-of-war was in progress. While de Gaulle and the M.R.P. were trying to commit the Socialists to a Centre alliance, the Communist Party was still trying to alienate the S.F.I.O. from the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. and to resurrect the Popular Front. Torn between two sides, the Socialist Party was subjected to stresses which seriously affected its internal stability.

Here in miniature was the drama of *tripartisme*. While the Communist Party and the M.R.P. pulled in opposite directions, the S.F.I.O. redoubled its efforts to hold them together. Previously, when the issues under discussion had produced a simple cleavage in the party system between Left and Right, the S.F.I.O.'s bridging role had not been too exacting, but once a more complex division of parties had taken place conciliation became extremely difficult. During the referendum bill controversy, for example, the M.R.P. and Communist Parties diverged so sharply in their policies that the S.F.I.O., in the culminating phase of the crisis, was compelled to take sides. In this instance it aligned itself with the M.R.P. and, for this short space of time, the Resistance Front ceased to exist, the S.F.I.O. becoming part of a Centre alliance. *Tripartisme* went through the same stages; throughout 1946 the Socialists were to make great sacrifices to bridge the gap between their two

²⁵Gordon Wright, *The Reshaping of French Democracy*, p. 84.

allies, shifting sometimes towards one and sometimes towards the other. Finally in May 1947 they were to be forced to make a final break and to side with the M.R.P. and the Radicals in an alliance which later became the Third Force.

The referendum bill affair failed to lead to a major political crisis because its implications were never explored and because its effects were absorbed in the cotton-wool of the Assembly's proceedings. An air of unreality surrounded the Consultative Assembly to the end; not only did the government refuse to treat it as either a representative or a responsible body, but the parties themselves came to regard it as a harmless debating club, a safe setting for the most extravagant – and purposeless – political manoeuvres. The parties of government, in criticizing legislation, acted with the irresponsibility of opposition parties; they were under no pressures to form responsible and durable alliances which, translated into the politics of the Constituent Assembly, could have provided the basis for an effective coalition government. Instead they brought into parliamentary affairs the morality and opportunism of the election campaign. Had the Consultative Assembly been made a responsible legislative body, the parties of the Resistance might well have learnt to work together despite their conflicting viewpoints. Perhaps General de Gaulle might even have learned a few valuable lessons in democratic leadership.

The Thirty-seventh Congress of the S.F.I.O., August 1945

The thirty-seventh Congress of the S.F.I.O., held in the *Palais de la Mutualité* between 11 and 15 August,²⁶ was attended by 602 delegates representing 97 metropolitan and overseas federations and holding between them 10,633 mandates (voting authorities). Under the Party's provisional rules a federation was entitled to one mandate by right and to additional mandates for every twenty-five enrolled members, which means in effect that the 10,633 mandates represented a total party membership of about 260,000, compared with the 1936 and 1938 figures of 180,000 and 275,000 respectively.²⁷ As in pre-war days, the

²⁶In the following account of the congress proceedings the votes and texts of resolutions are taken from *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 6, July-Aug. 1945, and the debates from *Le Populaire*, 12 to 16 Aug. 1945.

²⁷See the figures given by Mayer (*Le Populaire*, 30 Mar. 1946) and Maurice Duverger, 'S.F.I.O.: Mort ou transfiguration?', *Les Temps Modernes*, p. 1865.

largest federations were Pas-de-Calais (829 mandates), Nord (741 mandates) and Seine (481 mandates), which between them controlled about one-fifth of the voting power at the Congress. Twenty-eight moderately strong federations (each controlling between 100 and 400 mandates) were grouped in four regions – the Mediterranean littoral, the northern plain above Paris, the South-West and the Centre. As a rule, the federations in the Brittany-Normandy and the Bourgogne-Champagne regions were weak, rarely holding more than 100 mandates each.

It was at this Congress that the first signs of trouble within the S.F.I.O. began to show; the Party was already fracturing under the strains of the previous months. Whereas at the special Congress of November 1944 the only significant cleavage had been that between the traditionalist delegates and the new men, the outlines of at least three factions were now visible. At this stage they had not taken definite shape; with little coherence or form, they existed only as loose associations of like-minded delegates working out areas of agreement amongst themselves. However, the importance of this Congress in the history of the Party can only be appreciated if the special characteristics of these emergent factions are sketched in at this point.

On the Left-wing of the Party were two closely associated groups, referred to henceforward as the 'progressives' and the 'anti-participationists'. Composed for the most part of pre-war militants with an almost mystical respect for Socialist traditions, both were concerned to prevent the party from losing its integrity in the politics of the Gaullist régime. In one sense they were the conscience of the Party, deeply affected by the disillusionment and uncertainty which beset the whole of the French Left in that curious transitional period between the crumbling of the Resistance Front and the emergence of the tripartite alliance. In their eyes, the Resistance had failed as a revolutionary force; the reforms of structure had not been carried out, the C.N.R. and the Consultative Assembly had not been given real powers, the M.R.P. had apparently lost its radicalism and was coming firmly under the control of the Church, collaborators and Vichyites had not been purged from the civil service, and the forces of reaction seemed to be preparing for a new offensive. For all these reasons, the Left-wing Socialists considered that their Party must stop deceiving itself about de Gaulle's republicanism and about the revolutionary possibilities of the Resistance Front. They wanted the S.F.I.O. to return to its traditional lines of action, the Popular

Front and the anti-capitalist and anti-clerical crusades of the past, and to break with de Gaulle, whom they saw as a sinister counter-revolutionary figure, using his régime as a snare to trap the revolutionary parties.

Although the two Left-wing factions assessed the post-war situation in much the same way, they differed in their strategic thinking. The progressives were willing to co-operate closely with the Communists and to have the S.F.I.O. represented in coalition ministries alongside, though not without, Communist representatives. Their uneasiness about the presence of Socialists in de Gaulle's cabinet was not sufficient to make them press for the withdrawal of their ministers while those of the Communist Party showed no signs of resigning. They were however anxious to end the S.F.I.O.'s connection with the M.R.P. and to lay the foundations for a new Popular Front alliance consisting of the Communist, Socialist and Radical Socialist Parties. By contrast, the anti-participationists adopted a more doctrinaire approach; they claimed that the Party should not participate in any government, no matter how patriotic, which might help to bolster up the bourgeois state. Nor did they look favourably on proposals for closer co-operation with the Communists, whom they felt had betrayed their revolutionary heritage by joining forces with de Gaulle and by building up an authoritarian party organization. The anti-participationists looked upon themselves as the true revolutionaries, the only men in the whole of the French Left who had remained faithful to the essential doctrines of Marx, Blanqui and Guesde. They thought of the Communists as being to their Right rather than their Left, and there was some point in this estimate. It would be a mistake to think of the Socialist and Communist Parties as occupying Centre-Left and Left positions on the French political spectrum, for each contained in its membership groups which ranged from revolutionary orthodoxy to conservative revisionism. The Communists were able to control the effects of this divergence by the organizational device of democratic centralism, but the Socialists lacked the advantage of such crude but efficient aids to unity.

Although the distinction between the progressive and anti-participationist (or revolutionary) approaches was fully appreciated in such federations as Seine, Rhône and Bouches-du-Rhône, all steeped in the intellectual traditions of the Socialist movement, in the smaller provincial federations, where immediate tactical considerations or even a passing mood may have inspired

the instructions given to congress delegates, the finer points of difference were blurred. For example, electoral setbacks often persuaded normally Right-wing federations to join with the anti-participationists in demanding the withdrawal of Socialist ministers from government; this was certainly the case after the elections of 2 June and 10 November 1946. In the Brittany-Normandy region, where the S.F.I.O.'s main electoral enemies were the Church and the M.R.P., federations such as Finistère, Côtes-du-Nord, Manche, Sarthe, and Maine-et-Loire tended to be progressive because they favoured local co-operation with the Communists and were inconvenienced by associations established between the Socialist and M.R.P. Parties in national politics. In the south-western, central, and Languedoc regions, many federations took a progressive line mainly on account of their *gauchisme*, their desire to keep the S.F.I.O. as far to the Left as possible. In the northern industrial departments, such as Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Somme, Aisne, Marne, Seine-et-Marne and Vosges, the Party's militants were torn between several considerations: as wage earners, they appreciated that co-operation between the Socialist and Communist Parties was a highly effective means of obtaining better wages and conditions; as doctrinaire Socialists, their Guesdism predisposed them to place a high value on working class unity in politics; but as participants in the electoral struggle, they resented the unscrupulous and ruthless tactics which the Communists often employed. In this situation, leadership counted for a great deal. Thus, while the Pas-de-Calais and Nord federations drew on the same traditions and the same social groups, they were committed during this period to opposite wings of the Party: under Augustin Laurent, Nord was firmly aligned with the Right-wing forces within the S.F.I.O., while under Guy Mollet, Pas-de-Calais became a bastion of progressive support.

On the Right of the Party were the 'moderates', an amorphous faction made up of new men and those of the older militants who had carried over the revisionism and anti-Communism of pre-war days. Many of the new men were absorbed in the mythology of the Resistance and the Liberation; they saw the Socialist movement from the perspectives opened up by Blum's *A l'échelle humaine* as a movement for the spiritual as well as the economic transformation of society. The anti-clericalism and revolutionism of the old-style militants annoyed them; they looked upon the Resistance as the prelude not to a revolution in the Marxian sense, but to a national revival led by de Gaulle and inspired by all

classes and parties except those of the extreme Right. They looked forward to the day when the S.F.I.O. would be the party of the enlightened middle classes as well as of the proletariat – a broad labour movement which would bring new stability to the French party system. Having such an outlook, they sympathized more with the M.R.P. than with the Communists and Radicals, and they were easily alarmed by suggestions that the S.F.I.O. should join a new Popular Front, breaking with de Gaulle and the M.R.P. in the process. Here they found themselves on common ground with those of the older militants who were revisionist in their outlook or who were simply concerned to check the inroads which the Communists were making into the S.F.I.O.'s traditional areas of electoral support. Neither section of the moderate wing of the Party carried its suspicion of the Communist Party to the point of insisting that the S.F.I.O. should break with it and join in a Centre alliance, but each made quite clear that its tolerance of the Communists was subject to conditions. Some moderate federations were located in departments where the electoral battle with the Communists was being waged with exceptional fierceness, as in Nord, Meurthe-et-Moselle, and Oise. Amongst the rural or predominantly rural departments, there were two regions of moderate strength, one centred on Haute Vienne and the western slopes of the Massif Central and the other on the Loire Valley.

It would be wrong to convey the impression that the Socialist federations can be separated clearly into moderate, progressive and anti-participationist categories. Many were far from consistent in the policies they advocated at the various National Congresses and National Council meetings of this period, and several changed sides in a most bewildering manner. But the importance of the factions is indisputable; the internal politics of the S.F.I.O. under *tripartisme* cannot be understood unless they are taken into account.²⁸

The thirty-seventh Congress gave the outside world the first certain indication that trouble was brewing inside the S.F.I.O. Strong undercurrents of discontent came into play whenever the debates touched on questions of doctrine or strategy. Mayer, Auriol and Blum went as far as they could to gain acceptance for their policies without driving the dissenters into a definite

²⁸See Appendix 2 for an analysis of National Congress and National Council divisions showing the general support for each faction amongst the federations.

opposition, but their anxiety to conciliate led them to gloss over some of the basic points at issue. Instead of preparing the rank and file for the difficult compromises which lay ahead, the Congress served mainly to preserve illusions about the S.F.I.O.'s strength in post-war politics.

On the opening day of the Congress, Saturday 11 August, Mayer had the satisfaction of seeing his *rapport moral*, the *Comité directeur's* annual report, approved by 8,857 mandates to 638, with 927 abstentions and 211 absent. This apparent unanimity was deceptive, for later in the day the leaders encountered serious opposition when their proposals for revising the Party's organizational rules (*statut*) and Declaration of Principles came before the delegates. The *Comité directeur* wished to have the organizational changes which had been considered by the Congress of November 1944 embodied in the Party's official rules, but the Left-wing delegates expressed strong opposition to the proposal that the executive should be elected by a simple-majority voting method and that the old National Council should be abolished. Claiming that the *Comité directeur* had become too powerful under the special powers given it by the November Congress, they called for a revival of the old rules, a restoration of the National Council, and the election of the executive bodies by proportional representation. The Seine federation in particular was anxious to have the old system restored.²⁹

Much more serious opposition was raised when Blum proposed the revision of the Declaration of Principles, that lengthy statement of party doctrine which preceded the organizational rules. When the S.F.I.O.'s founding Congress of April 1905 had drawn up the Party's rules and principles, these were generally regarded as being a blend of the revisionist and Guesdist positions, represented formerly by the *Parti socialiste français* and the *Parti socialiste de France* respectively,³⁰ but in fact the Declaration of Principles retained a strong Guesdist flavour. Its most important clause had stated that the S.F.I.O. was:

a class party, which aims at socializing the means of production and exchange

[It is] a party of the class struggle and of revolution. The party's representatives in Parliament form a single group distinct from

²⁹See an account of the congress of the Seine federation in *Le Populaire*, 31 July 1945.

³⁰See Noland, *The Founding of the French Socialist Party*, pp. 186-7.

all the political groups of the bourgeoisie. They must refuse to vote military credits, credits for colonial conquest, secret funds and the budget as a whole.³¹

Blum, in revising the Declaration, had tried to tone down its Guesdism and to touch up its revisionist features. Two of his suggested changes particularly incensed the Left-wing delegates. The first was the proposal that the S.F.I.O. be described as a party of *action de classe* rather than of *lutte de classe*, which would have implied that the Party did not subscribe to a narrow view of political action within the bourgeois state; the second was the proposal that the scope of the Party's objectives be widened beyond the defence and extension of 'the political liberties and rights of the workers' and include an affirmation that society should be transformed in the interests of all men, on the grounds that 'all the rights of the individual and all forms of liberty cannot be separated from each other'.³²

There is no full record of the debate on these questions but later accounts indicate that the Left-wing delegates took Blum severely to task for his proposed revisions and insisted that the old Declaration be retained intact. Their protest was directed, in fact, against the attempt being made by Mayer and Blum to broaden the Party's social basis and to direct its activities along revisionist rather than revolutionary lines. As far as the men of the Left-wing federations were concerned, the S.F.I.O. would lose its identity once it ceased to be a party of the proletariat, committed to class warfare. It was to answer these charges that Blum took the floor of the Congress on Sunday 12 August to make his most important speech since his return from Germany. He referred in his opening remarks to the outraged feelings of the traditionalists.

As I listened to the speakers who followed one another on the platform, yesterday evening and this morning, I certainly felt that something in the new rules and above all in the new draft for the party's Declaration, of which I apologize for being the author, had shocked, stung and offended the feelings of many of our comrades and of our party's long-standing militants in

³¹Cited by P. Marabuto, *Les partis politiques et les mouvements sociaux sous la IV^e République*, p. 112.

³²Blum later discussed this episode in an article, 'Notes sur la doctrine', *La Revue Socialiste*, no. 3, July 1946, pp. 257-61. See also Fauvet, *Le Monde*, 23 Feb. 1946.

particular. These are feelings I understand and respect. I could myself have experienced them.

He then went straight to the heart of the matter – the relevance of classical Marxist doctrine to the strategic problems of a working class party involved in pre-revolutionary politics, or more precisely, in a political situation characterized by a lack of revolutionary tension. While pointing out that their present social and political situation differed markedly from that which had prevailed during the controversy between the revisionists and the orthodox Marxists at the turn of the century, he nevertheless claimed that his revised Declaration was perfectly in accord with Marx's theories of capitalist society, of value and of profit. Having briefly recapitulated his own distinction between the 'exercise of power' and the 'conquest of power' by a Socialist party, he emphasized that the conquest of power should be directed to achieve not only a 'social transformation' – the substitution of one economic régime for another – but, beyond that 'the transformation of the condition of man'.

I mean that the object of the Revolution is not only to liberate man from economic and social domination and all the forms of servitude accessory to it; but it is also to ensure for him within the collective society, all his fundamental rights and all freedom to follow his personal vocation.³³

There is every sign that Mayer and his colleagues, alarmed at the strength of the opposition aroused by the proposed organizational changes and by Blum's draft Declaration, decided to abandon their intention of obtaining an immediate decision. On Monday, on the advice of a special committee, the Congress confirmed temporarily the powers vested in the *Comité directeur* by the previous Congress and decided that its size should be increased to thirty-one members, who were again to be elected by a simple-majority voting method. The Congress further resolved that the federations should be invited to submit to the *Comité directeur* their proposals for changes in the Party's rules and the Declaration. The *Comité* was authorized to establish a committee with the responsibility of drafting a single proposal in the case of general agreement and alternative proposals in the case of disagreement. Finally it was provided that an extraordinary national assembly should meet before 1 March 1946 with the sole purpose of

³³*L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum*, pp. 65 and 69. The translation of the latter passage is from Joll, *Intellectuals in Politics*, p. 54.

studying the new rules and deciding whether they should be adopted. In effect, Mayer and the other leaders were acknowledging that they were anxious to avoid splitting the Party over the issues raised by their original proposals.

They were more successful in handling the next important matter which came up for discussion, a controversial Electoral Bill which the government was about to enact. A fortnight earlier, all the parties of the Resistance Front had combined in the Consultative Assembly to recommend to the government that it adopt a system of *représentation proportionnelle intégrale* for elections to the proposed assembly. (That system embodied all the traditional formulae for progressive proportional representation, as conceived by the Resistance – blocked lists, uniform electoral quotas throughout the country, the joining of small departments to more populous ones, the allocation of surplus votes to the credit of national lists.)³⁴ Adrien Tixier, the Socialist Minister of the Interior, had then drafted a bill in line with this proposal but the cabinet, when it considered the matter on 8 August, had rejected Tixier's draft in favour of a more conservative one prepared on de Gaulle's instructions.³⁵ Once this became known, there was a general outcry from the Left. The bill as it stood provided neither for national lists nor for a national quotient and laid down rules which ensured that the smaller rural departments would be grossly over-represented by comparison with urban departments. At its Monday session, on 13 August, the Socialist Congress passed a resolution describing the proposal as 'an unfair, bastard system of representation' and called upon the government to reconsider the measure at its next meeting, at which the Socialist ministers were asked to press for the bill's amendment in conformity with the principles of *représentation proportionnelle intégrale*. A youngish man with sandy hair and heavy glasses drew a burst of applause from the delegates when he advised the *Comité directeur*, in the event of the petition's being rejected, 'to take from this the only possible lesson; the resignation of the Socialist ministers'.³⁶ The speaker was Guy Mollet, a delegate from the powerful Pas-de-Calais federation. Having grown up in a working-class home, Mollet understood and sympathized with the northern

³⁴J.O. (A.C.P.), *Déb.*, 2 Aug. 1945, pp. 1745-74.

³⁵*Le Populaire*, 11 Aug. 1945; *Le Monde*, 9 Aug. 1945; de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 265-7.

³⁶*Le Populaire*, 15 Aug. 1945.

miners and textile workers. A secondary school teacher before the war, he had gone underground soon after the outbreak of hostilities and had played a prominent part in the Socialist Resistance, had been a leading member of the Pas-de-Calais Liberation Committee, and after the Liberation had graduated to the important positions of Mayor of Arras and secretary of the local Socialist federation.³⁷ Despite his hesitant manner of speaking, Mollet's earnestness and homespun Guesdism won him the immediate allegiance of the Left-wing delegates at the Congress – of progressives and anti-participationists alike.

Events worked to Mollet's advantage. When the suggestion that the bill should be amended was referred to de Gaulle on the Tuesday, he rejected it flatly.³⁸ Aware that the delegates were in a mood to register a strong protest, Mayer put before the Committee of Resolutions a motion which set out the Party's grievances against the government, maintained that these justified the resignation of the Socialist ministers, and yet declared against such a gesture on the grounds that it would confuse the ensuing election campaign and weaken de Gaulle's position on the eve of his visit to the United States. This won approval from all on the Committee save Mollet; he presented the Wednesday session of the Congress with an alternative motion containing a longer list of grievances and calling for the resignation of the Socialist ministers. Put to the vote, Mayer's motion obtained 7,625 mandates and Mollet's 2,916, there being 64 abstentions and 28 absentees.

The importance of the vote was clear. Mollet's motion had attracted 27 per cent of the total mandates at the Congress, and of the ninety-seven federations represented, thirteen had voted for it *en bloc*, eight had given it a majority vote, and fifteen a minority vote. The anti-participationist delegates had undoubtedly provided the core of Mollet's support but it was evident that many progressives had taken advantage of the issue to express their disapproval of other features of the executive's policies. Participation in de Gaulle's government had obliged the Socialist ministers to share the responsibility, not only for the electoral bill, but for the non-completion of the nationalization programme, the restrictions placed on the C.N.R. and the Consultative Assembly, the pegging of wage rates and the failure of Plevén's deflationary policies. Mollet's skilful handling of this crisis had enormously

³⁷Ibid., 17 Dec. 1946.

³⁸See Mayer's account, *ibid.*, 16 Aug. 1945.

increased his prestige amongst the rank and file. He had become the man to watch.

At the Congress, some of the most important debates centred around problems of alliance – alliance with the Communists on the one hand, and with the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. on the other. It was clear from the outset that most of the delegates were dissatisfied with the *Comité directeur's* preference for the Resistance Front formula, that is to say, an alliance of the Communist, Socialist and M.R.P. Parties, with the M.U.R.F. and the U.D.S.R. in the background as electoral auxiliaries. The progressives wanted this combination scrapped in favour of a new Popular Front, in which the Radical Socialist Party would displace the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. as the Right flank of the alliance. The moderates, on the other hand, argued that the Party should maintain its links with de Gaulle and the Centre groups, even if in doing so its links with the Communist Party were weakened. Thus Mayer, Verdier and the other new leaders were without positive support in their efforts to maintain a balance in the S.F.I.O.'s relations between the Communists and the M.R.P., and yet they were strangely reluctant to justify their strategy. While they themselves realized that only a combination of the above three Parties could give France a liberal constitution and carry out a programme of basic economic reforms, and while they rightly looked upon the Radicals as unsuitable allies, both because they were economic conservatives and because they remained unrepentant champions of the Third Republican Constitution, they could not bring themselves to put the situation to the militants in these terms. Instead, they pretended that the Resistance movement still had a revolutionary purpose, and that the S.F.I.O. was bound to win a major victory in the first post-war elections. Whatever their reason for doing this, it was their great mistake; more than anything else, the thirty-seventh Congress should have been an occasion for facing the hard facts of post-war politics – events were moving too quickly for any party to allow its strategic thinking to be influenced by fantasy.

The first alliance to be considered was that with the Communist Party. Two months previously, on 12 June, *L'Humanité* had published a Charter of Unity in which it put forward the idea of a *Parti Ouvrier Français* 'capable of accomplishing the historical mission assigned to the working class of our country'. Under the terms of this Charter, it was recommended that the Socialist and

Communist Parties form a single party to 'defend and propagate the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels as enriched by Lenin and Stalin' and to work for the socialization of the means of production and exchange. It was to remain a revolutionary party aware of the need for 'the conquest of power by the working class', and, like the Communist Party, it was to be organized according to the principles of democratic centralism, its executive having control over 'the whole of the Party, the parliamentary group, the press'. Ideological unity was to be indispensable, and while the party was to make known to the masses 'the imposing victories of socialism' won by the Russian Communist Party, it was to be independent of all governments, that of Russia included. The tenth National Congress of the Communist Party, held between 26 and 30 June, had followed up the Charter by outlining steps which the two 'workers' parties' might take to achieve unification. It had recommended that bi-monthly meetings of their two executive bodies be held to discuss current politics; that the Communist and Socialist members of de Gaulle's government should adopt 'an identical position on the problems submitted for their examination'; and that the two Parties should work together at the next elections and co-operate in press and propaganda work.³⁹

The Socialists' early reactions had been cautious. Although the *Comité directeur* had undertaken to submit the Charter and the unity proposals to the Socialist Congress, it had protested that the Charter of Unity should not have been made public before being discussed by the *Comité d'entente* which the two Parties had set up in December 1944.⁴⁰ Meanwhile the unity question had aroused widespread interest amongst the S.F.I.O.'s rank and file members, and was the main topic for discussion at the congresses of the federations in July and early in August. At these congresses, held within each department, branch representatives debated the agenda of resolutions and proposals drawn up for the National Congress and decided how their delegates to Paris should vote. There had been a possibility, which the Communists must have appreciated, that many of the progressive federations would instruct their delegates to vote for the unity proposals. Alive to the dangers of the situation, the Socialist leaders had done everything possible to dampen enthusiasm for the scheme. Blum had written a long series

³⁹*L'Humanité*, 29 June 1945.

⁴⁰*Le Populaire*, 15 June, and 1-2 July 1945.

of *Le Populaire* articles setting out his reasons for rejecting it. He maintained that it was inconceivable that the S.F.I.O. would ever form part of an anti-Communist alliance inside France or that, in international politics, it would consent to France's joining an anti-Russian alliance. The Socialists were fully aware of the need for unity of action with the Communists not only in order to obtain social and economic justice for the people but to hold the forces of reaction at bay. However, he emphasized, unity of action would be impossible if an attempt were made to force the two Parties into 'organic unity' before all their differences had been settled. Blum insisted that 'a premature and precarious union, agreed to in a moment of enthusiasm but concealing disagreement' would end in the two Parties severing relations in anger; organic unity was the probable outcome of a long period of successful co-operation, or 'unity of action' between the two Parties. He made it clear, however, that the Socialists could not unite with the Communists while the latter remained spiritually bound to Russia. He admitted that the French Communist Party had recovered its freedom of decision following the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 but questioned whether it had yet recovered its freedom of opinion (*jugement*).⁴¹

Blum's closely reasoned arguments had the desired effect. His articles were reproduced in the Socialists' regional newspapers, and his views were given careful consideration at the congresses of the federations. Several federations, including Gironde and Vaucluse, did vote for the Communists' proposals,⁴² but most agreed with Blum's point that effective co-operation between the two Parties was more to be valued than a premature and unstable union. Many of the congresses disliked the suggestion that the *Parti Ouvrier* should be organized along democratic centralist lines and they put forward the view that any united party should be 'federalized and democratic' rather than centralized and authoritarian. Resolutions to this effect were the ones most commonly adopted; at the congress of the Rhône federation, to take a fairly typical example, 86 mandates were given to a motion suggesting that the united party should have a federal and democratic structure, 26 to one which favoured a party organized

⁴¹See *L'Oeuvre de Léon Blum*, pp. 36-64, and his pamphlet *Le Problème de l'Unité*.

⁴²*Le Monde*, 8 Aug. 1945.

under the provisions of the Communists' Charter, and 6 to a motion against any organic unity with the Communists.⁴³

When the subject came up for discussion at the National Congress on the afternoon of Monday the 13th, Mayer repeated Blum's arguments against immediate union. Using stronger language than the old man had considered proper, he made a great deal of the point that the Communist Party's attachment to Soviet Russia was a stumbling block to unity.

Some interests are shared by the Russian working class and the French working class, but that coincidence is not automatic. From June 1941 until the present time, the interest against Hitler was identical. But in August 1939 our interests and those of Russia did not coincide.

Socialists and Communists, Mayer went on, had quite different political moralities:

For them the end justifies the means, while for us it's different. The more noble is an ideal – and Socialism is the most noble of ideals! – the greater the need for care in the choice of methods for its realization.⁴⁴

Mayer's critics were equally outspoken, maintaining that if the S.F.I.O. allowed the opportunity for union to pass, it would run the risk of being drawn steadily to the Right and of becoming increasingly dependent on the electoral backing of the bourgeoisie. A divided working class, argued the progressive speakers, would lead to weakness on the Left and thus increase the dangers of fascism and war once the Right had recovered enough strength to resume its attacks against the Republic.

It was clear from the debate that despite the reassuring signs of moderation shown during the congresses of the federations, the progressives had sufficient support at the National Congress for them to make an issue of the subject. In fact, had the *Comité directeur* allowed a straight ballot for or against the Communists' Charter of Unity, the progressives might, by exploiting the resentment built up during the earlier debates about the proposed Declaration and party rules, have mustered a large vote for immediate union. As such a division would certainly have increased the tension between the Left- and Right-wings of the Party, a result which the leadership were anxious to avoid at all costs, every effort was made to reach a compromise in the Committee of Resolutions, which sat all through Tuesday night.

⁴³Ibid., 31 July 1945.

⁴⁴*Le Populaire*, 15 Aug. 1945.

On the final day of the Congress, Wednesday the 15th, it presented the delegates with a long resolution which restated the Party's desire to bring about the unity of the working class, but expressed the opinion that a lasting union would be achieved only when the two Parties could work together in 'mutual frankness and confidence'. The resolution then listed the conditions which would make union possible: each Party would have to proclaim its doctrine openly, without disguising its objects; would have to observe democratic principles in its own organization and defend the cause of democracy in the nation and in the world; and consecrate itself 'to the exclusive service of the labouring community, whose freedom depends on the freedom of the nation'. Accordingly, neither Party should 'be linked to a foreign government or even be influenced by it'. Having set out these criteria, the resolution went on to point out in what respects the Communist Party did not measure up to them, and why the Socialist Party could not accept the Communists' proposals 'as a useful basis for unification'. Finally, as a substitute, the resolution outlined methods of continuing 'unity of action'; it proposed that the *Comité d'entente* should meet to ensure co-operation between the two Parties during the election campaign and that, after the election, it should resume discussions about the possibilities of 'organic unity', the results of such discussions being studied at each Party's National Congress. The resolution proposed that the *Comité d'entente* should exist only at the national level, although the possibility of temporary meetings between Socialists and Communists at the local level was also envisaged.

Here was a *nègre-blanc* resolution of the first water. The progressives (and here again Mollet's influence on the Committee of Resolutions may have been important) found something to satisfy them in the proposal that the *Comité d'entente* should meet after the election to discuss 'organic unity' and in the approval of Communist-Socialist discussions at the departmental level, a practice hitherto discouraged by the *Comité directeur*. The moderates, on the other hand, were left to draw what comfort they could from the declarations of principle which made up most of the statement. The object of the compromise was achieved. When the resolution came before the delegates it was approved by 9,921 mandates to 274, with 212 abstentions and 226 absent. Only the hard core of progressive delegates had voted in the minority.

Just as the debate on the Charter of Unity issue had focused

attention on the Left-wing of the Resistance Front, so the S.F.I.O.'s connections with the groups on its Right came under critical examination during the discussions provoked by the *Comité directeur's* proposal that the Party should continue and increase its unity of action with the U.D.S.R. In presenting a motion to this effect, Mayer claimed that the S.F.I.O. had an obligation to help pro-Socialist Resistance organizations and that by supporting the U.D.S.R. it was helping to clarify the group structure of the Resistance Front. As Blum put the argument in a later editorial:

From the moment that each Resistance movement represents a distinct and homogeneous political family, alliances between parties and movements would correspond to real affinities; coalitions would become straightforward, and the electoral struggle would become clear. That is precisely what the Socialist Party has tried to do.⁴⁵

The progressives, having compromised on other questions, were in no mood to retreat on this issue and they gave solid backing to the Sarthe federation's counter proposal that the S.F.I.O. should ally itself with the M.U.R.F., the pro-Communist Resistance organization, and that it should not join any alliance from which the Communist Party was excluded. In support of the Sarthe resolution, the progressives maintained that any strengthening of the S.F.I.O.'s links with the U.D.S.R. would greatly increase the chances of its being drawn into an anti-Communist bloc. In the subsequent division, the Left-wing factions showed their full voting strength; although the *Comité directeur's* motion was adopted by 6,104 mandates (57 per cent of those represented at the Congress) to the 2,718 given for the Sarthe motion, there was a significant number of abstentions (1,806) and 5 absentees. The geographical distribution of the federations voting in the minority gives some idea of the location of Left-wing support in the Party; of the twenty-four federations which gave bloc or majority votes for the Sarthe motion, most lay in the Brittany, Champagne-Bourgogne and Languedoc regions, although it is interesting to note that Mollet's Pas-de-Calais federation, for reasons which are not clear, supported the *Comité directeur* on this occasion.⁴⁶

The *Comité* again encountered solid Left-wing opposition when

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 1 Sept. 1945.

⁴⁶See Appendix 2 for an analysis of this division.

it brought forward a supplementary resolution spelling out the terms of the proposed electoral alliance with the U.D.S.R. This was adopted by only 5,659 mandates (or 53 per cent of the total) against 4,114 given to a resolution presented by Veillard (Seine-et-Marne) who wanted the Congress to allow the federations to form electoral alliances with other parties besides the U.D.S.R. There were 785 abstentions and 75 absentees. As if to express their disapproval of the Party's connection with the M.R.P., the delegates also passed a strongly-worded resolution on the *laïque* question, asserting the S.F.I.O.'s determination to oppose any resumption of the Vichy subsidy to church schools and announcing the Socialists' readiness to nationalize education.

On its last day, the Congress elected the new *Comité directeur*; twenty-five of the twenty-six retiring officers were reappointed and six new members were elected.⁴⁷ But the leaders had little cause for satisfaction. Whereas the Congress of November 1944 had been an enthusiastic and relatively united gathering, whose proceedings were scarcely affected by the veiled discontent of the traditionalists, that of August 1945 revealed that the dissatisfaction of the Left-wing federations with established strategies had reached a critical point. The progressive delegates had come out openly against the Party's connection with the U.D.S.R. and had made no secret of their hostility to the M.R.P., while the smaller group of anti-participationists had built up support for their demand that the Party withdraw its ministers from de Gaulle's government. Less obvious, but nevertheless important, was the evidence that the moderate delegates were most anxious to avoid having the S.F.I.O. committed too closely to the Communist Party. There had been little positive support for Mayer's and Blum's strategy of working for the maintenance of the Resistance Front as the possible basis for a future governmental alliance. In view of this, it is surprising that the leaders had not made a more determined attempt to justify their policies;

⁴⁷The membership of the new *Comité directeur* was as follows: Vincent Auriol, Jean Biondi, Elie Bloncourt, Mme Renée Blum, Gaston Defferre, Edouard Depreux, Charles Dumas, Just Evrard, Paul Favier, Edouard Froment, Félix Gouin, Salomon Grumbach, Gérard Jaquet, Augustin Laurent, André Le Troquer, Mme Andrée Marty-Capgras, Daniel Mayer, Mistral, Jules Moch, Mme Emilienne Moreau, Marius Moutet, Marcel Naegelen, Louis Noguères, André Philip, Victor Provo, Jacques Priou-Valjean, Henri Ribière, Paul Rivet, François Tanguy-Prigent, Eugène Thomas, Robert Verdier. (*Le Populaire*, 16 Aug. 1945.)

Mayer too often fell into the trap of basing his cases for governmental participation, for supporting de Gaulle, for maintaining the Party's connections with the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R., on purely secondary arguments. It was almost as if he had chosen to tone down his remarks, to concentrate on the less controversial aspects of his strategy, because he expected that the S.F.I.O. would emerge from the elections by far the strongest party of the Left (as after the Popular Front election of 1936) and as the arbiter of the governmental alliance. He made a great mistake in not attempting to persuade the delegates, especially the traditionally minded, to face the realities of the new France. Disillusionment was to be all the more demoralizing because of this lack of warning.

The General Election of 21 October 1945

Few French election campaigns have been as complicated as that of September and October 1945. The criss-crossing of party alignments on the different issues – the referendum questions, the constitutional proposals, the C.N.R.'s programme – made it impossible for any broad electoral alliance to be established, or for the electors to be presented with a clear choice; a party considered worthy of support because of its constitutional theories was likely to be rejected by an elector because of its economic policies or because of its attitude to de Gaulle. Nor was there any real dialogue in the campaign; the parties seemed to be talking at cross-purposes, each one claiming to have the exclusive combination of policies which would solve the nation's main problems but unwilling to suggest which combination of parties would best provide France with the economic and constitutional conditions for recovery. This election was yet another demonstration of the fact that the instability of the French party system can be attributed primarily to electoral particularism and indiscipline.

The basic issues were those raised by the referendum questions, the response to which is summarized in Table I.

Four broad groupings may be distinguished. On the Left the Communist Party, the M.U.R.F. and the C.G.T. came out for a *Oui-Non* response, that is in favour of a sovereign constituent assembly but against the proposed pre-Constitution; in the Centre, the S.F.I.O., the M.R.P., the U.D.S.R. and the *Jeune République* (in fact, those groups which had supported the Auriol-Bourdhet Bill during the July crisis) were advocating a *Oui-Oui* vote, in

line with their view that the constituent assembly should be governed by a pre-Constitution; on the Centre-Right, the Radicals (and one or two small groups) advised a *Non-Non* vote to signify approval for a revival of the Third Republican Constitution; on the Right the Democratic Alliance and the Republican Federation were recommending a *Non-Oui* vote, that is for a return to the 1875 Acts or, failing that, for the regulation of the constituent assembly by a pre-Constitution. The table shows how the clear division into Left and Right produced by the first question, for or against a constituent assembly, had been broken by the complicated response to the second, in which the Radicals were aligned with the Communists against the pre-Constitution and the Socialists with the Right in supporting it.

TABLE I *Party Positions on the Referendum Proposals of 21 October 1945*

	<i>First Question</i> (For a Constituent Assembly)	<i>Second Question</i> (For the proposed pre-constitution)
Communist Party	Yes	No
M.U.R.F.	Yes	No
C.G.T.	Yes	No
S.F.I.O.	Yes	Yes
U.D.S.R.	Yes	Yes
<i>Jeune République</i>	Yes	Yes
M.R.P.	Yes	Yes
Radical Socialist Party	No	No
Democratic Alliance	No	Yes
Republican Federation	No	Yes

In defending the principle of a pre-Constitution, the Socialist leadership soon found itself in difficulties not only with the Communist and Radical parties, but with the trade unions and with its own Left-wing federations. The central trade union organization, the C.G.T., in spite of strong Socialist representation in most of its constituent unions, chose to follow the Communist policy of advocating a *Oui-Non* vote, and a formal protest from the S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur* to the C.G.T. executive produced no results. Inside the Socialist Party, the leaders faced opposition from those progressive federations who disliked the fact that the S.F.I.O. had once again made common cause with the Centre rather than the Left. The Gers federation won wide approval when it came out defiantly for a *Oui-Non* vote. In an effort to

limit the effects of the referendum issues, the Socialist leaders maintained that they were not the most important ones in the campaign and that General de Gaulle had no intention, despite Communist allegations, of regarding the referendum vote as a plebiscite. 'I am convinced,' Mayer said at Le Havre on 4 September, 'that the head of the provisional government has never entertained any other idea than that of restoring democratic institutions to our country.'⁴⁸ General de Gaulle made few controversial statements during this period but in a radio broadcast on 17 October he repeated his earlier call for a *Oui-Oui* vote.⁴⁹

A further source of cleavage between the parties was the constitutional debate proper, which was now becoming increasingly important. The Radicals and the parties of the Right favoured the restoration of the 1875 Acts, while at the other extreme the Communists wanted a constitution which would provide for a sovereign popular assembly entitled to elect and hold responsible both the premier and his ministers. Objecting to such a concentration of power in one assembly, the M.R.P. favoured a bicameral legislature in which the popular chamber would be balanced by a council representing regional, social, and professional groupings. It also considered that the executive should be relatively independent of parliament and hence advocated that the president should be given important powers, including the right to suggest a choice of premiers to the assembly and to dissolve parliament.⁵⁰

The Socialists shared with the Communists the belief that the best guarantee of strong and effective government was a sovereign assembly through which the popular will could be adequately expressed, preferably by means of a system of large disciplined parties. At the same time they agreed with the M.R.P.'s view that a popular assembly should be aided in its work by specialized advisory bodies, and that the executive, if it were to implement long-term policies, had to be made stable. In *A l'échelle humaine* Blum expressed a preference for the Swiss and American presidential régimes, which he claimed had provided the executive with 'an independent and continuous authority' in its own sphere of action.⁵¹ In *Hier . . . demain*, Auriol, too, had considered the problem of achieving governmental stability and argued that a

⁴⁸Ibid., 5 Sept. 1945.

⁴⁹De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 618-21. He also advocated a *Oui-Oui* vote in another radio broadcast on 4 Sept. 1945 (ibid., pp. 599-602).

⁵⁰See Wright, pp. 85-6.

⁵¹Blum, *A l'échelle humaine*, p. 129.

strong government could be provided by a system of large parties organized into majority and minority blocs, which would fulfil the same functions as the Government and Opposition parties in the British parliamentary system. In other words, Auriol was suggesting that the survival of democracy would depend on whether executive stability was achieved without loss of parliamentary liberty, and that only by a system of strong parties could this be achieved. He proposed that the popular chamber should be assisted by a second chamber, to be called the National Council of the Provinces, composed of members representing professional groups and regional assemblies. This body was to share in economic and social legislation but was to have no power of political decision.⁵² Both Auriol and Jules Moch discussed the possibility of having the executive elected for the whole term of a legislature, and resigning only if parliament voted a special censure motion (after a cooling-off period of one or two days).⁵³

The S.F.I.O.'s August Congress had adopted a manifesto containing proposals for a constitution and a charter of economic rights. Auriol, who had drafted its constitutional proposals, had taken the opportunity to put forward his idea that the popular assembly should have the advice of 'councils or specialized organs' in carrying through its legislation. The manifesto also proposed that the executive should be elected for the term of the legislature and that it should be removed from office only after the vote of a definite no-confidence motion.⁵⁴ The Socialists had hoped that the growth of disciplined parties would make parliamentary stability the basis for ministerial stability, but being uncertain that this state of affairs could be obtained they had also admitted the need for the kind of checks the M.R.P. had envisaged – advisory councils, limits to the use of censure motion procedure by the assembly, and so on. For this reason the S.F.I.O.'s constitutional proposals were to provide an important bridge between the Communists' unicameral scheme and the M.R.P.'s bicameral and semi-presidential plan.

The election campaign provided the Communists with another

⁵²Auriol, *Hier . . . demain*, II, pp. 114-16, 205-6, and 244-9.

⁵³See Moch, *Le Parti socialiste au Peuple de France*, pp. 77-8, and Michel and Mirkine-Guetzévitch, *Les idées politiques et sociales de la Résistance*, pp. 304-22, for a plan for constitutional reform which Moch submitted to the Consultative Assembly in 1944.

⁵⁴*Le Populaire*, 16 Aug. 1945.

opportunity to build up a Popular Front alliance as the basis for a future coalition government. At the invitation of the C.G.T., representatives of the Communist, Socialist and Radical Socialist Parties, of the C.G.T. and of the League of the Rights of Man met on 23 August to discuss 'a way by which republicans may unite to ensure the defence of democracy'. The boundaries of the proposed alliance were clearly suggested by the list of invitees, since neither the M.R.P. nor the U.D.S.R. had been asked to send delegates. According to the Socialist version of proceedings, the attempt foundered mainly on disagreements over the referendum questions and the broader constitutional issues. A move to establish even a limited alliance for the period of the election campaign also failed; the Socialists rejected a Communist proposal to this effect on the grounds that the S.F.I.O.'s recent Congress had authorized only one electoral alliance – that with the U.D.S.R. – and had otherwise instructed the Socialist federations to present straight lists in both the cantonal and general elections.⁵⁵ This meeting of 23 August failed to produce results, but it nevertheless intrigued the newspapers who referred to it as the *Délégation des gauches* after the committee which had organized the Left-wing alliance in the Chamber of Deputies during the Combes ministry of 1902-05. Despite its unfortunate association with the anti-clericalism of that period, the label stuck. Both the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. were suspicious of the *Délégation* and very much regretted that the Socialists were connected with it.

The *Délégation* might well have collapsed after a few weeks had it not been drawn into a running battle with the government over the question of revising the controversial Electoral Ordinance of 17 August. Although this measure provided for a system of proportional representation within a departmental framework, many of its features annoyed the parties of the Left. It set down that departments were to be entitled to one representative for every 100,000 inhabitants (according to the 1936 census) and a final one for any remaining fraction over 25,000; that each department was to have at least two seats but that those eligible for more than nine seats were to be subdivided. The election of deputies was to be conducted according to the following procedure: once the returns for a department were complete, the total number of valid votes was to be divided by the number of members to be returned, which would give the 'electoral quotient'; each party

⁵⁵See *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 7, Sept.-Oct. 1945, p. 2.

list would then be assigned as many seats as its total of votes contained the electoral quotient, and any seats remaining after this operation were to be allocated according to the principle of the highest average, calculated by dividing the list's total of votes by one more than the number of seats it had already won.⁵⁶ The parties of the Left complained that this system would produce electoral quotients which varied considerably from constituency to constituency. It would be more equitable, they claimed, to have a standard quotient applying to every department, and surplus votes credited to national lists of candidates presented by the main parties. They also maintained that the Ordinance would have the effect of grossly under-representing the more populous and urbanized departments by comparison with the smaller ones. Seine, for example, would have an average of one seat for every 60,000 electors, while Basses-Alpes would have two members for its 55,658 electors.⁵⁷

In an effort to have the Ordinance revised, Léon Jouhaux, the General Secretary of the C.G.T., asked General de Gaulle to discuss the measure with representatives of the *Délégation des gauches*. The General refused, but a subsequent exchange of letters led finally to his giving sixteen additional seats to the largest departments.⁵⁸ Although the *Délégation* continued to proclaim its dissatisfaction, at no time did it suggest that the Socialist and Communist ministers should threaten to resign from the government unless their demands were granted. The real importance of the *Délégation* lay in its value as a sign to the electorate that a new Popular Front was in the making, an impression that was strengthened by the news that it had appointed a sub-committee to work out detailed governmental policies from the C.N.R.'s famous programme of March 1944.⁵⁹ On 1 September Duclos told the Central Committee of the Communist Party that 'the goal in the next election

⁵⁶Ordinance no. 45-1837 of 17 Aug. 1945, *J.O., O.D.*, 19 Aug. 1945, pp. 5155-6.

⁵⁷See decree of 7 Sept. 1945 (Ministry of Interior), *ibid.*, 8 Sept. 1945, pp. 5603-4, and *Le Monde*, 23 Aug. 1945.

⁵⁸For the exchange of letters and memoranda see de Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 598-9 and 605-7, and *A.P.*, 1944-1945, pp. 465-7.

For the apportionment of the additional seats see Decree no. 2123 of 15 Sept. 1945 (Ministry of Interior), *J.O., O.D.*, 16 Sept. 1945, p. 5823.

⁵⁹*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 7, Sept.-Oct. 1945, p. 3; *Le Monde*, 30 Sept.-1 Oct., 13 and 20 Oct. 1945.

must be to produce a republican majority based on the C.N.R. programme and for its application'.⁶⁰ This was the point at which the Socialists began to dig in their heels, and at meetings of the *Comité d'entente* they made it clear that they had no intention of reconsidering the possibility of a Communist-Socialist electoral alliance.⁶¹ At the same time they did not state openly whether they would favour a revival of the Resistance Front formula and a continuation of de Gaulle's presidency after the elections. In fact, the S.F.I.O. appeared confident that it would come through the polls with far more seats than any other party and that it would then be able to fashion a governmental alliance to its own taste, with or without the Radicals, with or without the M.R.P. and, perhaps, with or without the Communists.

The Party's hopes were raised further by the results of the cantonal elections, held on 23 and 30 September to elect the departmental general councils. Of the 2,990 councillors elected outside the Seine department, fully 812 (or 27 per cent) were Socialists, compared with the 328 Communists, 616 Radicals and 230 M.R.P. councillors returned. Throwing his usual caution to the winds, Blum predicted that after the elections the S.F.I.O. would have 'the most numerous and powerful group [in the Assembly], one which will be the pivot of any possible combination', and suggested that the next government would consist of parties subscribing to the C.N.R. programme. Blum said that the Socialists would never join an anti-Communist bloc, nor drive the M.R.P. into opposition (provided it did not menace 'the *laïcité* of the Republican State'). Moreover, providing they were willing to accept the need for 'reforms of structure', Blum was willing to have the Radicals included in the coalition and even, on the same condition, the Right!⁶² Rarely had he appeared so confident.

In some parts of the country, the S.F.I.O.'s organizational discipline broke down during the closing weeks of the campaign. In Bouches-du-Rhône I, centred on the city of Marseilles, ten of the twelve Socialist sections refused to accept the proposed election list in which Gaston Defferre, a member of the *Comité directeur*, occupied the first placing and Francis Leenhardt, of the U.D.S.R., the second. The Paris headquarters reacted by dissolving the old federation and establishing a new one which would support the

⁶⁰*L'Humanité*, 2-3 Sept. 1945.

⁶¹*Le Populaire*, 13 Sept. 1945. See also *Le Monde*, 13 and 21 Sept. 1945.

⁶²Ministry of Interior figures, *Le Populaire*, 2 and 4 Oct. 1945.

Defferre-Leenhardt list – and the general principle of the S.F.I.O.'s electoral alliance with the U.D.S.R. The ten dissident sections, progressive to the core, put up their own list of candidates, despite their lack of a newspaper.⁶³ In the election the official list polled 24.73 per cent of the valid votes (both Defferre and Leenhardt were returned) compared to the 5.93 per cent won by the breakaway group. The progressives gave trouble in Mayenne also, where the Socialist federation combined with the Communists to form a joint list which won 15.38 per cent of the valid votes at the polls and returned Camille Lhuissier to the Assembly. Both Lhuissier and his federation were reprimanded for having co-operated with *le parti frère*. A different case occurred in Haute-Saône where a delegation from the *Comité directeur* had to intervene to stop the local Socialists from forming a joint list with the Radicals.⁶⁴ Even with such difficulties, however, the S.F.I.O. was able to contest 97 of the 102 metropolitan constituencies, in 17 cases forming joint lists with the U.D.S.R. and in several others with the *Jeune République*.

Sunday 21 October was a good polling day, with fine autumn weather in most parts of the country. A light drizzle had developed in Paris by evening, but this did not stop a large crowd from gathering outside *Le Populaire* building in the Boulevard Poissonnière as loudspeakers broadcast *les vieux hymnes prolétariens et de joyeuses marches aux refrains entraînants*. The first results, mainly from the industrialized departments, were welcomed by cheers, and by midnight Oreste Rosenfeld felt confident enough to state that the S.F.I.O. seemed likely to become the largest party in the Assembly, with the Communists lagging well behind in second place.⁶⁵ In the early morning, however, as the results from the provinces came pouring in, the overall pattern became only too clear. Instead of being the first party, the S.F.I.O. was in fact running third both in votes and seats, while the M.R.P. had surprised nearly everyone by polling almost as well as the Communists. According to Peter Campbell, the final results for metropolitan France were as shown in Table II.⁶⁶

⁶³Ibid., 7-8 Oct. 1945; *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 7, Sept.-Oct. 1945, p. 3; *Le Monde*, 12, 17, and 20 Oct. 1945.

⁶⁴*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 8, Nov. 1945, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁵*Le Populaire*, 22 Oct. 1945.

⁶⁶Peter Campbell, *French Electoral Systems and Elections, 1789-1957*, p. 107. I have relied on Campbell for the general election returns of this period.

TABLE II *Election of 21 October 1945*

	Votes		Seats	
	'000	%	No.	%
Right	2,546	13.3	62	11.9
Radicals and Others	2,132	11.1	35	6.7
M.R.P.	4,780	24.9	141	27.0
Socialists	4,561	23.8	134	25.7
Communists	5,005	26.1	148	28.4
Unclassified	165	0.8*	2	0.3
Total	19,189	100.0	522	100.0

* Corrected percentage

Even the M.R.P.'s leaders were reported to have been surprised at the gains made by their Party in the eastern, western, and central regions. Much of its support seems to have come from conservative electors who were anxious to build up a bulwark against Communism and from those who regarded it as the party nearest de Gaulle – *le parti de fidélité*.

When they analysed the results in regional terms, the Socialists found further cause for regret.⁶⁷ The Communists had won more votes than the other Left-wing parties in all the industrial regions except the north, where the S.F.I.O.'s strong Nord and Pas-de-Calais federations still commanded the allegiance of the coal and textile workers. In the Parisian, Central and Mediterranean regions the balance had shifted decisively in favour of the Communists. However, in other areas (especially in the south-western and north-eastern parts of the country), the introduction of proportional representation had enabled the Socialists to recoup some of their losses at the expense of the Radicals. In the process, though, the S.F.I.O. had increased its electoral dependence on rural and small-town France, belying even further its claim to be a revolutionary and working class party.

The contours of Socialist support revealed by the election bear

⁶⁷Reliable detailed returns for the elections are given in Raoul Husson, *Elections et référendums des 21 octobre 1945, 5 mai et 2 juin 1946*. For an excellent atlas showing the regional patterns of returns for the elections of the Third and early Fourth Republics see François Goguel, *Géographie des élections françaises, de 1870 à 1951*.

See also Goguel, 'Géographie des élections du 21 octobre 1945', *Esprit* à, Dec. 1945, pp. 935-56.

some resemblance to those which had held before the war.⁶⁸ There were still the zones of strong support in the north, the Midi, Languedoc and the south-west, with pockets of strength in Bourgogne, Auvergne and the Loire country. The only areas of real weakness were in the Rhône-Alpes region in the east and Normandy in the west. Elsewhere the Party had polled 15 per cent or more of the enrolled voters. For the future, its task was obviously to hold on to its positions in the industrialized constituencies and to check the Communists' advance wherever possible; the policy of compensating for losses in working class areas by gains in rural areas was one which could only end in changing the social base of the Party – as the Radicals had learnt to their cost under the Third Republic.

The referendum, held on the same day as the election, had resulted in a massive vote of 18,585,000 to 699,000 in favour of a constituent assembly and against reviving the Acts of 1875. By 12,795,000 to 6,449,000 the electors had also decided that the constituent assembly should be regulated by the proposed pre-constitution.⁶⁹ This vote was widely interpreted as being a vote of confidence in General de Gaulle and a set-back for the Communist Party. The issue had now been definitely decided; France was to have a constituent assembly with restricted powers and, it was hoped, a new constitution.

De Gaulle, anxious to preserve his political neutrality, had spent polling day in the country and had not cast a vote. He retired to bed early, having left instructions that he was not to be disturbed. At 9.15 on the following morning he phoned his headquarters in the rue Saint-Dominique to ask about the results. Told of the M.R.P.'s success, he made one of the few understatements of his career. 'That's important', he said, and rang off.⁷⁰

⁶⁸See Appendix 3 for a list of the percentages of enrolled voters polled by the S.F.I.O. in each constituency. Map 2 shows the distribution of the Socialist vote in metropolitan France and the departments in which the S.F.I.O. formed electoral alliances.

⁶⁹ The exact returns were:		
	First Question	Second Question
<i>Oui</i>	18,584,746	12,795,213
<i>Non</i>	699,136	6,449,206
	19,283,882	19,244,419

Total of voters: 20,361,709. Enrolled electors: 25,717,551.

(Source: *J.O., L.D.*, 13 Mar. 1946, p. 2124.)

⁷⁰*Le Figaro*, 23 Oct. 1945.

3

The Beginning of Tripartisme

The Formation of the Second de Gaulle Government

Although the elections were held on 21 October the new government was not formed until 21 November, exactly one month later. The parties found it difficult to reach agreement on the three main problems which had to be solved – the choice of a new president of the provisional government, the formulation of a programme, and the arrangement of a parliamentary alliance. There was no one focus of power in the party system; each of the three major parties, the Communists, the Socialists and the M.R.P., had tried to bargain from what it considered to be a position of strength, only to find that it had become locked in a rigid balance of power. When at last a settlement was reached, it was only because General de Gaulle had intervened decisively. The three parties agreed to accept the General as president of the provisional government and they worked with him to form the first cabinet of *tripartisme*.

The negotiations had once more confronted the S.F.I.O. with a choice of alliances. On the one hand, the Communists wanted a combination in which they, the Socialists and several Radicals and overseas deputies would constitute a 'Marxist' alliance commanding about three hundred places in an assembly of 586; on the other, the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. were pressing the Socialists to join them in forming a centre alliance, which would also have been about three hundred strong. Refusing to be drawn either way, the Socialists insisted from the outset that the only sensible combination would be one composed of the Communist, Socialist, and M.R.P. groups, whose combined membership (about 450) would give it firm control of the Assembly and whose influence amongst the people would enable it to put through a generally acceptable constitution and to nationalize the large banks and certain key industries.

Having decided to press for this solution, the Socialist leaders were faced with two problems – one was how to persuade the Communist and M.R.P. Parties to accept the tripartite formula,

the other was how to satisfy all sections of the S.F.I.O.'s rank and file that the proposed alliance would not endanger their Party's integrity and long-term interests. Blum's post-election editorials show that he was acutely aware of both difficulties. He went to particular pains to demonstrate that a continued alliance with the M.R.P. would not, as the Communists were suggesting, lead to disaster. The M.R.P., he pointed out, had subscribed to the C.N.R. programme along with the other parties of the Resistance, and he felt confident that the progressive influence of the M.R.P.'s leaders would prove stronger than the influence of its conservative supporters and of the Church.¹ His arguments seem to have made a good impression. In spite of the fact that some progressive federations were reported to have favoured a Communist-Socialist alliance, a conference of the S.F.I.O.'s federal secretaries which met in Paris on 27 and 28 October declared for the realization of the C.N.R. programme by a three-party government.²

Up to that date, attention had been focused almost exclusively on the problem of an alliance formula, but thereafter a further question was raised: who was to be the head of the new government, General de Gaulle or a leader of one of the main parties? On 31 October the M.R.P. expressed itself openly for a coalition led by de Gaulle to carry out the C.N.R.'s programme.³ The Communists remained conveniently non-committal; in a *L'Humanité* article Georges Cogniot advocated a Communist-Socialist alliance⁴ but the Party's Central Committee simply claimed on 4 November that the Communist Party had a right to 'important posts' in the future government,⁵ without suggesting that the M.R.P. should be excluded from the governmental alliance or that de Gaulle should not be President. The S.F.I.O. also remained silent on the issue of the presidency, probably aware that the Communists, as the largest party in the assembly, would have been perfectly justified in nominating Maurice Thorez for the

¹*Le Populaire*, 23, 24, and 25 Oct. 1945.

²*Ibid.*, 30 Oct. 1945; *Le Monde*, 28-29 Oct. and 30 Oct. 1945.

³See Louis Terrenoire, *L'Aube*, 31 Oct. 1945.

⁴31 Oct. 1945. Duclos said later that, immediately after the elections, the Communists had thought of taking the initiative in forming a government but that they had been discouraged by the Socialists' refusal to support a Communist candidate for the presidency of the Assembly. (*J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Déb.*, 13 Nov. 1945, p. 66.)

⁵*L'Humanité*, 6 Nov. 1945.

post. But there is no doubt that they wanted de Gaulle to remain President, so long as he was prepared to acknowledge that the Constituent Assembly was entitled to more powers than those allowed the Consultative Assembly under the previous régime. They realized also that there was little chance of a three-party alliance being formed without the General's backing.

From the presidency, attention shifted to the task of securing agreement on a common policy. The three major parties all subscribed to the C.N.R. programme but they admitted that it required expansion and clarification. However, instead of meeting to discuss the subject, the Socialists and Communists on the one hand and the M.R.P. on the other produced their own versions of the programme, which immensely complicated the situation. The Communist-Socialist draft, drawn up by the *Délégation des gauches*, on which the C.G.T. and the League of the Rights of Man were also represented, called for the nationalization of the large banks, insurance companies, transport, fuel and iron industries and the large maritime transport firms, as well as for social, monetary and financial reforms. Its position on the problem of *laïcité* was noticeably moderate, since it specified merely that education should be made available to all children. Obviously troubled that the M.R.P. had not been associated with the work on this draft, the Socialists insisted that the *Délégation* send it to the M.R.P.'s headquarters before making it available to the press. Not surprisingly, the M.R.P. refused to be treated as a junior partner and made public its own draft programme, which resembled the *Délégation's* text on most points but included specific proposals for the new constitution, including a guarantee for freedom of instruction. It was clear that the M.R.P. assumed that the latter freedom would entitle church schools to the same rights, and even perhaps to the same amount of public funds, as the state schools.⁶

These manoeuvres had taken up valuable time. Article One of the pre-Constitution, promulgated on 2 November, specified that the new President should be elected 'immediately' (*aussitôt*) after the general elections, and de Gaulle had already announced that his government would relinquish its powers after the Assembly had elected its permanent bureau. The deputies met for the first time on 6 November in the *Palais Bourbon*, formerly the seat of the Chamber of Deputies. As if to signify his willingness to play

⁶A.P., 1944-1945, pp. 341-2 and 470-86.

a less dominant part in politics, de Gaulle came to the session dressed in a blue suit rather than his uniform. He must have noted the contrast between the order in this Assembly, in which deputies were ranged around the benches by parties – Communists on the Left, Socialists in the Left-Centre, the M.R.P. in the Right-Centre and the conservative groups on the Right, with small enclaves reserved for the U.D.S.R., M.U.R.F. and Radical groups – and the formlessness of the Consultative Assembly. This was matched by the contrast between the moods of the two chambers; the feeling of ineffectiveness had disappeared and the deputies of the Constituent were confident and excited, impatient to begin the work of drafting the constitution bill. Without waiting for the parties to reach agreement, the Assembly set its proceedings in motion. On the 8th it appointed its officers, electing Félix Gouin, a leading Socialist, as its President; the election for the President of the Provisional Government was arranged for the afternoon of the 9th.

Still the parties failed to settle their differences. The Communists were now insisting that the *Délégation's* draft should be accepted as 'the programme of governmental action' by the two Marxist parties, but the Socialists continued their efforts to include the M.R.P. in a policy agreement. Ten representatives from each of the three parties met on the mornings of the 8th and 9th to consider this possibility, but the discussions broke down because the M.R.P. insisted that it must be free to express its views on the schools issue during the constitutional debates. It also required that any joint programme should include constitutional as well as economic and social proposals, a demand to which the Communists took exception on the grounds that the drafting of the constitution was the duty of the Assembly alone and did not concern the government at all. A short meeting of the Communist-Socialist *Comité d'entente* on the afternoon of the 9th failed to break the deadlock.⁷ At the Socialists' request, the Assembly voted later in the day to postpone the election of the President for another four days.

Two and a half weeks had passed since the election and still no agreement was in sight. Nevertheless, the Socialists regarded the Communists' willingness to negotiate with the M.R.P., and

⁷Letter from Duclos to Mayer, cited *Le Populaire*, 8 Nov. 1945; also see *ibid.*, 10 Nov. 1945; *Le Monde*, 10, 11-12 Nov. 1945; Philip, *J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Déb.*, 13 Nov. 1945, p. 66.

thus to consider the possibility of a tripartite combination, as some cause for optimism. As if to correct that impression, the Communists suddenly hardened their attitude and renewed their call for a Socialist-Communist government based on the C.N.R. programme as revised by the *Délégation des gauches*. At Ivry on the evening of the 10th, Thorez claimed that the demands advanced by the M.R.P. could not have been included in the *Délégation's* programme without vitiating it altogether, and criticized de Gaulle for not having 'felt it necessary to hold conversations with qualified representatives of the big parties'.⁸ The very next day, *L'Aube* announced that the M.R.P. would vote for de Gaulle as President when the Assembly met on the 13th.⁹ On the 12th the Socialists made another effort to persuade the Communists to modify their position. Mayer wrote to Duclos and asked what policy the Communists would adopt with regard to the composition of the future government and the matter of de Gaulle's candidature for the presidency. In reply Duclos said that the Party's general position had been stated in Thorez's speech at Ivry; he added, however, that since the parties which had advocated a *Oui-Oui* vote during the referendum campaign would doubtless vote for the General, and that since the *Oui* majority on the second question of the referendum had been a plebiscite for de Gaulle, the Communists 'would not place an obstacle before the demonstration of national unanimity around a candidature which flows naturally from the referendum results'.¹⁰ One thing at least was settled – the Communists were going to vote for de Gaulle.

In fact, everything went smoothly on the 13th. When the Assembly met in the afternoon for the presidential election, Auriol explained that the Socialists were supporting de Gaulle as head of the Resistance and not because they regarded the referendum result as a plebiscite. Yet they wanted him to form, not a government of his own choosing, but one representing the three major parties and based on the C.N.R. programme. When Duclos spoke, he pointed out that while the Communists would vote for the General, 'we shall reserve the right to express our point of view tomorrow . . . on what the government should be and do.' De Gaulle was then elected President of the Provisional Government

⁸*L'Humanité*, 11-12 Nov. 1945.

⁹11 Nov. 1945.

¹⁰*Le Populaire*, 13 Nov. 1945.

by 555 votes to nil.¹¹ That evening he issued a statement in which he briefly outlined the Assembly's tasks – drafting the constitution, approving the budget and passing further reforms – and claimed that the government would require the independence, cohesion, and authority necessary for its task.¹²

De Gaulle now tried his hand at bringing the parties together, and his villa at Neuilly in the Bois de Boulogne became the centre of political activities. Throughout the whole of the 14th and the morning of the 15th, he held talks with the party leaders, sounding out their ideas and watching their reactions to his own suggestions. A major difficulty arose when the Communists asked that they be given one of the three major portfolios – Interior, Foreign Affairs, or War. De Gaulle refused their request on the grounds that their dependence on Soviet Russia made them unfit for such responsibility, offering them instead some of the ministries concerned with social and economic affairs. An exchange of letters on the evening of the 15th failed to resolve the problem; Thorez repeated his Party's request and protested at de Gaulle's doubting 'the national character of our party and its policy'; de Gaulle sent a letter repeating his offer and received another from Thorez reaffirming the Communists' position.¹³

At this stage, it seemed likely that the Communists might be driven into opposition, a possibility which caused the Socialists grave concern. With the approval of Blum and Mayer, Auriol wrote to de Gaulle on the 15th suggesting that he divide the Ministry of National Defence into three separate departments – War, Navy, and Air – giving one to each of the three main parties and giving the Ministry of Defence to a Socialist.¹⁴ Before a compromise along these lines could be explored, however, the letters exchanged between de Gaulle and Thorez were published in the morning press of the 16th. An open break seemed unavoidable. The S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur* repeated its appeal for a three-party coalition, thus serving notice to de Gaulle that the Socialists would not join his government without the Communists.¹⁵

A way out of the impasse had to be found. According to

¹¹J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Déb.*, 13 Nov. 1945, pp. 64-70.

¹²De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 624-5.

¹³See *Le Monde*, 15, 16, and 17 Nov. 1945; Duclos, J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Déb.*, 19 Nov. 1945, p. 73.

¹⁴De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 625-6.

¹⁵*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 8, Nov. 1945, p. 1.

several observers, the M.R.P. was asked, at a meeting of the Committee of Fifteen (consisting of five delegates from each of the three major parties), whether it would be prepared to accept a President other than de Gaulle. However, the M.R.P.'s Executive Committee refused and declared its intention of obtaining 'a government of union presided over by General de Gaulle'.¹⁶ It was obvious that one of the parties would have to give way; either the Communists by withdrawing their demand for a key cabinet post, or the Socialists by not insisting on a tripartite alliance, or the M.R.P. by accepting a president other than de Gaulle. The General himself still had some bargaining powers; on the evening of the 16th he sent a letter to Gouin, the President of the Assembly. In it he stated that the granting of the Communists' demands would have made it impossible for him to maintain the government's 'independence, cohesion and authority'.

Faced with this situation and in view of the impossibility of my forming a government of national unity, in accordance with the indication given by the assembly and my own wishes, I have the honour of restoring to the disposal of the National Constituent Assembly the mandate with which it entrusted me.¹⁷

On the surface, this appeared to be a routine letter of resignation, but it was clearly intended as an appeal to the people of France.

The letter, published in the press on the morning of Saturday the 17th, brought de Gaulle widespread backing throughout the country. Not only the M.R.P., but also the U.D.S.R. and the *Jeune République* announced their support for him. Student groups shouted his name in the streets. He talked with Gouin in the early afternoon and later with René Pleven and Jacques Soustelle, his companions of London days and now prominent U.D.S.R. figures. Meanwhile, negotiations between the major parties continued; the Committee of Fifteen met in the morning and again in the afternoon. The Communists proposed a coalition under their leadership, the M.R.P. declared its loyalty to de Gaulle, and the Socialists, who may have suggested the idea that a Socialist (possibly Gouin) would make a good President in place of de Gaulle, said they would support for the presidency only a man who was acceptable to both the Communist and

¹⁶See *Le Monde*, 18-19 Nov. 1945; *Le Figaro*, 17 Nov. 1945.

¹⁷*J.O. (A.N.C. I), Déb.*, 19 Nov. 1945, p. 72.

M.R.P. groups.¹⁸ De Gaulle's next move caught everyone by surprise. In a radio broadcast at 8 p.m. he implied that his letter to Gouin had not been one of resignation and stated that if the Assembly 'confirms me in my responsibility, I shall try to bear it again in the best interests of France and for her honour'.¹⁹

By changing his ground, the General had placed the Socialists in a difficult position. Their main objective from the election onwards had been to arrange a three-party alliance based on the C.N.R. programme, and they had been quite prepared to support de Gaulle for the presidency so long as he in turn accepted the need for *tripartisme*. When, by resigning, he had asked them to choose between himself and the Communists, they had made it quite clear that they were not prepared to break with *le parti frère* at that stage and that they would direct their efforts to producing a tripartite alliance under another, probably Socialist, president. (In fact, de Gaulle may well have 'resigned' under the impression that he would be able to force the Socialists into a centre coalition, but once he realized that they would not give way and that the parliamentary situation was almost out of control, he resubmitted his candidature.) Now the Socialists were no longer in a position to back him openly; their undertaking to the Committee of Fifteen that they would support only a candidate acceptable to both the Communist Party and the M.R.P. had left them extremely vulnerable. The Communists had just to declare that they would not vote for de Gaulle again and the Socialists would be forced to follow suit. Without the votes of these two parties de Gaulle could not hope to obtain the statutory minimum of 294 votes, a bare majority of the assembly's membership, which Article One of the Act of 2 November required for the election of President. At this stage then, the most probable outcome of the crisis seemed to be de Gaulle's defeat in the second ballot for the presidency, the M.R.P.'s retreat into opposition and, short of a dissolution, the formation of a Socialist-Communist coalition.

The events of Sunday the 18th seemed to be moving in this direction. In the morning the Communist Party's *Bureau politique* announced that the Communist deputies would not vote for de Gaulle in the ballot for the presidency, which was to be held on the afternoon of Monday. At a meeting of the Committee of

¹⁸See *Le Monde*, 18-19 and 20 Nov. 1945; *Le Figaro* and *Le Populaire*, 18 Nov. 1945.

¹⁹De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 627-8.

Fifteen later in the day, Auriol read out a statement expressing the S.F.I.O.'s refusal to accept any two-party alliance, whether Communist-Socialist or Socialist-M.R.P., as either would become 'a government of combat' dividing the Assembly and the nation into evenly balanced and hostile groups. He said that the Socialists felt that only a broad parliamentary majority and widespread popular support could produce a constitution and carry through social reforms, and consequently, that if the Communists and the M.R.P. held to their courses, the Socialist group would not take part in the first ballot for a new President. In this case de Gaulle would not obtain the required minimum of votes, so Auriol asked the other parties to join in a search for an alternative candidate.²⁰ There was some talk of Gouin's being nominated²¹ but at 9 p.m. the M.R.P.'s Executive Committee reaffirmed its support for de Gaulle.

However, de Gaulle's ingenuity was by no means exhausted. At 10 p.m. he sent a message to Gouin stating that he would ask the Assembly on the following day either to withdraw or confirm the mandate it had given him on the 13th.²² In fact he was denying either that he had resigned or that he was standing for re-election; he was claiming that he remained the elected President and that he was asking the Assembly only for a vote of confidence. The practical aim of his manoeuvre was to ensure that the ballot on the morrow would not be governed by the pre-constitution Act, so that a simple majority would be sufficient to authorize him to resume negotiations. This procedural ruse not only saved de Gaulle, it rescued the Socialists from their dilemma, for now that the Assembly was not being asked to 're-elect' de Gaulle, the Socialist group could vote for him without going back on their undertaking to the Committee of Fifteen. It is difficult to avoid the suspicion that the device had been suggested to de Gaulle by a prominent Socialist, perhaps Blum or Auriol.

The Assembly met just after 3 p.m. on the following day. In the galleries were seated the British, Russian and United States ambassadors, and outside the *Palais*, police and guards stood by in case of street demonstrations. Before they took their places on the party benches, Duclos and Auriol were seen to confer briefly. The U.D.S.R. had tabled a motion requesting de Gaulle

²⁰*Le Populaire*, 19 Nov. 1945.

²¹Marcel Gabilly, *Le Figaro*, 19 Nov. 1945.

²²*J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Déb.*, 19 Nov. 1945, p. 72.

'to resume negotiations so that a tripartite Government may be formed after the briefest possible delay', to which the Socialist group had proposed an amendment to delete the words after 'negotiations' and to replace them with

so that there may be formed after the briefest delay a Government composed essentially of three parties, the Socialist Party, the Communist Party and the Popular Republican Movement, sharing the portfolios equitably and concerned to apply the programme of the National Council of the Resistance.²³

In other words the Socialists wanted it clearly understood that de Gaulle was being elected with the specific obligation of forming a three-party coalition of a given formula. The debates which followed lacked any real interest. Duclos claimed that de Gaulle had in fact resigned his mandate in his letter of the 16th and that he should either have offered himself for re-election or stood down in favour of another candidate. He announced that the Communists were willing to accept the tripartite formula but that if this failed they wanted to form a Communist-Socialist government. André Philip then pointed out that the Socialists would not agree to any other than a tripartite coalition, and he went on to criticize de Gaulle's actions during the crisis, especially his radio broadcast of the 17th. If the new series of negotiations also failed, said Philip, 'we shall then try to form a tripartite ministry with another head of government'. Maurice Schumann, the next speaker, made it quite clear that the M.R.P. would not participate in a tripartite coalition unless it were headed by de Gaulle. In the ballot, the Socialists' amendment was adopted by 348 votes to 35, the extreme conservatives voting against it and the Communists, the M.U.R.F., and a few Radical, U.D.S.R., and conservative deputies abstaining. The motion so amended was then passed by 396 to 158, with the Communists, the M.U.R.F., and three Radicals voting in the minority.²⁴

In the negotiations which followed, de Gaulle found the party leaders more willing to co-operate and he was able to announce his ministry on the 21st. Its party composition was as follows:

Non-party or technocrat

Charles de Gaulle

President, in charge of National
Defence and of War

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 73-8, 83-5 (divisions).

Raoul Dautry	Reconstruction and Town Planning
André Malraux	Information

Communist

Maurice Thorez	Minister of State
François Billoux	National Economy
Marcel Paul	Industrial Production
Ambroise Croizat	Labour
Charles Tillon	Armaments

Socialist

Vincent Auriol	Minister of State
Adrien Tixier	Interior
François Tanguy-Prigent	Agriculture and Food
Jules Moch	Public Works and Transport
Eugène Thomas	Posts and Telegraphs

M.R.P.

Francisque Gay	Minister of State
Pierre-Henri Teitgen	Justice
Georges Bidault	Foreign Affairs
Edmond Michelet	Armed Forces
Robert Prigent	Health and Population

U.D.S.R.

René Pleven	Finance
Jacques Soustelle	Colonies

Radical

Paul Giacobbi	Education
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Republican Unity

Louis Jacquinot*	Minister of State
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*Jacquinot was an associate member (*apparenté*) of the Republican Unity Group.

There were several significant features about the new team. An ingenious arrangement had been devised to save the Communists from loss of face over the portfolios question; de Gaulle himself had taken over the post of National Defence, while Michelet (M.R.P.) and Tillon (Communist) had been appointed under him to the Armed Forces and Armaments portfolios respectively. Although the ministry was 'essentially tripartite', with each of the three main parties holding five portfolios each, de Gaulle had reserved important places for the former technocrats, including René Pleven, who was now loosely

attached to the U.D.S.R. On the 23rd the General made his ministerial statement, in which he spoke of further economic, administrative, judicial, and army reforms, and he was accorded a unanimous vote of confidence by the Assembly.²⁵

The crisis was over. Like the much milder affair precipitated in July by the referendum bill issue, it had sharpened the tensions between the parties, forcing them to clarify their policies and reassess their strategies. The Socialists, despite strong pressure from both sides, had stubbornly clung to the tripartite formula; the Communist Party, the M.R.P., and General de Gaulle had acted as if there were practicable alternatives. No one had really wanted *tripartisme*. The Communists would certainly have preferred a popular front alliance; the Socialists would have preferred an alliance which they could have dominated; the M.R.P. would have preferred a centre alliance. De Gaulle's dislike of the new combination was intensified by his objection to the size and the power of the new parties, monoliths which were quite new to French experience.

TABLE III *Group Strengths in the First Constituent Assembly.*²⁶

<i>Groups</i>	<i>1 December 1945</i>	<i>1 February 1946</i>	<i>1 April 1946</i>
Communist	151	151	152
M.U.R.F.	8	10	8
S.F.I.O.	139	141	144
M.R.P.	150	151	150
U.D.S.R.	27 (4)	27 (3)	27 (2)
Radical Socialist	24 (5)	25 (4)	25 (4)
Independent Republicans	14	14	16
Peasant	6 (5)	5 (4)	5 (4)
Republican Unity	36 (2)		
P.R.L. (after 29 January 1946)		36 (2)	34 (2)
Muslim	7	7	4*
<i>Non inscrits</i>	8	6	6
Total	586	586	583

*The three Muslim deputies for Oran lost their seats in February because of electoral irregularities.

Note: The figures in parentheses give the totals of the associate members (*apparentés*).

²⁵Ibid., 23 Nov. 1945, pp. 119-21.

²⁶The basic list of group memberships was published on 26 Nov. (*J.O., L.D.*, 25 Nov. 1945, pp. 7831-2). The subsequent alterations, which were taken into account in the preparation of Table III, were usually given at the end of daily reports in the *débats* series of the *Journal officiel*.

The Assembly Stands on its Rights

The Constituent Assembly's group structure, unlike that of the Consultative Assembly, was clearly defined. Table III shows the strength of the various party groups at three points in the Assembly's term.

Of the 139 Socialists, only about forty-eight had had experience in previous legislatures and only thirty-three of these had been members of parliament under the Third Republic. Many of the new recruits were impatient with the older leaders, such as Auriol and Gouin, and found themselves more in sympathy with such bustling younger leaders as Guy Mollet, who had been returned as a member for Pas-de-Calais. The new men, intolerant of the manoeuvres and compromises of parliamentary life, brought an element of instability and impulsiveness into the action of the group, and on more than one occasion they threatened to challenge established policies. Their hostility towards the M.R.P. was excited whenever the church-schools issue was raised or whenever M.R.P. deputies showed signs of economic conservatism. Five additional members were recruited during the term, two of them from the U.D.S.R.²⁷ The group's affairs were governed by a bureau and a smaller executive delegation, which were assisted by seventeen special committees, each one dealing with a different area of legislation. Auriol was elected president of the group early in November but after he became a minister his place was taken by Marcel Naegelen. The leading members of the executive delegation included Tanguy-Prigent, Gaston Defferre and Mollet; the latter also headed the group's important constitutional committee.²⁸ He was to make the most of these positions of influence in the months which followed.

The tripartite alliance was given its first real test during the passing of the controversial Bank Nationalization Bill early in December. The Bill provided for the appropriation by the State of the Bank of France and four large deposit banks; for the organization of credit by a National Credit Council, under the authority of the Minister of Finance; and for stricter governmental control over the trading banks.²⁹ Since the measure had to be passed in a single weekend, between the closing of the *Bourse* on Friday afternoon and its reopening on Monday morning,

²⁷*Le Populaire*, 5 and 6 Mar. 1946.

²⁸*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 8, Nov. 1945, p. 3.

²⁹*J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Doc., Annexe* no. 46, 30 Nov. 1945, pp. 62-6.

proceedings were hurried, to say the least. The Assembly's Finance Committee, which considered the proposals on Saturday 1 December, recommended that two additional banks be nationalized and that the Credit Council be placed under the Minister of National Economy rather than the Minister of Finance.³⁰ De Gaulle refused to consider these suggestions and warned the Assembly that if it endorsed the Finance Committee's recommendations the government would probably force a second reading of the Bill.³¹ Considerably sobered, the deputies dropped the controversial amendments – but many of them were obviously annoyed by de Gaulle's handling of the affair.

A further incident between the General and his parliamentary majority arose over the question of civil servants' salaries. The *Cartel des Services publics*, which represented the C.G.T.'s main white-collar federations, had been pressing for a general revision of public service salaries and for the granting of an immediate provisional allowance, dating from 1 August 1945, to civil servants, active and retired. These demands, which were certainly warranted, had been taken up by the trade unions and later by the three major parties. However, when the question was raised at a cabinet meeting on 7 December, Pleven pointed out that the grant of such concessions would incur an additional expenditure of 31,500 million francs and persuaded the ministers to postpone their decision. This caused an outbreak of strikes and demonstrations, but de Gaulle was nevertheless able, at a cabinet meeting on the 14th, to obtain a decision for making a more modest scale of allowances than that envisaged by the *Cartel*.³² The *Cartel* enlisted the support of the Socialist and Communist Parties for further pressure on de Gaulle, but the General refused to change his mind, and insisted on having full parliamentary support for the cabinet's previous offer. By the time the Assembly met on the 18th to discuss the question, the parties of the majority had all been brought into line. They voted an Order of the Day expressing confidence that the government would improve civil service conditions, which de Gaulle accepted as evidence of their concern for the general interests of the nation.³³

Both this and the incident of the Bank Nationalization Bill had

³⁰*Ibid.*, *Annexe* no. 49, 30 Nov. 1945, pp. 67-9.

³¹*J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Déb.*, 2 Dec. 1945, pp. 160-1.

³²*Le Monde*, 16-17 Dec. 1945.

³³*J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Déb.*, 18 Dec. 1945, pp. 234-47.

severely strained relations between de Gaulle and the parties of government. He had made it clear that while he was prepared to grant the Constituent Assembly a wide freedom of action in drafting a constitutional proposal, he was determined to have it accept the government's final responsibility in the fields of economic and social policy. He was also trying to establish the principle that the main parties, since they were fully represented in his ministry, should loyally support governmental policies in the Assembly. Although this was not his primary object, his policies served to provide some order for the tripartite alliance at the parliamentary level, a point which the parties themselves were slow to appreciate. While they had some cause to complain about the constraints which de Gaulle was imposing on the Assembly, they would also have found it very difficult to make *tripartisme* work without his assistance.

The Socialists found an opportunity for embarrassing de Gaulle at the very end of the budget session, when the Assembly was considering defence expenditure. The problem of cutting down the armed forces was very much in the air at that time; France had still 920,000 men under arms in January 1946, despite the fact that her only outstanding military commitments were a share in the military occupation of Germany and Austria, the maintenance of order in French overseas territories, and the restoration of control in Indo-China.³⁴ In fact, it was later estimated that 40·7 per cent of French public expenditure in 1945 had gone towards the armed forces.³⁵ Ordinary citizens, without knowing these figures, were puzzled at the sight of so many army vehicles on the road and so many uniformed men and women on the street. The cartoonists of *Le Canard Enchaîné* had a royal time depicting jeeps full of girl soldiers and happy officers enjoying themselves at the public expense. By 1946, the government was drawing up plans for reducing military expenditure but even so it was asking the Assembly to approve a three-months' credit of 40,000 million francs as the first instalment of a total military budget of 172,000 million francs. The Socialists, who were genuinely disturbed by the proposed order of spending, decided to stage a demonstration on the issue. They made their move at 2.30 a.m. on New Year's

³⁴See the *Exposé des motifs* of a bill for military expenses presented by the Gouin government (*J.O. (A.N.C. I), Doc., Annexe* no. 763, 26 Mar. 1946, p. 735).

³⁵*Le Monde*, 10 Dec. 1946.

Day, when the jaded assembly turned its attention to the National Defence Bill, providing for the credits in question. The Socialists moved to cut the armed forces estimate (22,000 million francs) by 20 per cent, a proposal designed to embarrass not only de Gaulle but also the Communists, whose comrade Charles Tillon was Minister of Armaments.

Although the M.R.P. refused to join with the Socialists in this manoeuvre, the Communists ignored Tillon's predicament and supported the proposed cut, as also did the U.D.S.R. De Gaulle, true to form, was not disposed to compromise; early on New Year's Day he telephoned André Philip, who was leading the Socialists' attack, and said, 'I will not accept your amendment. I pose the question of confidence.'³⁶ At 11 a.m., when the Assembly resumed the debate after a brief adjournment, Auriol brought a message from de Gaulle offering a 5 per cent reduction in the total defence estimate (40,000 million francs) and declaring that the adoption of the Socialists' amendment would make the government's task impossible. Philip accepted the challenge and declared: 'We would not want the question of confidence to be used on each and every occasion, with the effect of reducing the National Constituent Assembly to a mere recording chamber, renouncing all prerogatives.'³⁷ When the debate was resumed in the afternoon, de Gaulle was present and he intervened on four separate occasions, implying that he would resign if the amendment were adopted. He placed the question firmly in its constitutional setting, declaring that the basic choice was between 'an all-powerful assembly delegating a government to carry out its will' and a government endowed with 'entire responsibility' for the executive power while it retained the Assembly's confidence.³⁸ The Socialists claimed that the General was making too much of the incident and that the government could easily ask for more credits later in the year if it found that the 20 per cent reduction was too drastic. Philip protested that they were in fact protecting the Assembly's right to collaborate on an equal footing with the government in legis-

³⁶Richard Barron, *Parties and Politics in Modern France*, p. 108.

³⁷*J.O. (A.N.C. I), Déb.*, 31 Dec. 1945, p. 725.

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 733. It should be noted that de Gaulle's statements on this occasion are also included amongst the documents given in the General's *Mémoires*, III, pp. 642-4, with slight changes of wording (which do not, however, alter the sense of the original text).

lative work. In the end, a compromise of sorts was reached; de Gaulle agreed that the 20 per cent reduction should take effect after 15 February and that in the meantime the government would draw up a bill for reorganizing the armed forces.³⁹ The Socialists apparently felt that the demonstration had served its purpose. 'We want him [de Gaulle] to stay', said Philip at Lyons shortly afterwards, 'but we also want him to get used to democracy.'⁴⁰ De Gaulle's reaction may be imagined.

The Departure of de Gaulle

These parliamentary incidents distracted attention from the rifts which were appearing between the parties over the basic constitutional issues. The work of drawing up the constitutional bill for discussion by the Assembly had been entrusted to a Constitutional Committee, appointed on 29 November 1945 and consisting of forty-two members. Its party composition was as follows:

First Constitutional Committee, Representation of Parties

<i>Left</i>		<i>Right</i>	
Communists	11	U.D.S.R.	2
M.U.R.F.	1	Radicals	2
S.F.I.O.	10	Independent Republican	1
M.R.P.	11	Peasant	1
		Republican Unity	
		(later P.R.L.)	3
Total	33		9

The Socialists, M.U.R.F. and Communist members, holding twenty-two places between them, could have forced their own ideas through the Committee – but only at the risk of driving the M.R.P. over to the Right and of endangering the tripartite alliance in the process. Although the Communists were quite prepared to defy the M.R.P., the Socialists were anxious to have all three parties sharing equally in the drafting of the bill, not only because they wanted to preserve *tripartisme* but also because they

³⁹J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Déb.*, 31 Dec. 1945, pp. 732-6.

⁴⁰*Le Populaire*, 6-7 Jan. 1946.

appreciated the difficulties of winning popular approval for a constitution which did not satisfy moderate opinion.

As usual, some Socialists resented the fact that circumstances had driven them into such close association with the M.R.P., and although they worked to achieve a three-party agreement on the draft proposals, they did so with bad grace. André Philip and Guy Mollet personified the two attitudes. Philip, who was elected as the Committee's President, was realistic and moderate in discussing the controversial issues which arose; steeped in the academic literature on comparative constitutions, he stressed that the Committee should think of the proposed institutions in terms of their function in contemporary French society rather than in terms of doctrine. Mollet, on the other hand, was inclined to allow his Jacobinism and his doctrinaire preference for the *régime d'assemblée* to get the better of his judgement; on several occasions he showed himself intolerant of the M.R.P.'s policies and difficulties. Other important figures in the Committee's debates were the Communist representatives, Etienne Fajon and Pierre Hervé, Pierre Cot, a left-wing Radical, and René Capitant (U.D.S.R.). The M.R.P.'s delegation included several men well grounded in legal theory and political science, such as François de Menthon, Paul Coste-Floret and the venerable Henri Teitgen.⁴¹

The three parties had stated their constitutional theories in broad terms during the election campaign of September and October 1945⁴² but they were now in a position to set out their arguments in detail. While the Communists still wanted to have a popular assembly endowed with a monopoly of legislative powers, they were now prepared to grant that it should have the assistance of advisory councils; and although they wanted the premier to be appointed by the assembly and to preside over the executive, they were willing to admit the existence of a president with purely advisory powers.⁴³ The M.R.P., in its institutional proposals, showed its usual concern to surround the popular chamber with a system of checks; its representatives argued that the assembly should be balanced by a strong president and by a second chamber, on which special interests, communities and professional groupings

⁴¹Wright (pp. 112-25) gives an exceptionally good account of the committee's early proceedings.

⁴²See pp. 106-8.

⁴³J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Doc., Annexe* no. 20, 23 Nov. 1945, pp. 25-8.

should be represented.⁴⁴ Mid-way between these two positions stood the Socialists. Like the Communists, they wished to see a strong assembly, empowered to elect the premier, as the cornerstone of the political structure; like the M.R.P., they wanted checks on the assembly's powers – two advisory bodies and a complicated procedural arrangement to ensure that the government could not be removed from office on a chance vote.⁴⁵

There was enough similarity between the proposals of the three main parties to make agreement possible, providing each was prepared to grant concessions in detail. Although the Communists' scheme was labelled *régime d'assemblée* and the M.R.P.'s plan *régime parlementaire*, the difference between them was by no means as fundamental as many right-wing commentators tried to claim at the time. All three parties were agreed on the need for advisory councils (although only the M.R.P. favoured a full second chamber) and for two heads of state, a premier and a president (although the Socialists at first wanted a premier only). The real controversy was about the distribution of power between these institutions, and here there was obviously a continuum between the arrangement favoured by the Communists and that favoured by the M.R.P.; agreement would become possible once the Communists agreed to grant more restrictions on the assembly and the M.R.P. less. During the constitutional debates, each party tried to imply that the *régimes* in question had distinctive characteristics, that they were not extreme variants of a single system but in fact different systems. In the last resort, such arguments were irrelevant. The real choice facing the French people was that between a parliamentary system and a presidential system; whether the former system would work would depend not on cunning institutional arrangements but on whether the party system made possible the formation of strong, durable, parliamentary majorities.

⁴⁴See Coste-Floret's statements, *S.C.C. I*, 5 Dec. (pp. 33-4) and 18 Dec. 1945 (pp. 119 and 121). For a discussion of the M.R.P.'s ideas in a more general setting see Willard Ross Yates, 'The Doctrine of the *Mouvement Républicain Populaire*, 1944-1947', Ph.D. Thesis, Yale University, 1957.

⁴⁵*J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Doc.*, *Annexe* no. 44, 29 Nov. 1945, pp. 58-62. Although the Socialists' bill was registered as a Document on 29 Nov. 1945 it was not actually lodged with the Assembly's bureau until 17 Jan. 1946. By this time it had been changed to conform to certain decisions taken by the Constitutional Committee but it still closely resembled the Party's earlier schemes (see pp. 59-60, 107-8).

Had the Constitutional Committee concerned itself only with institutional questions, an early and fairly satisfactory three-party agreement might well have been achieved. But serious differences arose during the debates on political rights and the legal status of parties. The Committee attempted the difficult task of drawing up a revised Declaration of Rights, like that of 1789, and of defining a Party Statute, a set of rules specifying how political parties should be constituted and how they should act. The issues raised were extremely controversial, and considerably increased the tensions between the parties. For example, the M.R.P.'s representatives asked that the Declaration of Rights should include a guarantee of freedom of instruction, implying the liberty of a father to choose for his children whatever type of education he thought most suitable, and the liberty of the Church to maintain its own system of education apart from that of the State. The Communists and the Socialists refused to accept this proposal. However, the Socialists did agree with the M.R.P. about the need for a Party Statute to guarantee the plurality of parties within the State, to insist on their adherence to the essential principles of the Declaration of Rights, to ensure the democratic nature of their internal organization and the regulation of their financial arrangements, and to oblige deputies to join that party under which they had been elected and to accept its discipline. By such means the Socialist and M.R.P. members hoped to promote the formation of a system of strong, coherent parties. The Communists, who did not require external aids to achieve organizational solidarity, flatly opposed the adoption of the Statute.

When the Committee began its work in December, Philip proposed that it should cover the main questions involved first, leaving the detailed drafting of the bill's different sections to various sub-committees. The main Committee was to decide whether it wished the bill to embody certain principles but the votes taken were not to be regarded as definitive. These preliminary discussions served to bring out the main points of disagreement between the parties and could have cleared the way for the necessary stage of hard bargaining on the essentials. On the straight institutional questions, the Socialists were careful not to side consistently with either the Communists or the M.R.P. In the problem of the second chamber, for example, they and the Communists maintained that the advisory councils envisaged should not be given legislative powers and they voted against the M.R.P. to approve the principle of a unicameral parliament by

22 votes to 18.⁴⁶ On the other hand, the Socialists and the M.R.P. voted with the Radicals and the Right to approve procedures which would give the executive some independence of the Assembly.⁴⁷ The main decisions taken at this stage pointed the way to a constitution conforming roughly to the model favoured by the Socialists. This pleased neither the M.R.P. nor the Communists very much but it kept alive the possibility that a three-party agreement would eventually be reached.

It was unfortunate, therefore, that the differences which occurred during these preliminary discussions were fully reported in the press and given an exaggerated significance. *L'Humanité* began to suggest, quite unfairly, that the Socialists had formed an agreement with the M.R.P. The Communists made special mention of an incident which occurred at a Committee meeting on 19 December, when the Socialist and M.R.P. members voted for Philip's proposal that the constitution should provide machinery for referring to referendum bills which were claimed to conflict with constitutional provisions.⁴⁸ Pierre Hervé, writing in *L'Humanité*, claimed that the proposal represented a further attempt to limit the authority of the popular assembly.⁴⁹ A number of Socialist representatives on the Committee, including Mollet, referred the question to their parliamentary group, which decided that the principle of 'the regulation of constitutionality' (the title given to Philip's scheme) should not be included in the S.F.I.O.'s draft constitutional proposal, then being prepared.⁵⁰ Mayer pleaded in vain that his Party had not 'imagined, elaborated, settled or even envisaged any alliance with the Popular Republican Movement'.⁵¹ The new deputies in his Party wanted to remove even the suspicion that such a connection might or could exist.

⁴⁶Maurice Guérin, 'Compte rendu in extenso des séances de la Commission de la Constitution de la première Assemblée Constituante (Décembre 1945-avril 1946)', Secretariat of the parliamentary group of the M.R.P., 3 June 1946, Sitting of 5 Dec. 1945, p. 6.

I have relied on this excellent cyclostyled account of the committee's proceedings for the division lists of all ballots before 24 Jan. 1946. After this date, when the committee agreed to adopt formal voting procedures, the divisions are recorded fully in the official transcript of the discussions.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, 12 Dec. 1945, p. 18.

⁴⁸*S.C.C. I*, 19 Dec. 1945, pp. 133-42.

⁴⁹*L'Humanité*, 20 Dec. 1945.

⁵⁰According to Mollet's account, see *S.C.C. I*, 29 Mar. 1946, pp. 619 and 621, and Guérin, 29 Mar. 1946, p. 195.

⁵¹*Le Populaire*, 23-24 Dec. 1945.

The Communists were pressing the Socialist leaders very hard at this point, and there are some indications that left-wing elements within the S.F.I.O. itself were becoming increasingly hostile to *tripartisme* by the end of December. In keeping with the resolution adopted by the S.F.I.O.'s Congress of August 1945, which had laid down that a meeting of the Socialist-Communist *Comité d'entente* should be held after the elections to discuss the problem of 'organic unity', the S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur* on 26 December accepted a Communist invitation 'to explore all the possibilities and immediate means to be used to realize the common action of Socialists and Communists against the forces of reaction'.⁵² When the *Comité d'entente* met on 29 December, it agreed that the press controversy between the two Parties should be eased off and that a further meeting should be held on 18 January.⁵³ The Communists were anxious that the two Parties should draw up a common constitutional proposal without worrying about whether or not it would meet with the approval of the M.R.P. 'No question of governmental cohesion can legitimately arise here', claimed Pierre Hervé, 'since the drawing up of the Constitution is the exclusive province of the Assembly'.⁵⁴

These moves made the M.R.P. uneasy, particularly when in mid-January the Constitutional Committee began its preliminary examination of the proposals for a revised Declaration of Rights. The Communist and Socialist members voted against the M.R.P.'s members to defeat one motion for recognizing freedom of instruction and another for recognizing the rights of collectivities as well as the rights of individuals.⁵⁵ Such incidents were taken as signs that the Communists and Socialists had indeed come to some agreement. On 12 January the M.R.P. executive claimed that the preliminary scheme approved by the Committee 'no longer had anything in common with the *régime parlementaire*' and that if it were embodied in the constitution bill the M.R.P. would have to oppose it in the referendum campaign. Paul Coste-Floret repeated the warning two days later.⁵⁶

However, the Socialists were by no means committed to the idea of a Marxist constitution, and at the meeting of the *Comité*

⁵²*Le Monde*, 30-31 Dec. 1945.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 1 and 5 Jan. 1946.

⁵⁴*L'Humanité*, 4 Jan. 1946.

⁵⁵Guérin, 11 Jan. (p. 56), and 15 Jan. 1946 (p. 63).

⁵⁶*Le Monde*, 15 and 16 Jan. 1946.

d'entente on 18 January they refused to agree with the Communists' proposal that their two Parties should prepare a common constitutional draft. But they did agree that the Socialist and Communist members of the Constitutional Committee, along with Mayer and Thorez, should confer at regular intervals.⁵⁷ Obviously, the two Parties were approaching their new association with quite different objects in mind; as one Communist remarked, while his Party was offering the Socialists a mutual aid pact the latter were in fact wanting a non-aggression pact.⁵⁸ Publicly, however, the Communists exaggerated the significance of the agreement to confer. On the morning of the 19th, their Central Committee suggested that the possibility of a Communist-Socialist government had been created,⁵⁹ and Duclos claimed that a critical stage had been reached in the constitutional discussions. 'Socialists, Communists and *laïcs* must all unite to avoid a reactionary Constitution and to realize their objective, a democratic Constitution guaranteeing *laïcité* and leaving no opening for an eventual attempt to establish personal rule.'⁶⁰

The morning press on Saturday the 19th played on the importance of the *Comité d'entente* meeting, which *Libération* said had produced 'a defensive agreement against the idea of a presidential government'. There was an air of crisis about the day, but when it came the shock caught everyone by surprise. On Saturday evening, the cabinet ministers were requested by telephone to meet at noon on the following day at the Ministry of Defence, rue Saint-Dominique. When they assembled in a meetings room at the defence building, de Gaulle entered dressed in his army uniform and accompanied by two aides-de-camp. The scene which followed was brief and dramatic. De Gaulle stayed only long enough to announce that he had decided to resign as President of the Provisional Government, and that he would not change his mind. With that he strode out. In the afternoon he conferred briefly with Auriol, who had returned hurriedly from a U.N.O. conference in London, and is said to have been persuaded against broadcasting to the nation about his reasons for resigning.⁶¹ Later he sent a letter to Gouin, explaining that he had long

⁵⁷*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 10, Jan. 1946, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸Cited by Fauvet, *Le Monde*, 19 Jan. 1946.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 20-21 Jan. 1946.

⁶⁰*L'Humanité*, 20-21 Jan. 1946.

⁶¹*Le Monde*, 23 Jan. 1946.

considered that his task 'would be finished once the representatives of the nation were reassembled and the political parties were in a position to assume their responsibilities'. He claimed that this point had now been reached – 'economic activity is recovering, our territories are in our hands, we have regained a footing in Indo-China, and the public peace is undisturbed.'⁶² On the afternoon of Monday the 21st, de Gaulle journeyed with his family to a shooting lodge at Marly-le-Roi, and eight days later he moved from there to the Château des Sept-Fontaines, near Mézières.

The General later suggested that his real reason for resigning was his disgust with the way in which the parties were conducting public affairs. In his Strasbourg address of 7 April 1947, he maintained that he had to choose between joining 'the game of parties', thereby reducing his value to the nation, and leaving the parties to their own devices.⁶³ He states in volume three of his *Mémoires* that he was aware from the beginning of the legislature that he would have to resign and that the defence expenditure incident of New Year's Day helped him to make up his mind.⁶⁴ It is reasonable to assume that he had been unsettled from the time he consented to form the tripartite cabinet in November 1945, and that while he had realized the difficulty of making the three parties work together he had nevertheless been prepared to give the combination a reasonable trial. His confidence must have been shaken by the incidents which arose during the passing of the Bank Nationalization Bill, the raising of civil servants' salaries and the wrangling over defence expenditure. But the fact remains that in most of these affairs the General had made his own policies stick, even at the cost of unpleasantness. These were precisely the kind of difficulties he must have been expecting, and it is most unlikely that they in themselves would have driven him to resign.

It is more reasonable to suppose that the main reason for his withdrawal from politics was his concern at the possibility that the Communist and Socialist parties might use their combined strength to force their proposals for a *régime d'assemblée* through the Constituent Assembly. As he was later to make clear, de Gaulle's own preference was for a *régime présidentiel*, in which executive power would reside securely with the president and in

⁶²De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 645-6.

⁶³*A.P.*, 1947, p. 324.

⁶⁴Pp. 279-81.

which the powers of the popular assembly would be strictly limited. It had been obvious during the defence debate that the General had been much more interested in the constitutional issues involved than in the proposed reduction of military expenditure. He had realized that the Socialists were asserting not only that the Provisional Government should be responsible to the Constituent Assembly but also that this principle of executive subordination before the legislature should be embodied in the new constitution. De Gaulle must also have been disturbed that the Constitutional Committee had rejected proposals for a strong president and a second chamber. His misgivings on this score may have been brought into sharp relief by press reports that the Communists and Socialists had combined to carry through their own constitutional ideas. His decision to resign becomes intelligible only against this background.

François Goguel has suggested that de Gaulle expected the M.R.P. to rally 'an important part of the Assembly' in requesting his return to power,⁶⁵ and Philip Williams cites evidence to show that he had contemplated using the army to carry out a *coup d'état*.⁶⁶ In fact, it is safe to assume that the General expected *tripartisme* to collapse once his leadership was removed, and he probably thought that the Socialists would break with the Communists and join with the M.R.P. and the U.D.S.R. in recalling him to Paris. This was a serious possibility at the time. Even if *tripartisme* could be kept going, it would obviously be much harder to work without de Gaulle. With his arbitration removed from the situation, the Socialists would find their responsibility for holding the alliance together an even more onerous one than it had been previously. Whatever the consequences of de Gaulle's departure, it was clear that the S.F.I.O. stood to lose most in the long run from the crisis which was just beginning.

⁶⁵François Goguel, *France under the Fourth Republic*, p. 8; also David Thomson, *Two Frenchmen, Pierre Laval and Charles de Gaulle*, pp. 216-17.

⁶⁶*Politics in Post-War France*, p. 17.

The Defeat of the First Constitution Bill

Tripartisme under Socialist Leadership

The urgency with which negotiations were conducted during the ministerial crisis of January 1946 arose essentially from the fear that General de Gaulle might attempt a *coup d'état*. Although he had moved outside the political system, there was still the chance that he might re-enter it by force, possibly with the assistance of the army. While many Frenchmen doubted whether the General would risk such an adventure, others felt that if the parties failed to reach agreement his intervention would be only a matter of time. There was besides another cause for alarm. It emerged that the financial situation was little short of disastrous; that the deficit on the 1946 budget would be about 319,000 million francs instead of the 198,000 million forecast by Plevin in December, and that military expenditure, previously estimated at 172,000 million francs for the year, would in fact amount to 200,000 million if the current level of spending were maintained.¹ This state of affairs was especially ominous when viewed against the economic difficulties facing the government; by January 1946 the general price index was 22.5 per cent higher than in June 1945 and the volume of bank notes in circulation had swelled to four times the pre-war volume. Food and power shortages helped to aggravate this inflation.²

The seriousness of the situation compelled the three main parties to waste no time in reaching agreement. Within three days of de Gaulle's resignation they had decided to continue the tripartite

¹See André Philip's report to the Finance Committee on 1 February (*Le Monde*, 2 Feb. 1946); 'France Facing Hard Facts' (*The Times*, 19 Feb. 1946); and 'La Politique Economique et Financière d'André Philip et Albert Gazier, 26 Janvier-2 Juin 1946', Paris, 1946, p. 22.

²The General Price Index for June 1945 was 373 (*A.P.*, 1944-1945, p. 523) and for Jan. 1946 it was 457 (*ibid.*, 1946, p. 585), on a base of 1938 = 100. The value of bank-notes in circulation on 31 Jan. 1946 totalled 592,000 million francs compared with 142,000 million for 31 Aug. 1939 (*ibid.*, p. 589).

alliance and to accept Félix Gouin, one of the Socialist leaders, as President of the Provisional Government; within another four, they had approved a comprehensive programme outlining their policy objectives. In fact, the alliance emerged from the crisis stronger than before, and for a short time it seemed as if the three parties of the Resistance might yet give effect to the revolutionary policies they had formulated during the war.

During the crisis, most of the strain was borne by the M.R.P. It came under heavy pressure both from the Right and from its own provincial supporters to break with the Socialists and to stake its fortunes on the possibility of the General's return to power. However, Bidault and several other of its leaders are said to have warned the Party that there was little chance of its persuading the Socialists to part company with the Communists, and to have stressed the impossibility of formulating a generally acceptable constitution and of pursuing firm economic and foreign policies unless *tripartisme* were maintained. They suggested, in fact, that the alternative to a tripartite government would almost certainly be a Marxist government, through which the Communists would work to obtain control of the state. Wright claims that at one point three-quarters of the M.R.P.'s parliamentary membership was in favour of siding with de Gaulle, and that it was only the persistence of its leaders which held the Party to the alliance.³ In this task they received every assistance from the Socialists, who showed a new understanding of the M.R.P.'s internal problems. One writer in the *Bulletin intérieur* later commented that while some members of the M.R.P. had been willing to leave the alliance, others had been 'more concerned to remain faithful to a programme of reforms for which their party had always declared'.

The M.R.P. is a rally of conflicting forces. Their union would be maintained more easily if this party were to remain in the opposition. If it is made to act it will either lose part of its electors or it will divide.⁴

The S.F.I.O. had its own difficulties. Many of the Party's new members still thought of de Gaulle as the Resistance hero and the national leader, and blamed men such as Philip for having turned against the General without real cause. In an attempt to

³Wright, pp. 132-3. See also Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, pp. 69-70; Goguel, op. cit., p. 8; *The Times*, 23 Jan. 1946; *Le Monde*, 24 Jan. 1946.

⁴*Bulletin intérieur*, special number, Jan. 1946, p. 7. See also *Le Populaire*, 23 Jan. 1946.

correct this impression, Blum suggested in *Le Populaire* that de Gaulle had resigned because he had not learnt to work with the parties, and that if the Socialists were to follow de Gaulle they would have to deny the parliamentary principle – a course which was unthinkable. 'There is no viable and stable democracy outside the parliamentary régime, and there cannot be a viable and stable parliamentary régime outside the organization of parties.'⁵

For Blum, disciplined and coherent parties were the sole guarantees of popular sovereignty and thus of democracy.⁶ The Socialists' official version of de Gaulle's departure was that he had resigned because of the defence expenditure incident, having been foiled in his efforts to maintain military spending at high levels and to subordinate the Assembly to the government by the democratic action of the Socialist group. Rather than give way on these questions, they said, he had decided to leave office.⁷ In spite of such propaganda, sympathy for de Gaulle remained strong amongst large sections of the S.F.I.O.'s rank and file, and was later to complicate the Party's problems on several occasions.

In their efforts to conciliate the M.R.P., Mayer, Gouin, and Blum excited the hostility of the S.F.I.O.'s progressive and anti-participationist groups, the former because they favoured a Socialist-Communist alliance and the latter because they wanted the Party not to take part in any further ministries. The Communists made a direct appeal to progressive opinion within the S.F.I.O. Although Thorez and Duclos appear to have accepted the necessity for another tripartite coalition from the outset, *L'Humanité* insisted throughout the negotiations that the Socialists were entirely responsible for the rejection of the Marxist coalition proposal. On Tuesday the 22nd it appeared on the news stands bearing a large photograph of Thorez and asking that he be given 'the responsibility of forming a government based on workers' and republican unity' – and this at a time when the Communists were already resigned to the continuation of *tripartisme*. Nor were the Communists slow to stir up the anti-clericalism which still provided the source of anti-M.R.P. feeling within the S.F.I.O.

Later events were to reveal how badly both the S.F.I.O. and the M.R.P. had been shaken by this week of crisis. For both of them, their association with de Gaulle had been a source of strength and influence; in a real sense, they had depended on him

⁵Ibid., 22 Jan. 1946.

⁶Ibid., 3-4 Feb. 1946.

⁷*Bulletin intérieur*, special number, Jan. 1946, pp. 5-6.

to make *tripartisme* acceptable to the middle classes. But now that their Gaullism was shown to be conditional, a considerable proportion of their electoral support became restive. It was only in March that the full repercussions of de Gaulle's resignation registered their effect, but that effect was no less damaging for the delay.

As the correspondent of the London *Times* suggested,⁸ the Communists probably realized from the very beginning that another tripartite coalition could not be avoided. They must have been as concerned as their allies to prevent a Gaullist counter-attack and to deal with the financial and economic emergency – even if dollar credits had to be obtained from the United States. There is every indication that the French Communists of 1946 were anxious to remain a party of government and to promote French economic recovery; although their press attacks on the Socialists and M.R.P. parties were often irresponsible, they were prepared to act responsibly in the tasks of reconstructing the country and in drafting a new constitution. Their call for a Communist-Socialist coalition during this crisis was obviously a propaganda move, for they must have realized that the Socialists would never have considered such an alliance.

It is just possible that the party leaders had gained some inkling of de Gaulle's intentions before he announced his resignation. Mayer claims that he met Thorez and Duclos on Sunday morning before the famous cabinet meeting and that they agreed that the tripartite combination would have to be kept going in the event of the General's departure.⁹ After the General had left the cabinet meeting, the ministers talked the matter over for some time and found themselves substantially agreed that the alliance should be maintained. However, for a day or two the parties made a pretence of considering alternative solutions. The Communists proposed to the Socialists that Thorez should be nominated for the presidency, whereupon the Socialists gave their stock answer that they would not vote for any candidate who did not have the backing of each of the three major parties. When the M.R.P. conveniently obliged by rejecting the proposal for Thorez's candidature, the Communists proposed that the two Marxist parties should form their own coalition with Thorez at its head. After this proposal

⁸24 Jan. 1946.

⁹Letter from Mayer to Duclos, 22 Jan. 1946, cited in *Bulletin intérieur*, special number, Jan. 1946, p. 8.

also had been rejected, the Communists proposed (just before midnight on Monday the 21st) that Félix Gouin should be nominated for the presidency, on the grounds that his office as President of the Assembly had kept him above partisan concerns.¹⁰

Serious negotiations began on Tuesday morning, when a joint meeting of the S.F.I.O.'s *Comité directeur* and parliamentary group decided, by 60 to 38, against joining any ministry which did not represent the M.R.P. as well as the Communists¹¹ and agreed to nominate Auriol for the presidency instead of Gouin.¹² Later the Communists met and insisted on Gouin's nomination, which was finally endorsed by another Socialist meeting; Auriol was being mentioned as Gouin's successor as President of the Assembly. That evening the M.R.P.'s executive announced that it was sending a delegation to confer with the representatives of the other two parties, and declared that a new tripartite combination would work only if the president were to arbitrate between the parties and if the parties themselves were to arrange a truce in all the main fields of political action – the Assembly, the press, and the country in general. Before the election of a new President, continued the M.R.P.'s statement, the parties should also reach agreement 'on the minimum conditions of their co-operation within the government and the national constituent Assembly'.¹³

Agreement had now been reached on two essential points – the continuation of *tripartisme* and Gouin's nomination as President – and on Wednesday the 23rd the party delegations were able to devote most of their attention to discussing questions of programme and policy. Difficulties immediately cropped up. The M.R.P. wanted some undertaking that freedom of instruction, even if it were not treated as a right, should not be expressly restricted or abolished by the Declaration of Rights. It also wanted guarantees that its constitutional ideas would not be ignored by the Communist-Socialist majority on the Constitutional Committee. However, its allies refused to consider any such guarantees on the grounds that, since the drafting of the constitution bill was the task of the Constituent Assembly, there was no need for a coalition agreement to cover these points.¹⁴ No understanding had

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 1-2.

¹¹Wright, p. 132.

¹²See Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, p. 69n.

¹³*L'Aube*, 23 Jan. 1946.

¹⁴*Bulletin intérieur*, special number, Jan. 1946, p. 3.

been obtained when the Assembly, having adjourned its afternoon sitting, met at 7.15 p.m. and elected Gouin as President of the Provisional Government by 497 votes out of 555.¹⁵ Gouin immediately set about selecting his cabinet while using his influence to bring the policy discussions to a successful conclusion.

During Thursday's negotiations, the M.R.P.'s willingness to make concessions enabled the three parties to reach agreement. They signed a joint programme, the 'Charter of *Tripartisme*' in which they agreed to avoid polemical arguments, to observe in public 'a spirit of loyal solidarity in defending decisions taken together in the government'; to carry out the programmes drawn up in November 1945 by the *Délégation des gauches* and the M.R.P.; and to maintain the pre-war legislation on the church-schools issue during the life of the government.¹⁶ The Charter was a significant measure of the M.R.P.'s anxiety at the prospect of *tripartisme sans de Gaulle*; as a substitute for the General's authority, it was trying to establish rules and conventions for the formal conduct of the alliance and was virtually asking the government, as the supreme council of the alliance, to see that it was properly regulated. Indeed, the M.R.P.'s commitment to the new coalition was necessarily conditional, especially in view of the fact that the Socialists and Communists had refused to consider the possibility of complementing the policy settlement with a three-party agreement on constitutional principles. In this respect, the M.R.P.'s negotiators had shown themselves to be the realists; events were to prove the justice of their claims that differences between the three parties over constitutional issues would inevitably threaten not only the solidarity of the cabinet but the stability of the tripartite alliance as a whole.

Gouin found that the financial and economic situation was even more serious than he had imagined, and he set himself to obtain the approval of the large parties for drastic remedial measures. His first move was to ask the advice of Mendès-France, who recommended huge cuts in public expenditure, a halt in civil service recruitments and promotions, the freezing of wages and prices, an increased tax on capital and an attack on the black market. Mendès-France argued that were he to apply this policy he would require exceptional authority – not only all the powers formerly belonging to the Ministers of Finance and National

¹⁵J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Déb.*, 23 Jan. 1946, pp. 149-50.

¹⁶A.P., 1946, pp. 530-1.

Economy and the right to supervise the working of other ministries in the sphere of economic policy, but also the right to legislate by decree.¹⁷ Although evidence on this point is not conclusive, it does appear that when the Mendès-France plan was submitted to the parties, the Socialists and Communists objected to his proposal to freeze wages and the M.R.P. took exception to the suggested cuts in military expenditure. Mendès-France refused to accept the alterations proposed by the parties and declined Gouin's offer of a cabinet post.¹⁸ Drastic measures had to be considered, however, and Gouin promptly drafted his own policy proposals which he put before the parties on Saturday the 26th. As Mendès-France had done, Gouin advocated cuts in civil and military expenditure, a halt in civil service recruitment, the stabilization of wages and salaries, and measures to curb black-marketeering. Although he warned that his scheme would be 'a hard, essentially unpopular policy', the parties accepted it with few reservations.¹⁹

On the afternoon of the same day, Gouin formed his cabinet, which was composed as follows:

Socialist

Félix Gouin	President and Minister of National Defence
André Le Troquer	Interior
André Philip	National Economy and Finance
François Tanguy-Prigent	Agriculture
Marcel Naegelen	Education
Jules Moch	Public Works and Transport
Marius Moutet	Colonies

Communist

Maurice Thorez	Vice President
Charles Tillon	Armaments
Marcel Paul	Industrial Production
Ambroise Croizat	Labour and Social Security
François Billoux	Reconstruction and Town Planning
Laurent Casanova	Ex-Servicemen and War Victims

¹⁷Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, pp. 70-1; Alexander Werth, *The Strange History of Pierre Mendès-France and the Great Conflict over French North Africa*, pp. 65-6; *The Times*, 26, 29 Jan. 1946.

¹⁸See *Le Monde*, 26 Jan. and 2 Feb. 1946; *The Times*, 26 Jan. 1946; Duclos, J.O. (*A.N.C. I*), *Déb.*, 29 Jan. 1946, pp. 164-5.

¹⁹See *Bulletin intérieur*, special number, Jan. 1946, pp. 4-5.

M.R.P.

Francisque Gay	Vice President
Pierre-Henri Teitgen	Justice
Georges Bidault	Foreign Affairs
Edmond Michelet	Armed Forces
Jean Letourneau	Posts and Telegraphs
Robert Prigent	Health and Population

Non-Party

Henri Longchambon	Food
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Although the previous ministry is regarded as being the first of the tripartite cabinets, it had contained six ministers (Dautry, Malraux, René Pleven, Soustelle, Giacobbi and Jacquinet) who had been virtually responsible to the General himself. All these were excluded from the Gouin ministry, whose only technocrat was Longchambon, the Minister of Food, a post which each of the parties regarded as an electoral liability. The division of portfolios was almost equal, each party having six ministries, but the Socialists had taken the most responsible positions in the field of economic policy. On the success of Le Troquer (Interior), Philip (National Economy and Finance) and Tanguy-Prigent (Agriculture) depended the success of the government as a whole – and indeed the success of the whole idea of *tripartisme*. The Socialists retained their control of other key positions; Mollet succeeded Philip as President of the Constitutional Committee and Auriol succeeded Gouin as President of the Assembly. By virtue of these appointments, the S.F.I.O. also became responsible for arranging the constitutional as well as the economic settlement. On the 29th, Gouin received a vote of confidence from the Assembly by 503 votes to 44.

The Gouin ministry's economic measures, carried out between February and April 1946, were only partially successful. Philip tried to control the inflationary trend but he failed to prevent a steady rise in prices from taking place. Although he pushed through a Finance Act which increased taxes, cut subsidies and reduced government spending, he was unable to put into effect the full-scale retrenchment policy he had advocated on taking office. By March the government was counting heavily on the possibility of obtaining financial assistance from the United States, and Léon Blum and Jean Monnet were sent to Washington to negotiate for a long-term dollar loan and an order of vital machine tools. In March and April, acts were passed which authorized

the state to nationalize the most important gas and electricity companies, the Bank of Algeria, further coal mines and the large insurance companies, but such reforms failed to capture the imagination of a public frustrated by shortages and austerity. As the government's popularity declined, the parties became more reluctant to observe the conventions of ministerial solidarity; they criticized each others' ministers and disclaimed responsibility for the shortcomings of governmental policy. The Socialists in particular soon found their control of the economic portfolios a crushing liability.

By this time, *tripartisme* was almost a word of abuse. The liberal as well as the conservative press, the Radicals as well as the parties of the Right, joined in attacking the régime of the 'monoliths' as a perversion of the parliamentary system. Sympathy for de Gaulle began to grow during the winter months. The Left now found itself facing a powerful offensive from the Right. Each party reacted differently; the M.R.P. made no secret of its dislike for the alliance and its determination to end it as soon as possible; the Communists continued to insist that a new Popular Front was required to check the mounting counter-revolution; the Socialists alone had the courage to point out that *tripartisme* was a combination dictated by necessity, for limited ends, because no other combination could give France a constitution and new economic order. In *Le Populaire*, Marcel Bidoux argued:

'*Tripartisme*' is not a creation of the mind. It is a political fact which has imposed itself as much on the Socialists as on the Communists. By denying this, we would have ruled out the possibility of forming an effective and lasting government. The proof lies in the very existence of the Félix Gouin ministry. Without agreement between the 'big three', the nation would be given over to confusion and disorder, disarray and dissension. And that at a crucial time when the maximum national cohesion is required as much on the internal as on the external plane. Neither here nor abroad would we find the credits which are essential for restoring French authority and the economy, any more than we as a nation would manage to assemble the means for our recovery if we gave the appearance of being a divided country, battling against itself, and unable to realize that discipline which gives strength to States and armies. The M.R.P. has understood that as also have the Communists. There are thus higher obligations which subject the doctrines of parties to their demands without, however, emptying them of their substance, depriving them of their

originality and harming them by constraint. These obligations produce a convergence of action on which the safety of the nation depends. This is the very essence, and the history, of 'tripartisme'.²⁰

The Failure of the Auriol Compromise

By March 1946 the M.R.P. was losing its nerve. During the ministerial crisis which had followed de Gaulle's resignation in January, it had been swept along by events and committed to decisions without having fully considered their consequences. Six weeks later, as the implications of the new situation became only too clear, the M.R.P.'s resolve to stand by *tripartisme* began to weaken. Having risen to power as the 'party of fidelity' to de Gaulle, it now found itself being identified with Socialist and Communist positions in economic and foreign policy, and above all in the drafting of the constitutional bill. While de Gaulle had been President, the parties of the Right had been denied much freedom of manoeuvre, but after his retirement they launched a heavy offensive against the Left, in which they included the M.R.P. The *Parti Républicain de la Liberté* (P.R.L.) not only criticized the Gouin government's economic policies but continually attacked the M.R.P. for having abandoned de Gaulle, compromised on the church-schools question and accepted the principle of a Marxist constitution. Meanwhile, the Radicals, the Democratic Alliance and the U.D.S.R. (which broke with the Socialists early in March), who were already feeling their way towards the alliance which became known as the *Rassemblement des gauches républicaines* (R.G.R.), attacked the government at every opportunity. In their propaganda, these parties used the term 'tripartisme' to denote anti-Gaullism, pro-Communism, economic Radicalism, a *régime d'assemblée*. The M.R.P. found itself on the exposed flank of an unpopular alliance, fighting hard to maintain a settlement which many of its own supporters repudiated.

As the attacks from the Right increased in intensity, the M.R.P.'s leaders began to consider the possibility of changing sides and of giving up their attempt to obtain a constitutional proposal acceptable to all three parties. Very few people doubted that a constitution bill supported only by the Socialists and Communists

²⁰7 Mar. 1946.

would win a referendum majority, but it was obvious that a Marxist constitution would never be accepted by a large section of the people and that campaigns for its revision would constitute a constant source of political disorder. The M.R.P.'s leaders were as concerned to avoid such an outcome as their Socialist colleagues, but they were not prepared to risk the very existence of their Party for the sake of agreement on the constitutional issues. While many of the Socialist leaders, particularly Gouin and Auriol, realized the extent of the M.R.P.'s concern and made every effort to meet their demands the S.F.I.O.'s left-wing groups were much less sympathetic. They argued that hard bargaining was the only method of dealing with the M.R.P., which would otherwise try to obtain more and more concessions in an effort to curry favour with the Right.

No party pursued a clear line of action in this confused situation. Negotiations were proceeding in so many different institutions – the Constitutional Committee, the Constituent Assembly, the informal meetings arranged by Auriol – that chances of agreement at one level were often jeopardized by discord at another level. There was a regrettable absence of firm leadership; the government refused to intervene in what it considered should be the task of the Assembly, while the party press insisted on treating the discussions in an irresponsible fashion. Early in March, there was a good chance of agreement, thanks mainly to Auriol's skill as an arbitrator and to the willingness of both the Communist Party and the M.R.P. to make substantial concessions. But relations between the parties deteriorated rapidly in the weeks which followed; the Communists refused to make further concessions; the Socialists, disturbed by the restlessness of their left-wing rank and file, lost their enthusiasm for compromise; and the M.R.P. seemed to have resigned itself to the inevitability of disagreement. The most likely outcome appeared to be the drafting of a Socialist-Communist constitution bill and a violent shift to the Right by the M.R.P.

To understand how this state of affairs came about, we must first return to the situation which held at the end of February. At that time, the Constitutional Committee had just finished its preliminary discussions and was about to begin drafting the version of the bill which was to be presented to the Assembly in March. Although the members of the Committee were showing unusual restraint in dealing with the controversial issues, the press gave quite the opposite impression to the outside world; despite

Mollet's claim to the contrary,²¹ writers in *Le Monde*, *Le Figaro*, *L'Aurore* and other influential Parisian dailies were suggesting that the committee was proposing a *régime d'assemblée*. It was clear, nevertheless, that it would be difficult to draft institutional proposals which would satisfy all three parties, and Auriol, as President of the Assembly, invited party leaders to confer with him in his rooms at the *Palais Bourbon* to explore the possibilities of compromise; these conferences, which lasted for about a fortnight, proved highly effective, with the result that on 7 March Auriol was able to list a comprehensive group of subjects on which agreement had been reached.²² The main parties had accepted that the Assembly should have two advisory bodies, an Economic Council and a Council of the French Union, the latter Council having the right to pass an opinion on bills between their first and second readings by the Assembly; that the President should have more powers than those previously envisaged by the Constitutional Committee, in particular that of presiding over the cabinet and the Council of National Defence, and that he should draw up a list of candidates from which the Assembly would elect a Premier; that, as a guarantee of governmental stability, the Assembly should be dissolved automatically in the second half of its term if two ministerial crises had occurred and that neither a motion of confidence nor a censure motion should be voted until after a two-days' 'cooling-off' period. The Communists and Socialists had both made important concessions to reach this measure of agreement. They were not, however, prepared to go further and to agree that the two advisory councils should be fused to form a second chamber, nor that such a chamber should join with the Assembly in the election of the President – arrangements on which both the M.R.P. and the parties of the Right were insisting. As a compromise, Auriol suggested that the two councils should be left separate but that the Council of the French Union at least should be associated in the presidential election. Although the Communists refused on 8 March to accept this proposal²³ there was no denying that the conversations between the party leaders and Auriol had considerably increased the chances of a general settlement being worked out. The gap

²¹*Le Populaire*, 21 Feb. 1946.

²²Wright, pp. 151-2; *Le Populaire*, 27 Feb. and 2 Mar. 1946; *Le Monde*, 28 Feb., 1, 2, 8, and 9 Mar. 1946; *S.C.C. I*, 28 Feb. 1946, p. 472.

²³*Le Monde*, 9, 10-11 Mar. 1946.

between the M.R.P. and the S.F.I.O. had now been closed on several points, while the Communist Party had shifted its ground significantly on the questions of the President's powers and the authority of the advisory councils.

No worse time could have been chosen to hold a meeting of the M.R.P.'s National Council, an important body composed of representatives from the Party's provincial branches and authorized to discuss policy matters between annual conferences. When it met in Paris on 9 and 10 March, the M.R.P.'s leaders were disturbed by the amount of ill-feeling, of resentment against *tripartisme*, of nostalgia for the old dependence on de Gaulle, which they found amongst the delegates. Some observers have suggested that a move was made at this meeting to have the M.R.P. withdraw from the alliance altogether, but that Georges Bidault, the Foreign Minister, saved the day by pointing out the need for governmental solidarity in view of the impending international conference on the German and Austrian peace treaties.²⁴ The Council nevertheless adopted one resolution declaring that the M.R.P.'s continued participation in the government would depend on whether the 'Charter of *Tripartisme*' was fully observed, and another which endorsed the executive's acceptance of the Auriol compromise but authorized it to decide the Party's final attitude once the Assembly had made its definitive decisions about the Constitution bill.²⁵ In fact although the National Council did thus formally approve the positions which had been adopted by the M.R.P.'s parliamentary group, it definitely created the impression amongst the deputies that its patience was limited. Wright suggests that an M.R.P. caucus meeting estimated that the Party's electoral strength would be cut by one-third if it were to give in to the demands of the Socialists and Communists.²⁶

The M.R.P. would have found it much easier to maintain its balance at this stage had the S.F.I.O. as a party been more in sympathy with its problems; but as we shall see in the next section, preparations for the S.F.I.O.'s Extraordinary National Congress at Montrouge between 29 and 31 March were revealing that unrest amongst the rank and file had reached a critical point. Not only were the progressive and anti-participationist groups within

²⁴L. Gabriel-Robinet, *Le Figaro*, 9, 10-11 Mar. 1946; *The Economist*, 16 Mar. 1946, p. 411.

²⁵*Le Figaro*, 12 Mar. 1946; *Le Monde*, 12 Mar. 1946.

²⁶Wright, p. 162.

the Party especially articulate, but they were attracting the support of those federations which disliked *tripartisme* either because it involved association with the M.R.P. or because it was making the Party responsible in the eyes of the electors for the economic difficulties of the post-war reconstruction. Auriol and Mayer were well aware that influential sections of the Party's members and deputies did not wish to make any further constitutional concessions to the M.R.P., while Mollet, now the acknowledged leader of the discontented, was not disposed to expend his energies as President of the Constitutional Committee in conciliating the M.R.P.

The great need was for time – time to negotiate behind the scenes, and time for the M.R.P. and Socialist leaders to convince their supporters that a three-party constitutional agreement was necessary in the national interest. But at this stage the Assembly was preoccupied with discussing the draft proposals for the Declaration of Rights, a debate which unnecessarily aggravated the differences between the parties at a crucial stage in the negotiations about the institutional questions. At one extreme, the Radicals and the P.R.L. wanted to resurrect the Declaration of 1789 along with its philosophy of natural rights and individualism; at the other, the Communists and Socialists argued that rights were not inalienable and universal but relative to a particular socio-economic situation. The latter admitted that the rights of 1789 were just in the context of a bourgeois revolution, but argued that they were no longer completely relevant to the conditions of modern France. Above all, they considered that a modern Declaration should state the right to work and the right to strike, for example, and that the freedoms of press and property should be restricted if they threatened the full enjoyment of such rights.²⁷ The M.R.P., rejecting both the individualist and materialist theories of rights, claimed that the Declaration should recognize the rights of groups as well as individuals, on the grounds that natural social groupings had public *personae* and rights which were distinct from those of their constituent members. In particular the M.R.P. wanted recognition of the rights of families and of regional and professional groupings. The Communists and Socialists argued that the essential thing was to give man the right to form associations and that to endow such associations with rights of

²⁷Guillet expounded the Socialist view during the opening debate. See J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Déb.*, 7 Mar. 1946, pp. 617-19.

their own would lead to the kind of corporatism which had characterized the Vichy régime.

The basic conflict between the M.R.P. and the two Marxist parties came to the surface on several occasions during the Assembly debates on the Declaration, and produced minor incidents whose significance was immediately exaggerated in press reports. Thus a great deal was made of the fact that the Communist, Socialist and Radical groups had combined to reject, against the opposition of the M.R.P. and the P.R.L., several proposals favouring freedom of instruction.²⁸ During the discussions on the question of family and property rights, also, the M.R.P. found itself separated from the parties to its left. The long and involved wrangle over the Declaration, which lasted from 7 to 21 March, did a great deal to weaken the understanding which had been built up earlier, but it was not seriously suggested that the M.R.P.'s annoyance over these matters would cause it to oppose the constitution bill as a whole.

On 27 March, the work of widening and consolidating the Auriol compromise was resumed. The points agreed upon in the earlier discussions had been embodied in a series of draft clauses which now came before the Constitutional Committee, and Auriol resumed his talks with the party leaders. There were some hopeful signs. On 28 March the Committee agreed that the Council of the French Union should be accorded full parliamentary status and that the President should be elected by the Assembly alone and by a two-thirds majority of those voting. The M.R.P.'s executive committee signified its approval.²⁹ However, on the morning of the 29th a quite unexpected difference arose, which soon placed the whole compromise in danger. The Socialist-Communist majority to the Constitutional Committee opposed the machinery proposed for deciding whether or not acts passed by parliament were contrary to the constitution, a system known as 'the regulation of constitutionality'. The disputed clauses had been prepared by a sub-committee in accordance with the preliminary proposals which had been adopted by the Constitutional Committee on 19 December 1945. As we have seen,³⁰ Philip had

²⁸*Ibid.*, 14 Mar. (pp. 775-80) and 15 Mar. 1946 (pp. 808-26, and 841-2 (division)).

²⁹*Le Figaro*, 29 Mar. 1946; *Le Populaire*, 29 Mar. 1946.

³⁰See pp. 134-5.

brought the scheme forward in the first place and the Socialists had combined with the M.R.P. to secure its adoption. At Mollet's instigation, the Socialists' parliamentary group had then refused to accept the principle involved, but the M.R.P. had not been informed of this *volte-face*. Its members on the Constitutional Committee were thus amazed to find that the Socialists were now united with the Communists in opposing the principle of the regulation of constitutionality. De Menthon protested strongly and pointed out that he had told the M.R.P. executive that the scheme had already been approved.⁸¹ The M.R.P.'s indignation was based on the justifiable concern that, unless this principle were accepted, it would be possible for the Assembly to pass legislation which in fact contravened the constitution.

Mollet, who must bear the responsibility for not having raised the matter earlier, proposed at a meeting of party leaders on 1 April that provision should be made for a committee of jurisdiction to take charge of regulating constitutionality, but that it should be required to deal only with institutional questions and not with alleged infringements of the Declaration of Rights. Although this suggestion was reasonable, it was rejected outright by the Communists and the M.R.P. It was now obvious that the Auriol compromise would collapse unless the dispute could be settled, and that the M.R.P. was at last giving way under the accumulated strain of the past few weeks. When the Constitutional Committee met on 3 April, de Menthon resigned his position as *rapporteur* for the constitution bill on the grounds that he could not be expected to justify before the Constituent Assembly 'texts of Socialist-Communist inspiration'. The Committee then rejected the clauses dealing with the regulation of constitutionality by 22 votes to 17, the Socialists and the Communists voting in the majority against the representatives of the other parties. In view of its earlier acceptance of the Auriol compromise, the M.R.P. was straining a point to argue that this matter drastically altered the character of the institutional proposals. The provisions for a responsible second chamber, for guarantees of governmental stability and for an influential, if not a strong, President were all important concessions to its point of view. In rejecting the compromise and in suggesting that the proposals they had helped to frame would provide France with 'a single, omnipotent

⁸¹S.C.C. I, 29 Mar. 1946, pp. 618-22.

Assembly' without counterweights,³² the M.R.P.'s representatives had acted in bad faith.

'On the seventh day of creation', quipped Rémy Roure, 'having contemplated the tripartite work, the M.R.P. has taken fright. It has recoiled before government by convention.'³³

Time was running out, for the date fixed for the final vote on the bill was 19 April, just over a fortnight away. There seemed little chance of arranging a three-party agreement by then, especially as the M.R.P. had swung right away from the Socialists after the failure of the Auriol compromise. The initiative in this situation rested with the Socialists; if they could make an all-out effort to win back the M.R.P. there was a chance that a new compromise might be arranged. Certainly Auriol, Gouin, and Mayer were prepared to make such an effort but, for reasons which we shall now discuss, they had little hope of persuading their Party to do so.

Pressures for Revolt within the S.F.I.O.

The reluctance shown by the S.F.I.O. to make concessions to the M.R.P. was directly related to the serious internal differences which had arisen amongst Socialist rank and file. Two important congresses were held within five weeks of each other. In keeping with the arrangements made at the Congress of August 1945, a Conference of federal secretaries was held in Paris on 23 and 24 February to discuss proposals for changing the Party's constitution and Declaration of Principles. Between 29 and 31 March, a special Congress was held at Montrouge to discuss electoral tactics. At both meetings fundamental questions of policy and strategy were raised; the central theme at the February Conference was the maintenance of doctrinal integrity, while that of the March Congress was the formulation of the strategy best suited to the Party's long-term interests. In their defence of doctrinal revisionism and the tripartite alliance, the Party's leaders found themselves under attack from all sides – from the left as well as the right. These months gave the first clear indication that the Mayer leadership was losing the confidence of the Party, and that a new group of leaders, which included Guy Mollet, Yves Dechézelles, Jean Rous, and Pierre Rimbert, was coming to the fore.

³²Ibid., 2 and 3 Apr. 1946, pp. 638-43.

³³*Le Monde*, 5 Apr. 1946.

Before each conference, the issues involved were argued out in meetings of the local sections and federations, at which level the various groups within the Party refined their policies and built up their strength. The definition of groups was clearer now than it had been in August 1945. Not only were the progressives and anti-participationists more articulate and coherent but the moderates, hitherto a negative and restrained force within the party, were also pressing their own demands. The parallel between this situation and that which had existed in 1938, immediately after the breakdown of the Popular Front, is striking. Just as the anti-participationists, with their insistence that the S.F.I.O. should withdraw from government, were the direct descendants of Marceau Pivert's 'Revolutionary Left' so the progressives were following in the steps of the pre-war faction led by Jean Zyromski and A. D. Bracke, who had favoured opposing the Daladier government and working with the Communists. However, there was a very important difference between the two occasions. Whereas at the Congress of 1938 Blum had defeated the two left-wing factions because of his secure hold over the mass of delegates, especially those from the northern federations, in 1946 Mayer's personal following was weak and irresolute. Moreover, in 1938 the delegates' resentment against the leadership for their failure to turn the Popular Front into a revolutionary movement had been balanced by their appreciation of the Blum government's considerable legislative achievement; in 1946 the opposition to *tripartisme* within the S.F.I.O. was bitter and unqualified.

Although the February Conference was held in secret, enough of its proceedings have been reported to indicate how much the balance of forces within the Party was shifting.³⁴ The debate on the Declaration of Principles appears to have been particularly significant. Blum's drafts, submitted without success to the Congress of August 1945, had been carefully worked over by a drafting committee, and the Conference agreed to take into consideration the resultant text (by 3,053 mandates to 768, with 639 absent). Those delegates who voted in the minority in this

³⁴The conference was held in secret, but a fair indication of its proceedings, as well as the division lists for the particular ballots, is given in *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 11, Feb.-Mar. 1946, pp. 3-10. See also *Le Populaire*, 26 Feb. 1946.

A special ruling provided that the mandates held at this and succeeding conferences represented 50 members each, instead of 25. Mandates held at the conference totalled 4,460.

ballot represented the hard core of progressive federations, such as Seine, Sarthe, Tarn, Rhône, and Marne, which maintained that the Party should have retained without amendment the old Declaration adopted by the 1905 Unity Congress. Controversy arose over a phrase in the revised draft which, in a crude attempt to link Blum's revisionist phrase *action de classe* with the revolutionary phrase *lutte de classe* of the 1905 Declaration, described the S.F.I.O. as *un parti de lutte et d'action de classe*. The progressives apparently found enough backing to have the term *lutte de classe* revived, although no formal vote was taken.³⁵ Thanks to such changes and to those made by the drafting committee, the Declaration which finally issued from the Conference still retained a healthy Marxist flavour. Its key passage, in a manner strongly reminiscent of the old Declaration, still managed to juxtapose revisionist and revolutionary statements with a careless disregard for their strategic implications. It read:

The Socialist Party is essentially a revolutionary party: its end is to achieve the substitution for the régime of capitalist property a régime in which the natural wealth, along with the means of production and exchange, will become collective property and in which, as a result, classes will be abolished. This transformation, carried out in the interests of all men, can be accomplished only by the workers themselves. Whatever the means used in its realization, it in itself constitutes the social revolution. It is in this sense that the Socialist Party has always been and continues to be a party of the class struggle, based on the organization of the labouring world.

It is essentially a democratic party, because all the rights of the individual and all forms of liberty cannot be separated from each other. If Labour is not liberated there cannot be free citizenship; Labour cannot be emancipated unless the Community (*Cité*) is free. Widespread and full democratic liberties are both a necessary part of any Socialist régime, and the means of ensuring for the proletariat, within the capitalist régime itself, the progressive reforms which improve his condition and increase his revolutionary capacity.³⁶

The Conference also adopted the revised party constitution (*règlements du parti*) prepared by the drafting committee from the *Comité directeur's* earlier proposals, which had been so badly

³⁵See Fauvet, *Le Monde*, 23 Feb. 1946; Léon Blum, 'Notes sur la doctrine', *La Revue Socialiste*, no. 3, July 1946, pp. 257-61.

³⁶*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 11, Feb.-Mar. 1946, p. 4.

received at the Congress of August 1945. Under the new rules, the local organization was to remain much the same as before the war; the section, or branch, was to remain the local, and the federation the departmental unit of administration. The executive bodies also resembled the old institutions; the *Comité directeur* of thirty-one members (of whom only ten could be parliamentarians) had taken the place of the old *Comité administratif permanent*, except that its powers were much wider, and the National Council, consisting of one delegate from each federation, had been retained despite Mayer's earlier attempts to prevent its revival. On one important point, however, Mayer had had his way; the rules provided that the *Comité directeur* was to be elected by the National Congress under a simple-majority voting method whereas the old C.A.P. had been elected by proportional representation at pre-war congresses, a practice which had greatly encouraged factionalism within the Party. The progressive delegates had tried to restore the old proportional representation system, but their proposal had been defeated by 3,044 mandates to 1,071 (345 absent). The rules also permitted freedom of discussion within the Party press on questions of doctrine and method, but all Socialist newspapers and journals, in discussing the Party's activity (*action*), were required to abide by the decisions of the movement's national and international congresses, and those of the National Council.³⁷

Two of the votes at the Conference gave a clear indication of the geographical bases of both the progressive and moderate factions. The progressives, although some of them voted in the majority in the divisions noted above, voted at full strength on one occasion during the discussion of the Declaration of Principles, when their proposal (the Veillard amendment) to strengthen the revolutionary tone of the document's concluding paragraphs was rejected by 2,549 mandates to 1,597 (73 abstentions and 241 absent). The delegates from thirty-two metropolitan federations, including Pas-de-Calais and Seine, gave all or most of their mandates for the amendment, and the majority of these were to show up in similar divisions later in the year. Although the progressive federations were not grouped in any special region or regions, they formed two chains running from north to south, one along the south-western coast and the other from the Seine Basin to the head of the Rhône Valley. The moderate delegates were

³⁷Ibid. pp. 4-7.

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isolated on another occasion in the same debate, when they tried to delete the word '*communiste*' from the statement (in the rules) that the S.F.I.O. stood for 'the transformation of capitalist society into a collectivist or communist society.' Their proposal was rejected by 2,287 mandates to 1,848 (57 abstentions and 268 absent). Most of the thirty-four metropolitan federations who voted in the minority in this case were concentrated in the Provence and Alpes regions in the south-west and on the western slopes of the Massif Central. The largest amongst them were Nord, Haute-Vienne, and the Bouches-du-Rhône federations, the latter having been purged of its progressive elements during the election campaign of the previous October.⁸⁸

The strength of these two groups within the Party indicated that a storm was brewing. Of the 4,460 mandates represented at the Conference, the progressives and the anti-participationists could command about 1,600 and the moderates about 1,850, leaving the leaders with only 1,000 mandates at the most on which they could rely to support middle-of-the-road policies. Pre-war experience had taught that this state of affairs was dangerous; while things had been going well for the Party, its extreme groups had usually remained isolated knots of doctrinaires, vocal and congress meetings yet lacking mass support, but in situations of crisis power had flowed rapidly from the centre towards the extremes, producing a disequilibrium which had seriously reduced the Party's capacity for concerted action. *Tripartisme* was having just such an effect on the post-war S.F.I.O. Whereas just after Liberation Mayer's control over the Party had appeared to be virtually unchallenged, now that the situation had deteriorated opposition to his policies was mounting on both the left and the right of the Party. The strategies which he and Blum had tried to carry out were now being seriously questioned by the rank and file. No matter how insistent the leaders might be that, for reasons of national interest, the S.F.I.O. had no alternatives than to maintain its alliances with both the Communist Party and the M.R.P., from the point of view of the average militant *tripartisme* was sapping the Socialist movement of its revolutionary vitality.

Each faction had its own solution. True to the doctrines of orthodox Marxism, the anti-participationists declared that the Party should get rid of all commitments, withdraw its ministers

⁸⁸These divisions are analysed in Appendix 2. See also maps 4 and 5. (Five federations voted in the minority in both divisions.)

from the government and stand quite alone as the one, true revolutionary party. The progressive federations adopted a more hard-headed approach, asking only that the Party should break off its connection with the M.R.P. and abandon *tripartisme* for a dynamic alliance with the Communists and the left-wing Radicals. The Rhône federation, for example, suggested that the M.R.P. was dragging the Gouin government to a standstill, and that the time had come to face facts.

The regrouping of the forces of reaction and the increasingly equivocal attitude adopted by the M.R.P. is presenting the Socialist Party, a party of the class struggle, with a choice between the policy of seeking agreement with the bourgeoisie – that of the truce which in 1937 resulted in the failure of the Popular Front – and one of bold social reforms ensuring to the workers the leading role in society and the effective defence of their interests.³⁹

Without going as far as the anti-participationists, the moderates wanted the Party to shake itself loose from the restrictions of *tripartisme*, and to separate itself as much from the Communists as from the M.R.P. Only if the S.F.I.O. stood apart from its allies, they argued, could it appeal to the electorate as a positive force and not as the centre party in a stagnant alliance. In a typical statement of the moderate viewpoint, the Nord federation stressed how unreliable were both the Communist and M.R.P. Parties.

The M.R.P., although born of the Resistance and prompted by social impulses of a sentimental kind, is nevertheless unable to define its economic doctrine clearly. In another respect, despite the efforts of a minority of militants, the party as a whole remains dangerously influenced by groups which were formerly active in the ranks of the classical Right. Moreover, its dependence on the ecclesiastical hierarchy is obvious, and this prevents it from taking that position on Church-State relations (*les lois de laïcité*) which is imperative for national concord.

The leaders of the Communist Party remain friends of Russia and do not accept any criticism of that country. In France, they declare themselves for a free form of government but they admire in Russia a form of government in which there are no political freedoms of any sort (of the press, of association) and in which a single party exercises a dictatorship. They are no longer internationalists in the sense that in foreign policy their

³⁹*Le Populaire du Rhône*, 30 Mar. 1946.

every act and attitude is determined exclusively and unconditionally by the interests of the Russian State.⁴⁰

Mayer and his colleagues were bitterly criticized by the moderates for not having taken enough precautions to ensure that *tripartisme* did not cripple the S.F.I.O. The Haute-Garonne federation argued that the Party:

has been the victim of an inferiority complex, because it did not have a sound organization, firmly grounded on a definite doctrine and concerned to obtain results, with which to counter the noise, the demagogy and the ambition of the M.R.P. and the Communist Party.

It has been directed by a *Comité directeur* which, besides the mistakes it may have made on the political plane, besides the methods it has used (which have not always been inspired by a respect for democratic rules), has been, incapable, on the administrative plane, of managing the Party in a satisfactory manner and of making it a formidable instrument of combat.⁴¹

The Socialist leaders did their best to keep the situation under control. They pointed out that the alliance was the only one capable of providing the government with a broad majority in the Assembly and a solid basis in the country. Gouin made this point to the February Conference, explaining in doing so that a straight Communist-Socialist government would be even more difficult to work.⁴² At the same time, they resorted to the time-worn revisionist device of suggesting that, if only the S.F.I.O. were to adopt a suitable electoral strategy, it would win an overwhelming victory at the elections, escaping at one blow from the obligations of *tripartisme* and the limitations of the constituent régime. The *Comité directeur*, at its meeting of 9 January, had arranged for the Montrouge Congress to discuss electoral tactics and the Party's programme, and on 5 February Blum suggested in a letter to the parliamentary group that:

This time it will be necessary for us to take up a position which will distinguish us clearly and distinctly, with no chance of confusion, from the Communists on one side and the M.R.P. on the other. For we ourselves represent democratic socialism,

⁴⁰Motion on General Policy from the Nord Federation, Documents relating to the Extraordinary National Congress at Montrouge, 29-31 Mar. 1946, records held at the S.F.I.O.'s Central Office, 12 Cité Malesherbes, Paris.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, Motion from the Haute-Garonne Federation.

⁴²*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 11, Feb.-Mar. 1946, pp. 7-9.

and we have to show ourselves to the country as the Party which *par excellence* incarnates both Socialism and Democracy.⁴³

The electoral strategy of 'separation', so much in harmony with the outlook of the Party's moderate faction, was used by Mayer and Blum to suggest that they too were alive to the necessity of disbanding, or substantially modifying *tripartisme* as soon as possible. But they were in fact encouraging the discontented members of their Party to think in terms of a massive Socialist victory at the polls – which at the best would boost morale, but at the worst again distract the militants from coming to terms with the real facts of post-war politics.

When the Montrouge Congress opened on 29 March,⁴⁴ Mayer centred his report to the delegates on the 'strategy of separation' theme. Drawing attention to the fact that the Party's membership had reached 342,000 on 31 December 1945,⁴⁵ he emphasized its capacity to fight alone in the election campaign. He recommended that in each department the Party should put forward its own election lists, and not joint lists with other parties, and that it should make clear to the electors the differences which distinguished it from the other parties, the schools question in the case of the M.R.P. and the Russian connection in the case of the Communist Party. Once the discussion opened, however, the progressive speakers moved quickly to the attack. Yves Dechézelles drew a burst of applause when he asked whether the S.F.I.O. should continue to make concessions to the M.R.P. at the risk of damaging its relations with the C.G.T. and the Communists.⁴⁶ Had the progressives come out openly for a complete break with the M.R.P. and an electoral alliance with the Communists, they would certainly have been defeated, but Dechézelles was able to group wide support around a simple procedural motion – that the debate on electoral tactics be postponed until after the debate on the programme. Although Mayer opposed the motion, it was approved by 2,882 mandates to 1,439 (with 133 abstentions and 31 absent). This division, in spite of

⁴³Blum, *L'Oeuvre*, p. 266.

⁴⁴For the actual proceedings I have relied on: Minutes of the Extraordinary National Congress, Montrouge, 29-31 Mar. 1946, record held at the S.F.I.O.'s Central Office. The texts of resolutions and division lists have been taken from *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 12, Apr. 1946, pp. 1-6.

⁴⁵Congress Minutes, 29 Mar. 1946, p. 34.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 38.

the fact that its consequences were limited, marked a definite turning point in the Party's post-war history; for the first time since Liberation, the Mayer leadership had been directly challenged and defeated at an open meeting. Of the Party's ninety metropolitan federations, fifty-five had voted for this unofficial expression of no-confidence. The rebel majority was composed of the progressive and anti-participationist factions (who had the advantage of the backing of the powerful Seine and Pas-de-Calais federations) and of two groups of federations which had previously supported the *Comité directeur* – those from Languedoc (which resented the action the Paris leadership had taken in removing from office three officials of the Tarn federation who had established a *Comité d'entente* with the local Communists) and those from the Brittany-Normandy and Champagne-Bourgogne regions, where the hard local struggle against clerical influence had created little sympathy for the efforts made to conciliate the M.R.P. in national politics. Voting in the minority were most of the moderate and anti-Communist federations, including Nord and Haute-Vienne.

On the afternoon following this division, the debate on policy developed inevitably into a heated wrangle about the value of *tripartisme*. For the progressives, Jean Pierre-Bloch argued the need for a Socialist-Communist government if effective policies were to be implemented.

If we want to reintegrate the country, it must be affirmed that the next government will not be tripartite, but that the party has decided to do everything to ensure that tomorrow's government will be a government of the working class.⁴⁷

Speaker after speaker attacked either the M.R.P. or the Communist Party – some attacked both at once; on every side there was clear evidence that *tripartisme* had become profoundly distasteful to the rank and file. But the surprising thing which emerged from the speeches was that the real and positive demand of the discontented was not so much for a new strategy as for a moral revival, a return to fundamentals in the life of the Party. When the average militant thought about the integrity of the movement, his main concern was that its action should conform to the early traditions of Socialism. But he also believed that the Socialist Party should be a homogeneous group, in which the manners and values of the average militant were also those of his

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, p. 106

leaders and his parliamentary representatives. Mayer and Verdier, and to a lesser extent Auriol and Gouin, were suspected of having placed the Party's integrity in jeopardy by committing it to an alliance which forced it to compromise its revolutionary principles. Mollet, when he spoke, appealed to these emotional attitudes and carefully avoided referring to questions of strategy and alliance. He strongly implied that the present leaders had approached *tripartisme* in the wrong state of mind.

It is necessary that our representatives and our ministers should not simply be good administrators, which they generally are, and we must congratulate ourselves in almost every case on our choice of men and on their competence.

It is not enough that they should be good administrators: it is necessary that they should at the same time be Socialist militants acting in government, surrounding themselves with Socialist militants [Applause] in such a way that they would not be just the administrators of a dying capitalist regime, but men preparing for the Socialist regime which is about to be born.

In a word, we must affirm our revolutionary conception tirelessly and energetically.⁴⁸

The Montrouge Congress saw Mollet establish for himself a firm reputation amongst the provincial delegates, just as it marked the first important stage of Mayer's loss of central control.

On Saturday the 30th, Mollet gave an able report on the proceedings of the Constitutional Committee and, in an effective gesture, he asked the delegates to let him know how far the Socialist members of the Committee might go in making concessions. On the whole, the Congress was opposed to the idea of making any further concessions to the M.R.P. and while its final resolution on the subject admitted the need to endow the Council of the French Union with some authority and privilege, it specified that the Assembly alone should elect the President and that any provision for the regulation of constitutionality should not apply to the Declaration of Rights. These conditions had the effect of freezing the Socialist position at a crucial stage in the constitutional negotiations (the failure of the Auriol compromise was just becoming clear) and of restricting their freedom of manoeuvre in the critical fortnight which lay ahead.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 123.

In the debate on electoral tactics, which took up most of the two remaining days of the Congress, the *Comité directeur* found no difficulty in winning approval for its 'strategy of separation'. Some speakers, notably Foulon (Ille-et-Vilaine) and Marchand (Seine-et-Oise), put forward the progressive case that alliances with Communists should be formed wherever possible, but the Congress finally approved Mayer's proposals that the S.F.I.O. should present its own lists in each constituency, and that all federations should be obliged to observe this ruling. The Congress also passed resolutions granting an amnesty to the ex-officials of the Tarn federation who had been dismissed by the *Comité directeur* and reaffirming the Party's faith in *représentation proportionnelle intégrale*. The Seine delegates suggested that the *Comité d'entente* should meet to help foster good relations between the Communist and Socialist Parties during the election campaign, but this proposal was rejected by fifteen votes to three at a meeting of the *Comité directeur* on 9 April.⁴⁹

A forced optimism pervaded the whole of the Congress, epitomized in the Charter of Combat which requested the electors to give [the party], by a massive vote, a majority sufficient for it to carry out the whole of [its] plan. When, in both 1936 and 1946, it assumed the leadership of government, it honoured its engagements. As in the past, it is ready to assume all responsibilities. It requests the honour of serving and saving the country.⁵⁰

There was more to this appeal than met the eye. Behind it lay the great illusion that the constitution, whether Marxist or tripartite, would be approved at the referendum and that at the succeeding election the S.F.I.O. would at last fulfil the promise of 1945 and emerge as the dominant party of the Left, the arbiter of alliances and policies.

The Defeat of the First Constitution Bill

The last week of the constitutional debate was marked by a series of attempts, all more or less futile, to produce a compromise settlement between the three parties. On Monday 15 April Gouin met the party leaders in his office, only to find that the M.R.P.'s executive refused to accept his proposals. On Wednesday the 17th the Constitutional Committee appointed a special sub-

⁴⁹*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 13, Apr.-May 1946, p. 2.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, no. 12, Apr. 1946, pp. 5-6.

committee to deal with the points in dispute, but again with no result. On Thursday the Socialists appointed a delegation to appeal to the parliamentary groups of the M.R.P. and Communist Parties, but this move was no more effective than the others. All this while, the Constituent Assembly had been working its way through the institutional sections of the bill, gradually singling out the controversial clauses for special consideration.

Although they bargained with more flexibility than the M.R.P., the Communists and Socialists had made it clear from the outset that they intended to keep to the main outlines of the draft prepared by the Constitutional Committee. Pierre Cot, de Menthon's successor as *rapporteur* for the Committee, put the Marxist case very well when he opened the debate on the institutional clauses on 9 April. Rejecting the practice of measuring proposed constitutions against the obsolete ideal models of either the parliamentary régime, characterized by a separation of powers, or the *régime d'assemblée*, in which all powers were concentrated in a single chamber, Cot invited the deputies to think of functions rather than powers and to judge constitutions by criteria of effectiveness. In any case, he argued, those who claimed that the Committee's proposals would lead to a *régime d'assemblée* had not given sufficient importance to the counterweights which had been provided to check the authority of the Assembly – an influential President, and independent cabinet with such means as the question of confidence procedure to challenge the Assembly, and two important advisory bodies in the Economic Council and the Council of the French Union.⁵¹ The M.R.P. replied that these safeguards were too weak, and that the bill would not satisfy them unless the Council of the French Union were conceded full parliamentary powers, including the right to join with the Assembly in electing the President; unless the President were authorized to dissolve the Assembly if necessary; and unless the judiciary were made independent of political control.⁵² Throughout the debate, the M.R.P. insisted on these terms; there were times when its negotiators came close to modifying them but always either the Party's executive or its parliamentary group would refuse to give way. The Socialists made one or two attempts to

⁵¹J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Déb.*, 9 Apr. 1946, pp. 1620-3.

⁵²See the speeches of François de Menthon (*ibid.*, pp. 1623-6) and Paul Coste-Floret (*ibid.*, pp. 1637-42), and the resolution adopted by the M.R.P. executive on 15 April (*Le Monde*, 17 Apr. 1946).

meet the M.R.P.'s demands, but its representatives were hampered, until the very end, by the decisions taken at the Montrouge Congress, especially that against having the Council of the French Union sharing in the election of the President.

By Wednesday the 17th there appeared to be little hope of restoring a three-party agreement on the bill. In the Constituent Assembly on that evening, an M.R.P. amendment proposing the election of the President by a joint sitting of the Assembly and the Council was defeated by 288 votes to 255, with the Communists and Socialists voting in the majority.⁵³ Henri Teitgen, one of the M.R.P.'s most venerable and respected members, appealed to the Marxist parties to accept amendments to give the President the right of choosing the Premier. His remarks caught the tension of the occasion:

We have seen the partisans of the *régime d'assemblée* making an effort to reach . . . the limits of their territory, to the point where they have reached the frontiers of the parliamentary régime. We ourselves have done likewise.

. . . One boundary remains to be crossed. Each of us is tempted to reproach the other for not closing the gap. The problem is posed right now in these terms; we stand at one of those points where we face each other across the barrier.⁵⁴

However, the amendments in question were defeated by 288 to 259 with the parties dividing along the usual lines;⁵⁵ the barrier had not been crossed.

The next day Gouin abandoned the government's policy of neutrality (ministers had neither spoken in the debate nor taken part in the divisions) and spoke to the Assembly about the necessity for a tripartite agreement. Pointing out how important it was for the country to emerge from the period of provisional government (*sortir du provisoire*), he warned that if the constitution bill were passed by the votes of the Communists and Socialists alone and defeated at the referendum, the situation in the second constituent assembly would be substantially that of the first. Party strengths would be the same; the issues would be the same; the reasons for a tripartite alliance and for a tripartite constitution would also be the same. In addition, there was the danger that a second constituent assembly might find itself dealing with powerful anti-parliamentary movements.⁵⁶ Gouin's appeal to

⁵³J.O. (A.N.C. I), *Déb.*, 17 Apr. 1946, pp. 1962-3.

⁵⁴Ibid, pp. 1966-7. ⁵⁵Ibid, pp. 1989-90.

⁵⁶Ibid, 18 Apr. 1946, pp. 2007-9.

reason had a sobering effect, and on the very eve of the final vote on the bill the chances of arriving at a last-minute settlement seemed fairly good. Auriol conferred with representatives of the three main parties until well after midnight, and was able to construct a new structure for compromise. He obtained an agreement that meetings of the parliamentary groups were to be asked whether they would accept the following amendments to the bill: recognition of the Council's right to discuss bills and vote on them, and to have its debates published in the *Journal officiel*; authority for the cabinet, by presidential decree, to dissolve the Assembly in the second half of its term; permission for the President to nominate two members to the Higher Council of the Magistrature; the election of the President by an electoral college consisting not only of the Assembly's deputies but also of 250 special delegates representing towns, departmental councils, professional groups, and overseas territories.⁵⁷

These suggestions were debated by the parliamentary parties on the morning of 19 April, with the final Assembly debate set down for the afternoon. The Socialists, despite the ruling of their Montrouge Congress, were apparently prepared to accept the compromise, even the proposal for widening the President's electoral college. The M.R.P.'s agreement was less certain; the Marxist parties were still unwilling to provide for machinery for the regulation of constitutionality and to agree to the Council's sharing in the election of President. It is quite likely that the M.R.P. would have rejected the scheme for these reasons, but its meeting had not finished when news came that the Communists had refused to accept the compromise. Both the Socialist and M.R.P. meetings adjourned immediately. Duclos said later that the main considerations influencing his Party's decision to reject the compromise and stand by the draft bill had been the proposals to expand the President's electoral college and to widen the powers of the Council.⁵⁸ The afternoon's debate in the Assembly came as an anti-climax. Appeals for unity and stands on principle were made with the dignity and passion expected of the occasion, and the bill was passed in the end by 309 votes to

⁵⁷*Le Populaire*, 20, 21-22 Apr. 1946; *Le Monde*, 20 Apr. 1946; *S.C.C. I*, 19 Apr. 1946, pp. 777-8.

⁵⁸See a statement by Duclos, *J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Déb.*, 19 Apr. 1946, p. 2052.

249. The Communists and Socialists, in voting for the measure, had been joined by a few others, including four Muslim deputies from Algeria, three members of the U.D.S.R., and two of the M.R.P. The M.R.P. had voted in the minority alongside the Right, the Radicals, and the U.D.S.R.⁵⁹

The Socialists at least now knew where they stood, and within a matter of days they had formulated their policy for the referendum campaign. Realizing that Marxist votes would not be enough to pass the bill (even at the election of 21 October 1945 the Communist and Socialist Parties had polled between them only 49.9 per cent of the valid votes), the Socialists took the line that the proposed constitution stood in direct descent from the bourgeois Constitution of 1789, that it was a document conceived in the general interests of the French people and not the sectional interests of the Communist and Socialist Parties.⁶⁰ To strengthen this impression, the Socialists did everything possible to dissociate themselves from the Communists during the actual campaign, and the *Comité directeur* rejected the Communists' offer of co-operation during the referendum period. The Communists, however, described the Constitution Bill as another symbol of the class struggle, being supported by the forces of progress and being opposed by those of reaction. Thorez told one meeting that the adoption of the constitution would lead to a Communist victory in the following elections and to the formation of a progressive government.⁶¹ The M.R.P., the U.D.S.R., the Radicals and the Right were developing similar themes in their propaganda. They suggested that because the proposed constitution did not provide for a strong President and a strong Council to balance the power of the Assembly, it would make it easy for a Marxist majority in the popular chamber to dominate the machinery of government. Francisque Gay spoke of the Communists using the new constitution as a means to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat in France.⁶²

In fact, the Constitution Bill of 19 April 1946⁶³ was by no means a revolutionary document. While it is true that the powers vested in the Assembly were considerable (it would elect both

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 2081-2. For an analysis of this division, see Appendix 4.

⁶⁰See Mayer, *Le Populaire*, 23, 24, 25 Apr. 1946.

⁶¹*L'Humanité*, 23 and 25 Apr. 1946.

⁶²*Le Monde*, 4 May 1946.

⁶³*A.P.*, 1946, pp. 553-69.

the President and the Premier, approve the cabinet and could force the government to resign by passing a censure motion), important guarantees of governmental stability had been given. The cabinet, for example, was empowered to pose a question of confidence if its policies were being blocked, and was given additional security by the provision that the Assembly should be dissolved automatically after the second ministerial crisis in the last half of the legislature. In the last resort, however, an estimate of how the constitution would work depended on a separate estimate of what kind of result would be produced by the next election. The M.R.P. and the Right were correct in pointing out that a solid Marxist majority, firmly entrenched in the Assembly, would not be seriously restricted in action by any of the so-called checks on the Assembly's powers. But the Left were equally correct in claiming that the people's will would be more effectively expressed in the proposed National Assembly than it had been in the Chamber of Deputies under the Third Republic, and that governmental stability, if it were not provided by a coherent parliamentary majority, would be ensured by the provisions for the automatic dissolution and the vote of confidence. In effect, the voters were being asked to vote for a constitution whose institutional arrangements would facilitate 'revolution by legislation' in the case of a left-wing majority's being established in the Assembly. This was as clear to the voters of the Left as it was to those of the Right.

Few people expected the Bill to be defeated at the referendum, which was to be held on 5 May. The French Gallup Poll Institute predicted a 54 per cent *Oui* vote,⁶⁴ and most party estimates were for a result of that order – a close vote but certainly one in favour of the Bill. Instead the measure was rejected by 10,584,000 votes to 9,454,000. The final figures for France and the Overseas Territories were as follows:⁶⁵

<i>Oui</i>	9,454,034	47.18%
<i>Non</i>	10,584,359	52.82%
Valid Votes	20,038,393	
	(All votes	20,567,378
	Enrolments	25,829,425)

Goguel has prepared a map of the results which shows that the

⁶⁴*The Economist*, 18 May 1946, p. 800.

⁶⁵*J.O., L.D.*, 25 June 1946, pp. 5698-701.

voting did conform to a Marxist *versus* non-Marxist pattern, with the heaviest *Non* votes recorded in Brittany, Normandy, Alsace, Lorraine and other conservative regions, and the highest *Oui* votes in progressive regions such as the northern Massif Central, the Midi, and the North.⁶⁸ Although the level of *Oui* votes was higher in conservative departments than had been expected, it fell below the level of the usual Marxist vote in many of the progressive departments. In Haute-Vienne, for example, the total of 110,175 *Oui* votes compared poorly with the combined total of 140,185 votes polled by the Communist and Socialist lists in the election of 21 October 1945.

There was to be a second constituent assembly. Once more the parties faced the prospect of an election campaign in which the outlines of the basic socio-economic issues would be obscured by constitutional issues, in which individual party strategies would have to be adjusted to fit the special circumstances of constituent politics. In many ways it was the situation of October 1945 all over again with the important difference that this time General de Gaulle would stand apart from politics; the economic position was still deteriorating and the tripartite alliance no longer seemed a practicable basis for another coalition government. Gouin's warning was being repeated on all sides. Unless something most unusual happened, the three main parties would probably be returned to the new Constituent Assembly in their former strength, in which case the necessity for another tripartite alliance would almost certainly arise. In this event, the strain upon the Socialist Party would become almost intolerable. Many Socialists felt that the time had come for the S.F.I.O. to retire into the background for a period, at least until it could recover its confidence and overcome its internal differences. But it was to have no such opportunity. Once more the Party was forced to accept responsibilities and obligations which were beyond its capacity to fulfil.

⁶⁸Goguel, *Géographie des élections*, p. 91.

5

Constitution-making Against the Clock

Tripartisme in the Balance

The tripartite alliance was kept alive throughout the term of the new Constituent Assembly and eventually gained approval for the second Constitution Bill at the referendum of 13 October 1946. But *tripartisme* was dying. The great emotional unity of the Resistance had all but disappeared; relations between the three parties were still bad; popular hostility to the alliance was at its height. Alternative combinations were now being canvassed with more urgency, but neither the Communists, with their Popular Front proposal, nor the M.R.P., still anxious to create a centre alliance, was able to make much headway. Between May and July 1946, however, the S.F.I.O. began to shift noticeably towards the M.R.P. while the latter concentrated on maintaining good relations with the parties of the *Rassemblement des gauches républicaines* (R.G.R.). For a time, it seemed as though a centre alliance was in the making, despite the strong counter-pressures exerted by anti-clerical elements within the Radical Socialist Party and by the S.F.I.O.'s left-wing groups. This interesting development was cut short late in August by General de Gaulle's dramatic re-entry into politics, but it remains one of the most revealing episodes in the history of *tripartisme*.

The first significant shifts in alignment occurred during the election campaign for the second Constituent Assembly in May 1946. The Communists centred their propaganda around the slogan *Thorez au pouvoir!* with the implication that the next government would be a Communist-Socialist one under Communist direction. The M.R.P. retaliated with *Bidault au pouvoir!* and the implied suggestion that a centre alliance under their leadership would be the most desirable formula. The Socialists contented themselves with claiming that the tripartite combination was the only practicable arrangement under the circumstances and that any bipartite government would divide the country into two antagonistic blocs. While tacitly admitting that the previous coalition had not worked well, they pointed out

that things would improve if the electors returned the S.F.I.O. with the backing it required to mediate effectively between the Communist Party and the M.R.P. There was no cry of *Gouin au pouvoir!* but the Socialists quietly suggested that Gouin should continue as President of the Provisional Government and that, for the present, the coalition arrangement should be maintained.

At the same time the Socialist leaders made a determined effort to bridge the gap which had opened up between the S.F.I.O. and the M.R.P. during the last days of the previous Assembly and in the course of the referendum campaign. In the first place, they changed their ground on the constitutional issues, publicly suggesting that more powers should be given to the President in the new bill and that he should be elected by a joint sitting of the Assembly and the Council of the French Union.¹ Both these points were important concessions to the M.R.P.'s point of view. In the second place, the Socialists went out of their way to discourage the idea of a Communist-Socialist coalition during the last three weeks of the campaign. Mayer claimed that France did not want Thorez for a leader of government,² while Le Troquer accused him of having deserted from the French army in 1939 to slip away to Moscow.³ In a series of *Le Populaire* articles, Mayer attacked the Communist Party for its undemocratic organization, its dependence on Russia, and its political opportunism.⁴ The Communists reacted strongly, Georges Cogniot asking sarcastically whether the M.R.P. and the S.F.I.O., in view of their new understanding, intended to exclude the Communists from the coalition after the elections.⁵

Mayer's attitude to the other parties was interesting, for although he condemned the P.R.L. without reserve as the post-war embodiment of reaction, he saw good in both the M.R.P. and Radical Parties. Returning to Blum's theme that the M.R.P. was torn by a conflict between its progressive and conservative forces, he emphasized that the Socialists had an obligation to help progressives in their efforts to keep the M.R.P. to the Left. But he also drew attention to the corporatist nature of some of the M.R.P.'s social ideas, and deplored the extent to which it

¹See a speech by Félix Gouin, *Le Populaire*, 28 May 1946.

²*Ibid.*, 16 May 1946.

³*Le Monde*, 24 May 1946.

⁴17, 18, 19-20, and 21 May 1946.

⁵*L'Humanité*, 24 May 1946.

remained under the influence of the French clergy and the Vatican.⁶ Mayer condemned the Radical Socialist Party for its economic conservatism, but nevertheless he pointed out that its progressive members might yet bring it back to the Left.⁷ His map of the French party system was most revealing, for when he plotted the centre regions he identified several territories with which the S.F.I.O. retained links of sympathy and tradition. For the Socialists there was no sharp division between the parties of the Left and those of the Right; if there was a dividing line, it shifted its location from issue to issue and usually cut right across the main centre parties, the M.R.P. and the Radicals. By contrast, the Communists regarded the parties in terms of black and white, with the Marxist parties on one side and the remainder, including the M.R.P., on the other. From their point of view, any alliance which straddled the divide, *tripartisme* included, was unnatural. The divergent strategies of the Communist and Socialist Parties reflected their different views of the party system and the political process.

Throughout most of the campaign, Blum was away in Washington negotiating for dollar credits. On 28 May, within four days of the poll, word reached Paris that he had signed an agreement with the United States Government to have France's lend-lease debts cut from \$m.3,500 to \$m.700 and to allow her large credits for the purchase of industrial equipment and raw materials. This news received banner headlines in the French press and considerably boosted the Socialists' expectations of victory at the polls. Many observers shared their optimism. It was generally expected that the M.R.P. would lose votes to the S.F.I.O. on the one hand and to the R.G.R. groups on the other.

The election, held on 2 June, produced a quite different result. Both the Communist Party and the R.G.R. made modest gains, but their advance was dwarfed by the M.R.P.'s achievement in increasing its strength by 800,000 votes and becoming the most numerous party in the new Assembly. The Socialists were dismayed to find that their share of the votes had dropped from 24 to 21 per cent, and that the disparity between the size of their parliamentary representation and those of the M.R.P. and the Communists had been increased considerably. The results, compared with those of the previous election, are shown in Table IV.

⁶*Le Populaire*, 23, 24 and 25 May 1946.

⁷*Ibid*, 26-27 May 1946.

TABLE IV *Election of 2 June 1946: Results for Metropolitan France**

	Votes				Increase/ Decrease No.	Seats Election of 2 June 1946	
	21 October 1945 '000	%	2 June 1946 '000	%		No.	%
Right	2,546	13.3	2,540	12.8	-6	62	11.9
Radicals and others	2,132	11.1	2,295	11.5	+163	39	7.5
M.R.P.	4,780	24.9	5,589	28.1	+809	160	30.6
Socialists	4,561	23.8	4,188	21.1	-373	115	22.0
Communists	5,005	26.1	5,199	26.2	+194	146	28.0
Unclassified	165	0.8*	70	0.3	-95		
Total	19,189	100.0	19,881	100.0		522	100.0

* Corrected percentage.

The Socialist decline had been general and heavy in all regions except the Brittany-Normandy area. In 65 of the 97 metropolitan constituencies contested in both the October 1945 and this election the decrease in votes was between 0 and 5 per cent of enrolments, in nine others it was between 5 and 10 per cent, and in one (Sarthe) a 10.13 per cent fall was registered. The Socialist vote increased in twenty-two constituencies, although only in Drôme was the rise over 5 per cent of enrolments. The regional configuration of the S.F.I.O.'s voting strength remained roughly similar to that of October 1945 except that the Party was noticeably weaker in its former strongholds – the North, the Midi, Languedoc, and the South-West. The decline in the North was particularly serious; here the Party's vote had fallen in every constituency except Nord I and II, where slight increases were recorded. Whereas in the previous election the Socialist vote had been higher than 25 per cent (of enrolments) in seventeen constituencies, this level was reached in only nine instances in June 1946.

To which party or parties had the S.F.I.O. lost votes? Most professional commentators suggested that many former Socialist voters, having lost faith in their Party's ability to become the centre of a broad labour movement, had now given their support

*Campbell, pp. 107 and 111.

to the M.R.P.⁹ This theory of a simple shift has insufficient evidence to support it. While in such constituencies as Haute-Vienne, Corrèze, Gard, and Nord III the main drift in votes had clearly been from the S.F.I.O. to the M.R.P., in many other cases a decrease in the Socialist vote was accompanied by a comparable increase in the Communist and R.G.R. votes. This appears to have been the case in Aube, Oise, Seine I, Seine-et-Marne, and Somme. An examination of the detailed results strongly suggests that the S.F.I.O. had lost votes to all the parties impinging on its electorate, to the Communist Party and the R.G.R. as much as to the M.R.P. This pattern was probably the result of several factors, but certainly the most important of these was the revulsion of feeling amongst the S.F.I.O.'s *clientèle* against *tripartisme*, a revulsion shared by workers whose wages had been pegged despite rising prices; civil servants whose demands for salary increases had been rejected; peasants who objected to the fixing of food prices through the C.G.A. In 1945 the S.F.I.O. had stood for a positive ideal and a positive programme of liberal reforms but by the winter of 1946 it had come to symbolise the negativity of *tripartisme*. Contributing to the electoral success of the M.R.P. and the Communist Party had been the fact that they had appealed to the electors with positive slogans – *Bidault au pouvoir!*, *Thorez au pouvoir!* – and not merely as partners in *tripartisme*. Equally, the Socialist Party's electoral decline was in a measure the result of its leadership of the previous administration and of its position as the middle party in the tripartite alliance. The desire of the Party's rank and file to end this situation by any means now became stronger than ever.

The extent to which the election had altered the balance of the party system soon became clear. Whereas in the first Constituent Assembly the point of gravity had been located on the Left, with the result that *tripartisme* had been the only practicable alliance, it had now moved nearer the Centre. Numerically, it would now be possible for the S.F.I.O., the M.R.P., and the R.G.R. to form an alternative alliance. The new situation may be illustrated with reference to Table V which gives the sizes of the various party groups at two dates during the term of the second Constituent Assembly. In view of the fact that at least three hundred deputies would be required to form a stable parliamentary alliance, both

⁹See, for example, Jacques Fauvet, *Le Monde*, 4 June, and André Siegfried, *Le Figaro*, 12 June 1946.

a Marxist (groups 1 to 4) and a conservative alliance (groups 5 to 10) were out of the question. The real alternative was between a tripartite combination (groups 1 to 5) and a centre alliance (groups 4 to 7), which would produce totals of about 450 and 340 respectively. The M.R.P. now had a new scope for manoeuvre and it soon began exploring the possibilities of establishing the framework of a centre alliance; not only did it improve its relations with the Radicals and the U.D.S.R. but it also encouraged the Socialists to draw away from the Communist Party. However the Socialists were still reluctant to risk an open break, partly because they required good assurances that a centre combination would not produce an undemocratic constitution and partly because such a move would have been fiercely opposed by the progressive faction within the Party.

TABLE V *Group Strengths of the Second Constituent Assembly**

	16 June 1946	1 August 1946
1. Communist	143	145 (1)
2. M.U.R.F.	7	7
3. Friends of the Manifesto†	11	11
4. S.F.I.O.	127 (1)	128 (1)
5. M.R.P.	165	165 (3)
6. U.D.S.R.	17	20 (1)
7. Radicals and Rad. Soc.	31	32
8. Independent Republican	21 (1)	21 (2)
9. Peasant	7 (1)	7 (2)
10. P.R.L.	32 (3)	32 (3)
Non inscrits	19	5
Total	586	586

*Numbers of *apparentés* in parentheses.

†*Friends of the Manifesto* was the name given to a group of Algerian deputies led by Ferhat Abbas.

The possibility of varying the tripartite formula was raised during the ministerial crisis which lasted from the election until the formation of the Bidault government on 23 June. As soon as the election result was known, the M.R.P. advanced Bidault's candidature for the presidency; but instead of insisting, as they had during the crisis in November, that the presidential nominee should be acceptable to all three main parties, the Socialists and Communists merely waited. Léon Blum, in an interview with Raymond Millet, stated that in view of the M.R.P.'s electoral

success he considered that it was entitled to have one of its members elected as President.¹⁰ Both he and Mayer felt that, since their Party had been blamed both for *tripartisme* and for the economic difficulties which the Gouin government had failed to solve, the correct policy was to allow the other parties to take the initiative in negotiations.

This was the approach which they recommended to the S.F.I.O.'s National Council when it met on 9 June to consider the situation created by the election result. Mayer suggested that the Party should continue to support *tripartisme* in principle but that it should surrender control of the presidency and the most important portfolios.¹¹ He drew fire from two sides: while the progressives argued that the Party should join with the Communists in a popular front, the anti-participationists maintained that it should refuse to take part in another coalition. A motion to the latter effect, submitted by the Alpes-Maritimes federation, was defeated by 3,375 mandates to 939, with 171 absent. The Council then passed a formal resolution which authorized the *Comité directeur* and the parliamentary group to take part in discussions with the M.R.P. and the Communist Party and specified that the government, once formed, should convene an economic conference to discuss problems of wages, prices, production and money.¹² It then adopted an oral resolution which stated that, in negotiating for a new alliance, the S.F.I.O. should not claim the presidency, the ministries of National Economy, Finance, Food, Labour, or the control of any body formed to administer price-fixing regulations. On the positive side, this resolution proposed that the Education portfolio should be either given to a Socialist or entrusted to a *laïc* minister; that there should be a precise, prior agreement on the government's programme and that there should be an understanding that a constitution should be voted as quickly as possible and elections for the new Assembly held by October at the latest. The National Council also decided that, should a new situation develop or should the need arise to depart from the terms specified, the *Comité directeur* was to convene an urgent meeting of the National Council.¹³

¹⁰*Le Monde*, 7 June 1946.

¹¹For accounts of this meeting see *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 13, April-May 1946, pp. 12-13; *Le Populaire*, 11 June 1946; *Le Monde*, 11 June 1946.

¹²*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 13, April-May 1946, pp. 12-13.

¹³*Ibid.*, no. 14, June 1946, p. 2.

Thus the Council showed that it thought in terms of the Socialist leaders having to take part in discussions for establishing a new tripartite coalition, but it had given no indication as to whether or not it was prepared to accept Bidault's candidature for the presidency or (and this was most important) whether the Party should support Bidault against Thorez if both men were nominated for the post. Bidault was not popular amongst the Socialist deputies. For one thing, many disagreed with the policy towards Germany which he was pursuing as Foreign Minister. With a 'realism' strongly reminiscent of Clemenceau and Poincaré, Bidault wished to exact heavy financial and material reparations from Germany, to draw back the German frontiers in both the east and the west, and to create a federal political system in place of the centralized Reich. Although the Socialists wanted international control established over the large industrial firms of the Ruhr and the Rhineland, they wanted Germany to remain a unitary state and the German people to be given the chance of building a democratic polity. Fauvet suggests that it was partly their dislike of Bidault's German policy which decided two-fifths of the Socialist deputies to oppose a suggestion that the S.F.I.O. should support his candidature for the presidency.¹⁴

When it came to the point, Bidault was elected without much trouble at all. The Communists created a minor flurry when they declared that the Gouin ministry, after a few changes, should be continued,¹⁵ but they did not go to the length of nominating Thorez as a rival for Bidault. When the election was held on 19 June, Bidault was given 384 votes to nil, the Socialists voting for him and the deputies of the Communist, M.U.R.F., and Algerian Manifesto groups abstaining.¹⁶ There is no reason to suppose that the Communists were particularly distressed by this result. Had they really wanted to sabotage the tripartite agreement they could have nominated Thorez, thus forcing the Socialists either to abstain (in which case Bidault would not have obtained his statutory majority of 294) or to vote for Bidault notwithstanding, which would have created an uproar amongst the S.F.I.O.'s left-wing federations.

In the discussions which he conducted before forming his ministry, Bidault took a hard line with the Communists while doing his utmost to persuade the Radicals and the U.D.S.R. to

¹⁴Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, p. 78.

¹⁵*L'Humanité*, 18 June, 1946.

¹⁶*J.O. (A.N.C. II)*, *Déb.*, 19 June 1946, pp. 2550-1.

join the alliance. He left no doubt that for him *tripartisme* was expendable and that, should the Communists refuse to accept his terms, he would not hesitate to form either a centre coalition or a straight M.R.P. ministry based on the parliamentary support of the centre groups.¹⁷ His first setback came when both the Radical Socialist and U.D.S.R. groups refused to join the government, partly because they were not certain of having sufficient influence on its basic policies and partly because they were reluctant to sacrifice the electoral advantage of their *anti-tripartisme*.¹⁸ Bidault later implied that the U.D.S.R. had cut off a means of escape from the tripartite formula by its refusal to accept cabinet posts.¹⁹ As the chances of forming a broader alliance began to recede, Bidault was obliged to treat the Communists with greater respect, despite the fact that the latter were trying to drive a hard bargain. On Saturday 22nd June, Duclos and Thorez requested by letter that their Party should be given one of the portfolios of War, Foreign Affairs, and Interior, and that a general wage increase should be granted (the C.G.T. were at that stage demanding a 25 per cent increase in wages, salaries and pensions). The following day, Bidault suggested that the wages question and other matters should be submitted to a general economic conference and that certain concessions should be given to the workers at once; these proposals were accepted by the Communists.²⁰ Nothing further was heard of the Communists' demand for one of the key portfolios. The Socialists kept firmly to the background throughout the negotiations, and gave no public indication of what their attitude would have been had Bidault refused to treat with the Communists.

The new coalition ministry, formed on 23 June, resembled the Gouin ministry in its basic structure, except that on this occasion it was the M.R.P. rather than the S.F.I.O. which controlled the vital portfolios of Finance, and National Economy. It was still very much a tripartite ministry, although the balance of power had altered in some respects; the number of M.R.P. members had been raised from six to eight, that of the Socialists had been reduced from seven to six and that of the Communists had been increased from six to seven. Its composition was as follows:

¹⁷See Francisque Gay's remarks to a reporter, *Le Populaire*, 18 June 1946.

¹⁸*Le Figaro*, 21 June; *Le Monde*, 25 June 1946.

¹⁹*J.O. (A.N.C. II)*, *Déb.*, 26 June 1946, pp.2568-9.

²⁰*Le Monde*, 25 June 1946.

M.R.P.

Georges Bidault	President and Minister of Foreign Affairs
Francisque Gay	Minister of State
Pierre-Henri Teitgen	Justice
Edmond Michelet	Armed Forces
Robert Schuman	Finance
François de Menthon	National Economy
Jean Letourneau	Posts and Telegraphs
Robert Prigent	Population

Socialist

Félix Gouin	Vice President
Edouard Depreux	Interior
François Tanguy-Prigent	Agriculture
Marcel Naegelen	Education
Jules Moch	Public Works and Transport
Marius Moutet	Colonies

Communist

Maurice Thorez	Vice President
Charles Tillon	Armaments
Marcel Paul	Industrial Production
Ambroise Croizat	Labour
René Arthaud	Public Health
François Billoux	Reconstruction
Laurent Casanova	Ex-Servicemen and War Victims

U.D.S.R.

Alexandre Varenne	Minister of State
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Non Party

Yves Farge	Food (a later appointment)
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Varenne (U.D.S.R.) had entered the ministry without the approval of his Party. Yves Farge, an independent left-wing personality, was later recruited to administer the unpopular Ministry of Food. The Socialists, considering their studied reluctance to accept responsibilities, had been treated surprisingly well, retaining the important portfolios of Interior (now held by Depreux instead of Le Troquer), Agriculture, Education, Colonies, and Public Works and Transport. On 26 June, Bidault read his programme to the Assembly and received a vote of confidence by 516 to 2, the

P.R.L. abstaining.²¹ The tripartite alliance had been given another chance.

However, relations between the S.F.I.O. and the Communist Party were now at their worst, mainly because of clashes between the two parties during the election campaign, but also because of their differences in trade union affairs and in the field of foreign policy. The immediate history of Communist-Socialist relations in the trade union movement begins in 1921, when a pro-Communist minority broke away from the C.G.T. to found the *Confédération générale du travail unitaire* (C.G.T.U.) in 1922. The two organizations led a separate existence until 1935, when they joined together at the height of the Popular Front movement against the Right. The Communists were expelled from the unified C.G.T. in September 1939, after the signing of the Russo-German non-aggression pact, and it was not until 1943 that unity was restored again. At that time trade unionists were involved in underground activities, and there was still some tension between the ex-members of the pre-1935 C.G.T. (*les confédérés*) and the ex-C.G.T.U. men (*les unitaires*).²² After the war, the C.G.T.'s General Secretary, Léon Jouhaux, strove to make his organization an independent force in left-wing politics, but within the C.G.T.'s individual federations an open battle developed between the Communists and Socialists amongst the trade unionists. The Communist Party entered the post-Liberation period with the tremendous advantage of its close network of work-place cells (of which there were 6,927 in 1945)²³ through which its influence was spread in the working-class suburbs of Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles in particular. As a counter measure, the Socialists had tried to establish a rival system of *Groupes socialistes d'entreprises* (G.S.E.), which was accepted by the Special Congress of November 1944. By mid 1946, however, the total membership of the G.S.E. system was still only 37,800²⁴ as compared to the C.G.T.'s total membership of 5,000,000.²⁵ In the long run, the Socialists stopped trying to compete for influence within the C.G.T. and instead lent their support to the C.G.T. — *Force ouvrière*,

²¹J.O. (A.N.C. II), *Déb.*, 26 June 1946, pp. 2556-7 and 2583-4 (division list).

²²Hostache, pp. 76-85.

²³Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties, Their Organization and Activity in the Modern State*, p. 32.

²⁴*Le Populaire*, 31 Aug. 1946.

²⁵A.P., 1946, p. 116.

formed late in 1947 by a break-away group from the C.G.T. But this decision was still in the future in the summer of 1946, when the Socialists were just beginning to realize how completely the G.S.E. scheme had failed; once again, a large part of the blame was placed on Mayer's shoulders.

By June 1946, the French workers, who had done more than their share in the task of post-war reconstruction, had become impatient of the steady rise in prices which was still reducing the value of their real wages. Despite the Gouin government's attempt to check inflation, the general price index had risen from 462 in February to 620 in May,²⁶ hence the C.G.T.'s demand that wages and salaries be raised 25 per cent. In keeping with the agreement he had made with the Communists, Bidault arranged for the meeting of a National Economic Conference which endorsed many of the C.G.T.'s proposals. On 29 July the government provided for an increase of 18 per cent in wage rates and in August it put through an Act raising the salaries of civil servants.²⁷ Throughout this period of bargaining, the Communists were much more active than the Socialists in supporting the C.G.T.'s demands, a fact which was noted even amongst the white-collar federations, usually so sympathetic to the S.F.I.O. In an effort to even the score, the Socialists resorted to tactics which were reckless and, in the long run, pointless. In August, for example, a Socialist minority inside the Communist-controlled Postal Workers' Federation of the C.G.T. encouraged the spread of an unofficial strike which it used to challenge the authority of the official leadership inside the union.²⁸

A further reason for coolness between the Communist Party and the S.F.I.O. was that they often found themselves holding completely different opinions about international affairs. Their conflicting viewpoints were sharply revealed during the discussions on the German, Italian, and east European peace treaties at the Foreign Ministers' Conferences of 25 April to 16 May and from 15 June to 12 July. Whereas the Communists agreed with Bidault that Germany should pay heavy reparations, lose territory, and accept a federal polity, the Socialists sided with the British and Americans on most points, especially on the need for a liberal treaty and the maintenance of a unified Germany. By this time,

²⁶Ibid., p. 585. The latter figure was inflated by shortages in certain commodities such as potatoes.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 179-89 and 213-16.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 216-21.

also, French Socialists shared the disquiet of the British Labour Party about the signs that the Russians had no intention of withdrawing their troops from the countries in eastern Europe and that they were imposing serious restrictions on the activities of non-Communist parties in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria in particular. Already the commentators in *Le Populaire* were writing in the language of the Cold War. Charles Dumas claimed that the essential drama of the Foreign Ministers' Conference was that 'whereas the U.S.S.R. means to extend its advance into Europe as far as possible, on the other hand the Anglo-Saxon powers consider that a limit must be set to its claims.' Referring to Russia's policy in the Balkan countries, Dumas maintained that 'she occupies them, she crushes them, but when she is asked to give back Bulgaria to the Bulgarians, she replies that the Russian troops in Bulgaria are ensuring liaison with Austria'.²⁹ The Communists in their turn accused the Socialists of being the tools of the United States and of being anti-Communist. The days of left-wing solidarity in European affairs now belonged to the past.

The tensions between the Communist Party and the S.F.I.O. seemed in July 1946 to be building up to a crisis pitch. In fact, although *tripartisme* had been given another lease of life by the formation of the Bidault ministry, there were clear signs that the conditions were such that a centre alliance might soon be possible.

General de Gaulle Returns

Meanwhile, since his resignation in January, little news had reached the press about General de Gaulle, although some of his supporters, most notably Jacques Soustelle and René Capitant, had done their best to keep the flames of Gaullism alive. Then, on 16 June at the small Norman town of Bayeux, the General made a speech in which he sketched the bare outlines of the type of constitution he thought would meet France's problems. Placing special emphasis on the need to preserve intact the authority and prestige of the state, he advocated the formation of a strong upper house, composed of delegates from municipal and departmental councils and having the right to initiate legislation, and a President with strong powers, including those of appointing the Premier and his ministers, of dissolving parliament when necessary, and of arbitrating differences within the nation and amongst the

²⁹*Le Populaire*, 15 May 1946.

parties. To make sure that the President would be independent, de Gaulle wanted to see him elected by an electoral college with a membership much wider than that of the popular chamber. In many respects, his proposals conformed to the classical pattern of the *régime présidentiel*, as elaborated by conservative theorists such as Deschanel before the First World War. De Gaulle also focused attention on the status of French overseas territories by recommending the formation of a Great Council of the French Union, consisting of the metropolitan upper house and of overseas representatives, and authorized to deal with matters affecting the Union as a whole.³⁰

His speech was given a mixed reception. Whereas the Communists accused him of wanting to establish a presidential régime as a prelude to a personal dictatorship, in the manner of Louis Napoleon, the M.R.P. and the Radicals expressed sympathy with the principles underlying his proposals. The Socialists, as in 1945, found themselves torn between their admiration for de Gaulle and their dislike for his ideas. Blum warned that the President should not be given too many powers, but he issued his rebuke in reserved and respectful terms.³¹ A great deal hinged on the General's plans for the immediate future. If he was willing to enter into a dialogue with the centre parties and the S.F.I.O., he would have some chance of uniting them behind a modified version of his Bayeux proposals. The M.R.P.'s leaders appear to have wanted him to follow this course, but after his Bayeux address the General again wrapped himself in silence, leaving René Capitant to interpret his ideas for the outside world.

The Constitutional Committee appointed by the second Constituent Assembly proved as sensitive an indicator of party feeling as its predecessor. Its composition, compared with that of the first Committee, is shown in the table on the next page.

To reflect its increased strength in the Assembly, the M.R.P. had been given one of the Socialists' places on the Committee, and the Communists had surrendered one of their places to Ferhat Abbas, the leader of the small Algerian Manifesto group. The new distribution of places made possible two stable combinations, the old tripartite formula (33 members out of 42) and a centre alliance (25 members), but experience on the first Committee had shown that on certain issues anti-Communist and anti-P.R.L.

³⁰De Gaulle, *Mémoires*, III, pp. 647-52.

³¹*Le Populaire*, 21 June 1946.

alliances would be formed. There was one important change. The increased strength of the M.R.P.'s delegation meant that the common Marxist/non-Marxist division would now result in a deadlock of 21 votes to 21 (which meant that issues in dispute would be referred to the Assembly for decision), whereas on the first Committee the Communist, M.U.R.F. and Socialist members had constituted a bare majority of 22 members, which they had used to carry a number of important decisions. Many of the old personalities had been reappointed, including Fajon, Henri Teitgen, and Maurice Guérin, and the Socialist delegation again contained Mollet, Philip, and Ramadier, as well as one important newcomer, Léopold-Sédar Senghor, an able lawyer from Senegal. On 26 June, the Committee elected Philip as its President and Paul Coste-Floret as *rapporteur*.

Party Strengths on the First and Second Constitutional Committees

	First	Second
Communist and M.U.R.F.	12	11
Algerian Manifesto Group		1
S.F.I.O.	10	9
M.R.P.	11	12
U.D.S.R.	2	2
Radicals	2	2
Independent Republican	1	1
Peasant	1	1
P.R.L.	3	3
Total	42	42

The first sessions of the Committee were given over to general statements of each party's position. It soon became clear that the polarization of April had broken down, and that once more the proposals formed an even continuum from the Communists' *régime d'assemblée* (with some checks) to the P.R.L.'s *régime présidentiel* (with excessive checks). The points of agreement were more numerous than in November 1945. All parties now accepted the principle of a bicameral legislature, the need to ensure governmental stability, and the value of a strong

president, although there were still important differences of opinion over the allocation of powers and functions between the various institutions. While the Communists were for resubmitting the first Constitution Bill untouched,³² the Socialists maintained that it should be altered to provide for a more powerful and responsible Council, for the election of the President by a joint sitting of the Assembly and the Council, and for the Premier's appointment by the President.³³ These were the very amendments for which the M.R.P. had been pressing in April, but now it wanted to go much further and to give the Council the right of initiating legislation and that of referring bills back to the Assembly for a second reading. Possibly out of deference to de Gaulle's views, the M.R.P. also wanted to make provision for an Assembly of the French Union which would combine with the Council and the National Assembly to elect the President, who would choose the Premier, his ministers, and overseas commissioners, and have the right to dissolve the Assembly.³⁴ The proposals of the Radicals and the Right were more extreme variations on the arrangement suggested by the M.R.P.

For the first few weeks of the Committee's discussions, the members skirted the main institutional questions and encountered no serious difficulties. Even the Communists managed to avoid being isolated; although they voted alone against the proposal to have the President elected by a joint sitting of both houses rather than by the Assembly, they did agree that the President should appoint the Premier and that the latter should then receive an investiture vote from the Assembly.³⁵ Trouble came at the end of July, when the Committee broached the question of how the French Union was to be organized. Immediately, a rift appeared between the Marxists and non-Marxists; whereas the M.R.P., the Radicals, and the Right wanted to impose a conservative settlement on the old empire, the Socialists and Communists favoured a more liberal arrangement in which a measure of

³²Fajon, *S.C.C. II*, 26 June 1946, p. 16.

³³See their bill, *J.O. (A.N.C. II)*, *Doc., Annexe* no. II-23, 26 June 1946, pp. 8-12.

³⁴See Coste-Floret, *S.C.C. II*, 26 June 1946, pp. 14-16, and a special appendix, pp. 22-4. See also *J.O. (A.N.C. II)*, *Doc., Annexe* no. II-68, 4 July 1946, pp. 61-3.

³⁵*S.C.C. II*, 5 July (p. 66) and 4 July 1946 (pp. 58-63).

political independence and cultural autonomy would be granted to the overseas territories. The Socialists were particularly disturbed by this development; anti-colonialism was far stronger in the S.F.I.O. than in any other of the French parties, and this issue was one on which it was least disposed to compromise.

The Constitution Bill of 19 April 1946 had provided for overseas representation on both the metropolitan National Assembly and the Council, but it also envisaged the formation of local colonial assemblies with limited powers. Its most controversial provisions had been those for the granting of legal equality to French and native citizens, and for granting the constituent territories the right to secede from the French Union if they wished. Since the referendum of 5 May 1946, there had been strong agitation for changing this scheme, most notably on the part of overseas European communities and trading firms disturbed by the independence displayed by the Viet-Nam government in Indo-China. De Gaulle's Bayeux speech had highlighted the issue and the M.R.P., the Radicals, and the Right had formed the opinion that a much sterner institutional structure was required to prevent the Union from breaking apart.³⁶

In all, five separate proposals dealing with the French Union were submitted to the Constitutional Committee. Each of them recommended an Assembly of the Union surmounting a system of local colonial assemblies, but they disagreed fundamentally about the distribution of powers between these two levels of representation, and between the Union as a whole and the metropolitan parliament. Left-wing and native support was at first focused on a scheme drawn up by an intergroup of overseas parliamentarians, headed by Lamine-Gueye, another Senegal Socialist. This, the Lamine-Gueye proposal as it was called, recommended that considerable powers should be vested in the local colonial assemblies, including the right to frame their own constitutions, and that the Assembly of the Union, consisting of elected representatives, should draw up a constitution for the Union as a whole. Here was the Left's concept of a federal union, with effective power residing in the constituent states, carried to its logical conclusion. The conservative preference for a highly centralized union, in which essential decisions should be made in Paris, was embodied in a rival proposal drafted by the M.R.P. and the R.G.R. It recommended some powers for the Union

³⁶Williams, p. 292.

Assembly but proposed that only residual ones should be vested in the local assemblies. When these two schemes were submitted to the Assembly's Committee of Overseas Territories, the Lamine-Gueye proposal was adopted on a close division, but both came before the Constitutional Committee at the end of July.

In a strained effort to effect a compromise, the Socialists drew up a proposal which in its essentials was little better than a watered-down version of the Lamine-Gueye scheme. It suggested that the peoples of the Union should be given a choice of becoming either free states bound to France by treaty, or autonomous units within the Union, or a part of metropolitan France. In marked contrast to these liberal ideas, the Socialists went on to recommend that, for the immediate future, the colonial assemblies should deal only with local matters, and that the Union Assembly, convened *after* the promulgation of the metropolitan constitution, should propose to the metropolitan National Assembly laws to govern the Union and each of its constituent territories. In other words, the Socialists were suggesting that the metropolitan constitution should establish colonial assemblies with limited powers and that the institutional structure of the Union should be fixed by a later legislation of the metropolitan Parliament. When these three schemes (and another radical proposal presented by Ferhat Abbas) came before the Committee on 25 July, there was a complete deadlock; the M.R.P. and the R.G.R. stuck to their original plan; the Socialists stood by their 'compromise'; the Communists backed the Lamine-Gueye scheme.³⁷ The confusion was increased when the government submitted its own plan for the federal institutions proper; it wanted the Union Assembly to be responsible to a High Council, headed by the President and consisting of appointee representatives of the French government and the various states.³⁸

Since the differences on the Committee were widely reported in the press, it did not take long for the issue to get out of hand. No group on the Committee was prepared to alter its stand and, in the absence of a majority for any positive proposal, the members confined themselves to recommending that assemblies should be established in the overseas territories and that colonial representation in the metropolitan Parliament should be continued until the permanent institutions of the Union had

³⁷S.C.C. II, 25 July 1946, pp. 195-201.

³⁸Ibid, 26 July 1946, p. 218.

been established.³⁹ It seemed extremely doubtful whether the Constituent Assembly could resolve the matters in dispute without precipitating a major political crisis in the process.

On the other institutional questions, co-operation between the Socialist and M.R.P. delegations ensured that most of the decisions fell within the scope of the original proposals of these two parties. As a result, the Committee's final draft was a well-balanced document, not too far removed from the positions favoured by the Communists on one hand and the R.G.R. on the other. No great interest was aroused when on 2 August the Committee voted to approve the draft bill by 22 votes to nil, with 20 abstentions, for although only the Socialist and M.R.P. members, and one Independent Republican, had voted for it, the objections of the other delegations were not fundamental. There was a hollow ring about Pierre Hervé's complaint, on behalf of the Communists, that the bill went beyond 'the limits of a reasonable compromise' as there was about the objection of the Radicals that the counterweights to the Assembly's powers were not yet sufficient.⁴⁰ Both were obviously hoping to obtain more concessions for their point of view during the debates in the Constituent Assembly. The Committee saved itself many difficulties by dropping the idea of drafting another Declaration of Rights, such a source of dissension for the first Committee, and by preparing instead a neatly tailored Declaration of Principles, which listed the traditional rights of 1789 alongside a few new clauses affirming, amongst others, the right to work and the right to strike.

The debate on the bill began in the Constituent Assembly on 20 August, with the M.R.P. and S.F.I.O. speakers defending the proposals as if they were the results of their joint enterprise. Then Bétolaud (P.R.L.) claimed that the Council had to be given more legislative functions and the President more powers than

³⁹J.O. (A.N.C. II), *Doc., Annexe* no. II-350, 2 Aug. 1946, p. 298, Articles 63-71. On the application of the constitutional provisions for the French Union, see the following articles by K. E. Robinson: 'The Public Law of Overseas France since the War', *Journal of Comparative Legislation*, Third Series, XXXII, 1950; 'Political Development in French West Africa', *Africa in the Modern World*, ed. Calvin W. Stillman, Chicago, 1955, pp. 140-81; 'French Africa and the French Union', *Africa Today*, ed. C. Grove Haines, Baltimore, 1955, pp. 311-31.

⁴⁰S.C.C. II, 2 Aug. 1946, p. 258.

those envisaged; Fajon, on the other hand, complained that the Council and the President had been given too much importance already.⁴¹ As if to reassure the Communists, Ramadier argued that under the terms of the bill the President 'had neither power of decision nor . . . political power' and that the proposed Council could in no way be compared to the old Senate.⁴² Here was an interesting situation. The M.R.P. and the S.F.I.O. by themselves could barely muster a majority in the Assembly, and the final outcome of the debate depended on which of their neighbouring groups, the Communist Party or the R.G.R., was prepared to drop its objections to the bill. At this point, there seemed some likelihood that the R.G.R. might be the one to relent, thus creating the basis for the centre alliance which had always lain behind the politics of the second Constituent Assembly.

It was at this juncture that de Gaulle intervened in the debate, with decisive effect. At a press conference on 27 August, he complained that the draft bill did not provide adequate powers either for the Council or for the President, that the chapter on the French Union was too vague, and that the executive as a whole would lack sufficient independence. He argued that the President should be entitled to choose the Premier without reference to the Assembly and that the ministers should be responsible to parliament collectively and not individually.⁴³ Whether he had calculated this effect or not, the General altered the situation in the Assembly; encouraged by his censure of the bill, the R.G.R. and the Right immediately hardened their attitude with the result that the M.R.P. came under strong pressure from the conservative press to alter its policy to take account of de Gaulle's criticisms. While it is true that de Gaulle's Bayeux speech had given a general indication of his views, it was only at this press conference and in subsequent statements that he took a firm line on matters of detail. Before this, many people within the M.R.P. had hoped that if he did intervene in politics again it would be to support their cause. Instead, de Gaulle had aligned himself with the Right, and had thus appreciably widened the gap between the tripartite parties and those of the R.G.R.

⁴¹J.O. (A.N.C. II), *Déb.*, 20 Aug. 1946, pp. 3194-200.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 22 Aug. 1946, pp. 3244-6.

⁴³Statement of 27 Aug. 1946 (de Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, pp. 734-9).

The news of his press statement electrified the Assembly. Jean Le Bail, a Socialist deputy, added a nice touch of drama to the proceedings by turning to the Communists and asking them whether they still intended to reject the bill.

Where would you go from there? Can you seriously say that this constitution . . . paves the way to a presidential régime? Can't you see, on the contrary, that if you do not vote for it – I ask you to take account of certain rumours outside this Assembly – you would have the responsibility of facilitating . . . the advent of a presidential régime.⁴⁴

Herriot, the veteran Radical leader, added to the atmosphere of crisis by driving home the General's criticism of the French Union proposals. Defending the French colonial record in a speech which blended his imperial romanticism with sound legal argument, he maintained that the Constitution should provide definitive institutions for the Union and that the secession of overseas territories should be discouraged. His attack had immediate effect; Moutet, the Minister of Colonies, then obtained Philip's agreement to detach from the bill for further consideration the chapter dealing with the Union.⁴⁵ Bidault, according to Wright, had threatened to resign unless the Left agreed to a revision of this part of the bill.⁴⁶

De Gaulle's intervention forced the M.R.P. to decide whether it was going to side with the Right in support of a presidential constitution of Gaullist inspiration or whether it was going to work with the Communists and Socialists to produce a parliamentary constitution. Whatever its choice, it stood to lose electoral support, but if it sided with the Right it would remove any possibility of stable government, for the Socialist and Communist Parties had the numbers between them to bring down any conservative alliance. There had been, and there remained, only two possible parliamentary alliances, *tripartisme* or a centre bloc. With the latter combination now out of the question, the tripartite alliance became the only means of obtaining a constitutional settlement within the Constituent Assembly. Whether they liked it or not, the M.R.P. and the Communist Party had once more to come to terms with each other.

⁴⁴J.O. (A.N.C. II), *Déb.*, 27 Aug. 1946, p. 3332.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 3332-7.

⁴⁶Wright, p. 208.

The Thirty-Eighth Congress of the S.F.I.O.: A Day of Reckoning

More than for anything else, the S.F.I.O.'s thirty-eighth Congress (held at Paris between 29 August and 1 September 1946) is remembered as the setting against which Daniel Mayer was overthrown as General Secretary of the Party and Guy Mollet was appointed in his place. The revolt which led to Mayer's defeat was a curious one; not only is it necessary to explain its origins but one must also try to account for its failure to produce a fundamental change in the Party's strategy and policy. Why did a revolt which at first appeared to be a left-wing crusade against revisionists in high places have no more final effect than an ordinary palace revolution, its only enduring signs being a change in leadership and improved methods in the administration of the central secretariat?

In a very real sense, the thirty-eighth Congress provided an emotional outlet, a mental catharsis, for all the frustrations and tensions which had been building up inside the S.F.I.O. since the Liberation. It is important to realize how strongly the Socialist Party which emerged from the Resistance had believed that Socialism was the wave of the future and that the S.F.I.O. would realize its essential policies by becoming, if not a majority party, then at least the dominant party in a left-wing coalition, just as it had been the pivot of the Popular Front before the war. Mayer and the new leadership had proclaimed their faith in the Party's destiny throughout the winter of 1944-45, and had attracted much support for the S.F.I.O. amongst the progressive sections of the urban middle classes. But when the fire of the Resistance began to die down, and the necessity for the S.F.I.O.'s remaining linked in an equal alliance with the Communist Party and the M.R.P. became more and more obvious, Mayer and his colleagues had still clung to the myth that Socialism was 'the future'. Instead of pointing out to the Party's rank and file that their Party had an obligation to participate in government and *tripartisme*, not in order to launch a revolution but to give the bourgeois state a new constitution and a better economic structure, the leaders pinned their hopes on a Socialist victory in the elections of October 1945. By now factions opposed to the leadership had become influential; the progressives accused Mayer and Blum of being revisionists and called for a new Popular Front with the Communists; the anti-participationists wanted the Party to retire into opposition; the moderates favoured a more independent policy within *tripartisme*. At the Montrouge Congress of March 1946, the

leadership was given proof that the tide of revolt was running high in the Party, but they still hoped that the adoption of the first Constitution Bill and an electoral victory would rescue them from their predicament. Instead the bill was defeated and the S.F.I.O. thrown on the defensive by the electoral result of 2 June 1946.

Discontent amongst the Party's rank and file continued to grow during the summer months. The progressives were angered by the attacks which Mayer and Le Troquer had made on the Communists and by the consistently anti-Russian bias of *Le Populaire's* foreign news coverage; trade unionists were not satisfied that the S.F.I.O. had done everything within its power to back up the C.G.T.'s demands for wage and salary increases; the provincial cadres were suggesting that the electoral disappointments were partly the result of bad administration on the part of the central secretariat. There were several layers to the conflict which was now developing within the Party. At one level, the clash had distinct ideological overtones – there was a sense in which Mollet, but much more the Parisian intellectuals such as Jean Rous and Pierre Rimbert, represented the old Guesdist or orthodox Marxist tradition in the Party while Mayer, André Philip and Blum stood for the revisionism of Jaurès. At a second level, many of the militants were thinking largely in terms of personalities, comparing Mollet with Mayer as men and as administrators rather than accepting them as symbols for separate points of view. At a third level, as we have suggested, the whole revolt had an unmistakably cathartic character, as if the members were rebelling not so much against their leaders as against their situation and the intolerable frustrations of the tripartite régime.

The congresses of the federations, held in the first three weeks of August, had brought the crisis to a head. Three motions on general policy were submitted to the federations: one, known as the Philip motion, stated the case for the moderates; a second, the Mollet motion, put the progressives' case against the leadership; a third, the Priou-Valjean motion, also argued from the progressive standpoint. All these were printed in a special issue of the *Bulletin intérieur* and distributed to all sections. The main figures involved, especially Mollet and Philip, made a point of visiting many of the local congresses to support their proposals.

The Mollet motion,⁴⁷ signed by Mollet himself and by

⁴⁷*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 15, Aug. 1946, pp.1-3.

Dechézelles, Henri Barré, Léon Boutbien, Jean Rous and Pierre Rimbart of the Seine federation,⁴⁸ consisted of a diagnosis of, and a prescription for, the Party's illness. The signatories claimed that the S.F.I.O.'s decline was due to the fact that the leaders' doctrinal revisionism had diverted Marxist thought in the Party from the 'fundamental reality' of the class struggle. Their views on the need for a return to the doctrinal fundamentals had already been argued in an outspoken monthly, *La Pensée Socialiste*, which had first appeared in March 1946 under the direction of Jean Rous. They went on to suggest that the Party had devoted itself so much to governmental and parliamentary action that the essential tasks of maintaining the organization, of disseminating propaganda and of keeping in touch with the masses had been neglected. Serious tactical errors had been committed; the Party had been too submissive to de Gaulle, too complaisant in its dealings with the bourgeois parties, and clumsy in its handling of the Communist Party, with the result that it had shouldered the responsibility for *tripartisme*. It had also failed to press with sufficient energy for the implementation of such reforms as the nationalization programme and to take up a definite position on the question of wages and prices. To avoid catastrophe, the signatories asked the National Congress to break with this 'political line' by refusing to adopt the *rapport moral* of the *Comité directeur*.

They then presented their 'Policy of Rectification' for restoring the Party's fortunes. Doctrinally, they advocated a rejection of revisionism.

Recent historical experience not only fails to contradict the essential theses of scientific socialism in any way, it shows that only the offensive action of the working class can promote social progress and safeguard liberties.

Arguing from the orthodox proposition that the bourgeoisie would never surrender economic and political power without a struggle, the signatories warned against the dangers of utopian socialism and emphasized that the main need at this stage was to prepare the workers to manage their own industries. The Party's policies

⁴⁸Tanguy-Prigent, the Minister of Agriculture, was one of the original signatories but he was obliged to withdraw his name after a *Comité directeur* meeting on 31 July, when it was pointed out that he had already approved the *rapport moral* (*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 17, June-July 1946, p. 10).

also needed reshaping. In the economic field, it should press for such things as the periodical adjustment of wages and salaries in line with production and price indices, and for further structural reforms. In international affairs the Party should work for closer economic co-operation between European countries and for an enlightened policy towards Germany. It should also remedy the defects in its organizational, propaganda and press activity. Strategically, the Mollet motion claimed that the Party needed to dispel the impression of being 'a hinge party situated mid-way between the Communist Party and the M.R.P.' It should therefore take a strong line on the church-schools issue and show up 'the paternalistic and reactionary basis of the M.R.P.'s doctrine.' In its dealings with the Communist Party, the S.F.I.O. should reaffirm its interest in achieving the political unity of the working class while pointing out that this objective could not be realized so long as the Communist Party remained in 'political and intellectual subjection to the Russian State' and was not democratically organized. Moreover, while the Socialists should pursue 'unity of action' with the Communists for the workers' interests, 'it is desirable that the [Socialist] Party should show the maximum initiative in this matter and not in any way give the impression of being led by the Communist Party'.⁴⁹

The Mollet motion was designed to attract support not only from the progressive section of the Party but from other discontented elements as well. Its specific charges were that the leaders had been guilty of revisionism and that their strategy under *tripartisme* had not been carried out with consistent regard for the Party's welfare. But the motion neither condemned the principle of *tripartisme* nor proposed an alternative alliance, such as the new Popular Front favoured by the progressives. In fact, the Mollet motion was effective simply because it was so vague on many of the central questions.

Whereas Mollet's motion was a call to dissidence, Philip's was a call to order. Its list of signatories, given below, reads like a record of the Party's established provincial *élite*.

Georges Archidice (Lot)
Jean Charlot (Var)
Gaston Defferre (Bouches-du-
Rhône)
Albert Gazier (Seine)

Robert Lacoste (Dordogne)
Augustin Laurent (Nord)
Francis Leenhardt (Bouches-
du-Rhône)
Pierre Métayer (Seine-et-Oise)

⁴⁹*Ibid.*, no. 15, Aug. 1946, pp. 1-3.

Jean Meunier (Indre-et-Loire)	Christian Pineau (Sarthe)
Gérard Ouradou (Seine)	Paul Ramadier (Aveyron)
René Peeters (Meurthe-et-Moselle)	Alexandre Roubert (Alpes-Maritimes)
André Philip (Rhône)	

All fifteen belonged to the moderate wing of the parliamentary group and many of them were in firm control of their local federations. Archidice, Charlot, and Laurent, in particular, knew how to sway their local followers. In this motion, they appealed for confidence in the Party's economic policies, especially as concerned the nationalization programme, and suggested that the members of the Party had not placed sufficient value on the Party's long-term programme nor explained it fully to the people. A wrong impression had been created.

Instead of appearing to be a modern party, preoccupied with all aspects of the life of the citizens . . . the idea has been created that the party is an outmoded type, confined within a powerless revolutionary declaration or solely concerned, like the Radicals of yesterday, with electoral affairs.

They agreed that the S.F.I.O. should clearly mark out the distance which separated it from its rivals and that it should not be afraid either to attack the Communists or to affirm the Socialist belief in the separation of Church and State when dealing with the M.R.P. While they admitted that the influence of the Church on the M.R.P. gave it a right-wing bias, they pointed out that it had supported social reforms and agreed to limiting the rights of employers. Philip and his co-signatories asked their fellow Socialists to take a new pride in the 'humanist and revolutionary' Socialism of their Party, which they contrasted with 'the verbal Socialism of the M.R.P. and the totalitarian Socialism of the Communist Party'.⁵⁰

Jacques Priou-Valjean, the sponsor of the third motion on behalf of the sixth section of the Seine federation, was a left-wing member of the *Comité directeur*. His proposal shared the tone of the Mollet motion, but revealed much more clearly the longing of the Socialist intellectuals in Paris to see the Party recapture 'the revolutionary mystique which sustains the militants and gives them strength'.⁵¹ But it did not attract a great deal of support from the provinces, where the contrast between the Mollet and Philip motions was appreciated in its real context – that of a

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 11-15.

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 4-10.

general and inarticulate revolt against the leadership. Mayer himself refused to take sides, although the Philip motion reflected his ideas to some extent, on the grounds that his doing so would damage Party unity.

I have the firm conviction that a single resolution will emerge from our deliberations. The general secretary must have everyone's confidence and be the interpreter for the whole Party. He cannot be the provisional 'leader' of one section against another.⁵²

The Philip motion had been designed to take account of left-wing criticism of the leadership's strategy and policy, but it had not dealt fully with the doctrinal issues raised in the Mollet motion. These were taken up by Blum, who sought to answer the suggestion that his 'revisionist' and 'humanist' doctrinal approach had contributed to the Party's difficulties. He defended his ideas in *Notes sur la doctrine*, one of his best essays on Marxism, which was published in *La Revue Socialiste* No. 3, in July,⁵³ and in *Le Populaire*, 25-26 August, just before the opening of the National Congress. He contended that Marx had applied his doctrine of the class struggle in three contexts; in the first place he had used it to explain the way in which a revolution provided the bridge between one economic order and its successor, the exploited class of one order becoming the exploiting class of the next; in the second place, he had predicted that the antagonism between the capitalist and proletarian classes in modern society would end in revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, from which would evolve true Communism and the classless society; in the third place, according to Blum, Marx had used a notion of the class struggle to imply that the social revolution, although it was historically inevitable, would be realized only by a conscious application of the will. The proletariat had to prepare for revolution by giving constant attention to the problems of class solidarity, organization, propaganda and educational activities. The organized proletariat and the Socialist parties could not refuse to take part in parliamentary politics in the pre-revolutionary period because their ultimate objective, the conquest of power,⁵⁴ had to be pursued within the framework of

⁵²Ibid., p. 11.

⁵³Pp. 257-61.

⁵⁴For a discussion of Blum's doctrine on this point, see Joll, *Intellectuals in Politics*, pp. 26-7, and Joël Colton, 'Léon Blum and the French Socialists as a Government Party', *The Journal of Politics*, XV, iv, Nov. 1953.

capitalist society. By participating in bourgeois politics, they were obliged to accept a measure of responsibility commensurate with their strength in helping to administer the bourgeois state. Of course, he admitted, it was not easy for them to reconcile their revolutionary aims with such administrative responsibilities.

The political position of the Socialist parties during the pre-revolutionary period is always, in one way or another, a false position. But they can only free themselves from this kind of difficulty by renouncing the political forms of class action, as for example the revolutionary syndicalists and anarchists have done – but in so doing they indisputably deviated from one of the capital principles of Marxism.

Moreover, Blum claimed, the politics of class action in the pre-revolutionary period had become more important and more complicated because the decline of capitalism had not proceeded along the lines predicted by Marx. There had not been a progressive increase in class tension, a 'proletarianization' of the middle classes and a pauperization of the small peasant proprietors, a continuous concentration of capitalist property.

The congresses of the federations, reported fully in *Le Populaire*, showed that the feeling of revolt was strong and general. Most of the left-wing federations and a significant number of moderate federations voted against the *rapport moral* and for the Mollet motion. The leadership still had pockets of support here and there (Ardennes, Aude, Haute-Garonne, and Nord voted for the *rapport moral*) but all the signs were for an eventful National Congress and for the overthrow of the Mayer leadership.

The National Congress was attended by 380 delegates bearing 4,485 mandates and representing 97 metropolitan and overseas federations. On the basis of fifty members per mandate, this indicated a Party membership of only 219,000 compared with that of 342,000 reported by Mayer in March, and the approximate 260,000 represented at the previous Congress of August 1945. Nord, with 327 mandates, had now replaced Pas-de-Calais, with 309, as the most powerful federation, followed by Seine, with 216, Bouches-du-Rhône, with 177, and Seine-et-Oise, with 166. These federations between them controlled over one-quarter of the mandates at the Congress. Taking mandates as an index of membership, some interesting comparisons can be made between the strength of federations at this Congress and that of 1945. A few (such as Bouches-du-Rhône, Creuse, Eure-et-Loir and Haut-Rhin) had grown substantially but well over a third had

obviously declined, especially those in the South-West, the Loire Valley, the Centre, and the Midi. The membership of the Gard federation, for example, appears to have fallen from 8,000 to 4,900.

On the morning of Thursday 29 August, the opening day of the Congress, the delegates saw as they entered the *Palais de la Mutualité* a huge banner bearing the inscription *C'est de notre unité que surgira notre victoire*. The atmosphere inside the building was tense; a press photographer caught it well in a candid study of Mayer leaning across to whisper behind his hand to Blum.⁵⁵ Pierre Métayer, a signatory of the Philip motion, kept a firm control over proceedings as chairman but as the debate on the *rapport moral* got under way, speaker after speaker attacked the leadership. The progressives insisted on their claim that the S.F.I.O. had compromised its principles by conciliating the bourgeoisie and that its role in the tripartite alliance had damaged its prestige. They maintained that the time had come for the Party to return to the working class and to the pure doctrinal sources of the movement. Jean Rous claimed:

We are suffering the essential penalty of all workers' parties who allow themselves to get mixed up with bourgeois parties. An impossible unanimity has been sought. In fact there are two great currents in this party. Because the concern for unity was too great the necessary rectification was neglected.

Neatly equating revisionism with the intellectual approach to politics, Pierre Rimbert carried on in the same vein:

It's not a matter of realizing Socialism through sentimental intellectuals, but through a struggle between the dominant class and the proletariat.

The class struggle is not out of date. It is making itself felt more and more. The whole of our effort must be oriented towards the working class.

It will inevitably culminate in a revolutionary social transformation.

Another stream of criticism came from spokesmen for federations which blamed the recent electoral setback on the lack of organization displayed, they alleged, by the central secretariat at Paris. Lamarque-Cando (Landes) explained that although his federation had rejected the *rapport moral* it had adopted neither the Mollet nor the Philip motion, being opposed to the revival of factionalism within the Party.

⁵⁵ *Le Figaro*, 30 Aug. 1946.

It is not a question of changing doctrine but of changing the Party's secretariat and its methods, of envisaging a complete reorganization of our propaganda work.

Max Lejeune (Somme) was even more direct:

The secretariat must be modified. It is not essential that the secretary should necessarily be an eloquent orator. Above all the need is for an administrator, an organizer who would be backed up always by a deputy secretary and an administrative secretary.

The debate reached its climax in the late afternoon. Mollet drove home the attack by hitting at the Party's failure to make the best of *tripartisme*.

Our Party has too often figured as a mediator when we wanted it to figure as an arbitrator. So much so that a section of the public has begun to visualize the Socialist Party as a group situated between a party which claims to be on our left and another which is certainly on our right.

He claimed that more attention should be given to the Party's relations with the working class: 'If the middle classes . . . become proletarian, it's for them to come to Socialism and not for Socialism to go to them'.

Mayer then defended his record firmly and with dignity, maintaining that his team could not have done any better under the circumstances and doubting whether a new team would do any better in the future. He pointed out that there had been no real alternative to the tripartite alliance; a Communist-Socialist government would have led to strained relations between these two parties and thus endangered the political unity of the working class, while the M.R.P. had been a better third partner than the Radical Socialist Party because although the latter was profoundly *laïc* it was backward in social policy. He denied that the Party was becoming more bourgeois and asked whether the real danger was not that the S.F.I.O. might alienate that section of the middle classes which was influenced by de Gaulle. He concluded by defending the Party's humanism and by appealing for confidence in the *Comité directeur*.⁵⁶

Next, Blum spoke in anger, not only because of his liking for Mayer but also because he saw the work of his lifetime threatened by a revolt which seemed to him pointless, even petulant. Scarcely

⁵⁶*Le Populaire*, 30 Aug. 1946.

veiling his distaste for the doctrinal position of Mollet and the Guesdists, he claimed that the new Declaration of Principles which he had helped to draft was a coherent synthesis of Jaurès and Marx. Questioning whether any distinction could be made between revolutionary and revisionist (or humanist) Socialism, he asserted that what mattered in the last resort was whether a revolutionary transformation of capitalist society could be achieved or not. Whether this was accomplished by legal and peaceful or by violent means was beside the point; if it were accomplished without violence it would still constitute a revolution, while on the other hand, the simple conquest of power by a proletarian party would not, in the strictest sense of the term, constitute a revolution.

Reverting to his favourite theme, he pointed out again that Socialist parties in a pre-revolutionary situation should be concerned primarily with problems of class action.

In a country which has universal suffrage, political action necessarily signifies parliamentary action and parliamentary representation. And when a political party has grown sufficiently for its parliamentary group to have the majority or to become a necessary part of any possible majority, the problems of political action become the problems of power.

He claimed that a party had either to accept some administrative responsibility within the capitalist state or give up politics altogether. Those who talked of a revival of the Party (*renouveau*), said Blum, were really afraid – of the Communists, of the electors, even of their own comrades. In their fear they were turning back to the Party they had known in the past – the Popular Front, the *Cartel des gauches*, the 1905 Declaration of Principles, the old factions, the old style of organization. But the need of the present was to accept the changed state of affairs, to put aside anti-clerical dislike of the M.R.P. and to accept the necessity for *tripartisme*. 'You invoke the necessity for renewal, but more than anything else you are afraid of change.' To vote for the Mollet motion would be 'a species of moral alibi to relieve your bad conscience.'⁵⁷

⁵⁷Blum, *L'Oeuvre*, pp. 276-88. The speech is incorrectly dated in this source as having been given on 1 September instead of 29 August (cf. *Le Populaire*, 30 Aug. 1946, p. 3). The editors may have been confused by Blum's references to the rejection of the *rapport moral* and to the adoption of the Mollet motion, but he was clearly talking in such instances about the preceding congresses of the federations.

It was a powerful speech and its impact on the delegates is still remembered. The rebels' confidence was beginning to ebb but it was impossible for the delegates to go back on the instructions of their federations. When put to the vote, the *rapport moral* was rejected by 2,975 mandates (66 per cent of the total) to 1,365, with 145 abstentions.⁵⁸ The *Comité directeur* had received important backing from the overseas federation but of the ninety metropolitan federations only eighteen had voted for the adoption of the *rapport*. Faced with such a massive vote of no confidence, the leading officials (Mayer, Verdier, Jaquet, and Victor Provo) resigned without hesitation. The end of an era had come. Blum's concluding remarks now took on their full import.

Shall we now, as some of you hope, undergo a sudden shock, a psychological upheaval, a sudden awakening which will restore to our party some of the faith, courage and spirit of self-sacrifice which it lacks?

There was no psychological shock, only confusion. Now the disagreements between the different sections of the rebel group began to emerge, and the alliance behind Mollet began slowly to break up. Many of the moderate federations had wanted to censure the leadership for their inefficiency but they were by no means ready to propose a strategy of their own nor to vote for the Mollet motion. The progressives and the anti-participationists were prepared to press home their advantage, but it was already clear to them that if they put forward any positive proposals of their own (such as endorsing the principle of a Popular Front) they might well alienate the moderate support which had helped them to dominate the first day's proceedings. The initiative was passing into other hands.

On Friday 30 August, some hard bargaining seems to have been done behind the scenes. Depreux, the Minister of the Interior, was said to have been on the point of resigning his portfolio on the grounds that the rejection of the *rapport moral* constituted a vote of no confidence in the Socialist ministers. Augustin Laurent and Albert Gazier were being mentioned as possible rivals to Mollet in the election of a new General Secretary.⁵⁹ That afternoon, after the Congress had rejected the annual report on *Le Populaire*, Louis de Brouckère, a veteran Belgian Socialist and a former

⁵⁸*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 18, Aug.-Sept. 1946, p. 6. See Appendix 2.

⁵⁹See Bertrand Philippon, *Le Figaro*, 31 Aug. 1946; *Le Monde*, 31 Aug. 1946.

President of the old Socialist International, appealed to the delegates to avoid a split in the Party, which he said would be a blow to the cause of Social Democracy in Europe. Mayer responded warmly.

Together we shall search for points of agreement – for they are numerous – and together we shall carry them into effect. [Unanimous applause.] We shall settle points of difference by votes, and in action the minority will submit to discipline Never has our unity been placed in question.

As he embraced de Brouckère, the delegates rose to acclaim him and sang the *Internationale*.⁶⁰

Most of Saturday the 31st was taken up with a long debate on general policy, as the merits and demerits of the Mollet and Philip motions were discussed at length. Philip stated the modern revisionist viewpoint with specific reference to the S.F.I.O.'s obligations under *tripartisme*. He claimed that the working class had to assume more responsibilities in running the country now that the bourgeoisie had been discredited as the main governing class. France was already passing from capitalism towards a new social and economic order, a transition which was open to political regulation. Whether the new order would conform to Socialist ideals or whether instead it would be a 'kind of authoritarian and technocratic collectivism' along Communist or Fascist lines would depend on the extent to which the Socialist Party accepted its responsibilities as a party of government. Philip went on to suggest that the tripartite alliance had as one of its purposes the supervision of the first phase in the transition, and that the M.R.P. had been more suitable as an ally than the Radicals because of the latter Party's economic and social conservatism. For the future he suggested adjustments in the S.F.I.O.'s political tactics which would increase its effectiveness in action; the abolition of the Socialist-Communist *Comité d'entente*; an independent stand in dealings with other parties; and, instead of maintaining *tripartisme* in its present form, the establishment after the elections of a purely Socialist government based on a tripartite parliamentary alliance. These proposals, which now became a focus of support for the moderate delegates, reflected an extraordinary optimism; Philip was suggesting, firstly, that the S.F.I.O. would emerge from the next elections as the strongest party and, secondly, that it would then be able to govern in its

⁶⁰*Le Populaire*, 31 Aug. 1946.

own right with the conditional support of the Communist Party and the M.R.P. Once more the Party was being asked to pursue the mirage of electoral success instead of facing up to the realities of *tripartisme*.

Mollet, who spoke later in the day, met Philip's arguments squarely. While he agreed that the present period was a transitional one, in which the capitalist régime was undergoing changes of a Socialist character, there was still the need to guard against the possibility of a capitalist counter-offensive. The Socialist Party, he felt, had to prepare itself to seize and to hold political power in this event. Hence, if the Socialists participated in government at the present time, they nevertheless had to bear in mind that the conditions of the class struggle were still present. While the Socialists remained in power, it was their duty not so much to repair the capitalist system as 'to furnish the working class with springboards for its future action'; the reforms and achievements of Socialist ministers should not be represented as good management within the capitalist framework but as preparations for the future. Although Mollet said that there was no possibility of the Socialist and Communist Parties' uniting so long as the latter lacked a democratic organization and remained under Russian influence, he claimed that the two parties could pursue unity of action under special circumstances – so long as the Socialists did not give the impression that they were being towed by the Communists. He emphasized that both parties depended on the support of the working class.

In whatever ways the Communist leaders may have misled their followers, I feel more in sympathy with the worker who deceives or is deceived than with the bourgeois of other parties who believe themselves, or declare themselves to be liberal and reformist (*social*).

Had the Mollet and Philip motions been put to the vote separately the division would have been very close. The pattern set at most of the congresses of the federations had been that only about 80 per cent of those who voted against the *rapport moral* also voted for the Mollet motion and, as we have noted, opposition to the leadership did not always indicate support for Mollet. Had the motions been referred directly to the National Congress, the Mollet motion might have been endorsed by about 2,300-2,500 mandates against 1,800-2,100 for the Philip motion. Whatever the result might have been, the effect of the division would have been to sharpen the factional differences and to revive

the bitterness of the opening day's debate. In the event, the different motions were submitted to a committee of Resolutions whose thirty-one members included fourteen of Mollet's supporters and only four of Philip's. Had they wanted to press their advantage, the *Molletistes* on the committee could have forced through their own views but they co-operated in drafting a compromise resolution. Probably aware of the fact that they were losing sympathy, they appear to have adopted a conciliatory approach now that their main objective, Mayer's overthrow, had been realized. The committee's motion was a curious blend of the two positions, combining Philip's strategic proposals (an independent electoral campaign, the abolition of the *Comité d'entente*, the formation of a Socialist instead of a tripartite ministry), with views on the character of the rival parties which closely resembled those expressed by Mollet during the previous debate. When the resolution was adopted unanimously on 1 September, the closing day of the Congress, the delegates celebrated the occasion with another spirited rendering of *l'Internationale*.

Those parts of the resolution which dealt with domestic and international affairs were interesting, but the section dealing with 'Political Problems' was certainly the most revealing. Taking each party in turn, the committee had sketched those qualities and defects which it had found most important. The judgment passed on the M.R.P. was noticeably more severe than those which Mayer and Blum had made on earlier occasions; instead of drawing the distinction between the progressive and clerical aspects of the Party, the resolution drew attention to the way in which the M.R.P. combined disparate and often reactionary elements 'under the cloak of a social programme'. In future, the resolution continued, the Socialist Party would 'mobilize republican opinion for the defence of secular education' against clericalism, and would call on the assistance of the teachers for this purpose. The 'increasingly conservative character' of the Radical Socialist Party was also noted, but no mention was made of the progressive Radicals who had so interested the Socialists in the past. Referring to the Communist Party, the resolution claimed that the 'organic unity of the proletariat' still remained an essential objective for the Socialist Party but that this unity could not be realized so long as the Communist Party was not organized democratically and while it remained dependent on Russia. In keeping with Philip's policy of disbanding the *Comité d'entente*,

the resolution stated in guarded terms that henceforth only the *Comité directeur* should make contact 'with neighbouring political, trade unionist or philosophical organizations' (that is, the Communist Party, the C.G.T. and the League of the Rights of Man) and then only in exceptional circumstances and for limited objects.

The political section of the resolution concluded with a paragraph entitled 'The Party and Governments', which read as follows:

The Party notes that the composition of the National Constituent Assembly has made necessary the setting up of a coalition government. It regrets that such combinations (*formations*) lack effectiveness when they are not bound together by team solidarity and the cohesion of parties, or when they are not founded on a precise and prearranged programme.

Failing a purely Socialist government, the only formula which the Party considers would benefit the country, it will not allow its members to join a coalition government in future unless its partners accept beforehand a minimal programme of precise objectives conforming to the hopes of the working class.⁶¹

Two tactics were being suggested here. In one case, the S.F.I.O., having achieved an electoral breakthrough, would press for a purely Socialist government (*ministère socialiste homogène*) based on a tripartite alliance in parliament. In the other case, if the Party did not do well in the elections, it would agree to accept another tripartite coalition, but only on condition that a detailed policy was worked out beforehand. Many of the delegates must have wondered at this stage what the revolt had achieved. Mollet, having risen to power on a wave of *anti-tripartisme*, was now accepting a strategy which took into account the possible continuation of the old alliance.

Other resolutions adopted by the Congress reaffirmed the electoral tactics laid down at Montrouge (of straight Socialist lists and an independent campaign) and endorsed an earlier National Council decision favouring an alteration of the present voting law to enable the elector, in marking his ballot paper, to indicate his preference for the individual candidates of the Party list he had chosen to support. The Congress did not follow the Montrouge precedent of fixing limits which the Party was to observe in the

⁶¹For the text of the resolution see *ibid.*, 3 Sept. 1946, p. 4.

constitutional negotiations, and in fact left the Party virtual freedom 'to rally round the constitution the widest republican majority'.⁶²

On the last day of the Congress, the results of the election for the new *Comité directeur* were announced. In accordance with the rules adopted in February, each delegate was entitled to vote, without indicating his preference, for thirty-one of the sixty or so candidates on his voting paper. The successful candidates (members elected for the first time are indicated by an asterisk),⁶³ in order of election, were:

André Philip	*Georges Brutelle
*O. Capocci	*Mme Irène Laure
Daniel Mayer	Augustin Laurent
Salomon Grumbach	*Lamine-Gueye
François Tanguy-Prigent	*Jean Courtois
Mme Renée Blum	*Yves Dechézelles
*Guy Mollet	*Mme Suzanne Charpy
Mme. Emilienne Moreau	Charles Dumas
Jacques Priou-Valjean	Robert Verdier
Edouard Depreux	*Pierre Commin
Marcel Naegelen	*Jean Pierre-Bloch
*Léon Boutbien	*Lancelle
*Arrès-Lapoque	*Malacrida
*Ferrat	*Jean Rous
Victor Provo	*Rougeron
*Jean Texcier	

The election was not fought as a contest between two factions; there were no reports either of rival lists or of block voting, and the pattern of the result suggests that neither practice was used. Some measure of the extent to which the revolt had lost its force by the closing stages of the Congress is provided by the fact that both Philip and Mayer received larger personal votes than the acknowledged rebel leaders – Tanguy-Prigent, Mollet, Boutbien, Arrès-Lapoque, Dechézelles and Rous, all of whom had powerful regional backing, Tanguy-Prigent from the West, Mollet from the Pas-de-Calais and the others from the Seine. Although it has been suggested that the large change in membership (there were eighteen new appointees altogether) was an index of the desire for change at the Congress, this is not altogether true. As Article

⁶²Ibid., p. 2.

⁶³*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 18, Aug.-Sept. 1946, p. 6.

31 of the new Party constitution provided that the *Comité directeur* could contain only ten parliamentarians, eleven of the twenty-one deputies on the former *Comité* were automatically disqualified for re-election and such prominent figures as Auriol, Evrard, Froment, Gouin, and Le Troquer, for example, did not even stand on this occasion. This factor rather than the rebels' voting strength accounts for the heavy turnover in executive membership; several of those appointed for the first time, such as Texcier, in fact represented the moderate wing of the Party. The exact number of *Molletistes* elected remains a matter of dispute, though Fauvet's original estimate of sixteen out of thirty-one must be close to the mark.⁶⁴

Certainly when the new *Comité* met on 4 September to elect its officers Mollet was elected General Secretary by sixteen votes against the fourteen cast for Laurent, while his lieutenant, Dechézelles, was elected Administrative Secretary by a similar vote, sixteen against fourteen abstentions. However, although the *Molletistes* formed a majority on the executive they showed their desire for compromise by admitting representatives of the old order to the various sub-committees of the executive; thus the *Bureau* consisted of Mollet, Dechézelles, Arrès-Lapoque (Propaganda Secretary), and Boutbien (Deputy Treasurer) alongside Mayer, Verdier, Laurent, and Provo (Treasurer).⁶⁵ The changes in the structure of the secretariat were noteworthy; there were now three instead of two secretaries, and their respective functions were more clearly defined than before. The possibility of a deadlock between the two wings on the executive had been foreseen, and the Congress had stipulated that should the *Comité directeur* find itself divided over the question of the S.F.I.O.'s relations with other parties, the matter was to be referred to the National Council.⁶⁶

⁶⁴*Le Monde*, 3 Sept. 1946. The following is a rough breakdown of the *Comité* into *Molletistes* and others, drawn up by Mr. Philip Williams and the writer. It must be treated only as an approximate guide:

Molletistes: Arrès-Lapoque, Boutbien, Brutelle, Capocci, Commin, Courtois, Dechézelles, Ferrat, Lamine-Gueye, Malacrida, Mollet, Mme Moreau, Pierre-Bloch, Priou-Valjean (?), Rous, Tanguy-Prigent.

Others: Mme Blum, Mme Charpy, Depreux, Dumas, Grumbach, Lancelle, Mme Laure, Laurent, Mayer, Naegelen, Philip, Provo, Rougeron, Texcier, Verdier.

⁶⁵*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 19, Oct. 1946, p. 1.

⁶⁶*Le Populaire*, 3 Sept. 1946.

Mollet first made his mark as an administrator. He carefully reorganized the Paris office and staffed the key positions with a team specially imported from his native Pas-de-Calais. Within a few weeks of the Congress, *Le Populaire* had taken on a new look; more space was being devoted to working class problems, to the Party's parliamentary work, and to Socialist speeches inside and outside the Assembly. An equally significant change was the withdrawal of an American comic strip about 'Myrtle', a most unattractive child of stolidly bourgeois parents. In other respects, Mollet showed himself a dour tactician. Duclos did not wait long before pressing him to consider unity of action between the Communist and Socialist Parties to counter de Gaulle's campaign against the Constitution Bill. Mollet rejected the idea, stating that if the bill were not adopted at the referendum, the Socialists would then organize 'a great republican rally'.⁶⁷

Although the Congress had not basically altered the Party's course, it had brought out clearly some of the fundamental points at issue between the orthodox Marxists, represented by Mollet, and the revisionists, represented by Blum, Philip, and Mayer. To some extent, their dispute was about the facts of the Party's social composition and voting support. Was it becoming more or less a proletarian party? Was it becoming more or less dependent on a middle-class clientèle? The facts supported the revisionists' case. Only in the northern textile and coal-mining centres, and in a few scattered industrialized departments such as Haute-Vienne, had the S.F.I.O. retained a firm electoral hold on the working class; elsewhere – in Paris, Lyons, Marseilles – the Communists were in command. By 1946 the Party was receiving most of its electoral backing from agricultural and middle class constituencies, and although the majority of its militants were still working class people, most of its active members were drawn from other social groups. The S.F.I.O. represented the interests, not only of the wage earners, but also of the white-collar workers, civil servants, teachers, peasants, and shop keepers. Husson estimates that of the 510 Socialist candidates nominated in the election of October 1945, only 21 were workers in industrial concerns and 125 were active teachers, whereas of the 528 Communist candidates 131 were industrial workers and only 70 were active teachers. The same pattern was evident in the election of June 1946; of the 520

⁶⁷*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 18, Aug.-Sept. 1946, pp. 15-16; no. 19, Oct. 1946, pp. 2-3.

Socialist nominees, 24 were industrial workers and 114 were active teachers, and of the 522 Communist candidates, 128 belonged to the first category and 73 to the second.⁶⁸ These indices have a limited significance but they do show that the S.F.I.O. was tending to recruit its leaders more from the middle classes than from the proletariat, while the opposite remained true for the Communists.

Maurice Duverger describes an interesting study in which the class composition of Socialist sections in Paris was compared with the social structure of the surrounding community. The results showed that where workers predominated in a section's membership they also predominated, though in a greater proportion in the militant group, and that likewise, where a section was located in a middle-class suburb, its leadership contained a higher proportion of middle-class people (teachers, civil servants, tradesmen, lawyers, and so on) than its membership.

The explanation seems to be fairly clear; in a branch that is predominantly middle class, the workmen feel isolated amongst people who share their political opinions but not their mentality, their daily preoccupations or their instinctive reactions; the same is true for the middle-class members of a predominantly working-class branch. Social differences among members seems therefore to provide an obstacle to the development of militancy.⁶⁹

It may well be that part of the explanation for the 1946 revolt was the fact that the S.F.I.O. as a national institution was undergoing a crisis of the same order as that described above, that as its social base altered in composition so local and national leaders of middle-class origin were recruited in larger numbers, a trend which may have annoyed the working men amongst the rank and file. Mollet belonged to both worlds, having been brought up in a working-class home before becoming a teacher, but he identified himself still with the values of his early background.

In an important sense, of course, the *Molletistes* were arguing that even if the S.F.I.O. was largely dependent on peasant and middle-class support there was no reason why this support should determine the Party's character. For the orthodox Marxists, the Party's integrity was determined by its proletarian traditions.

⁶⁸Husson, pp. xix-xx. See also Williams, pp. 69-71.

⁶⁹Duverger, *Political Parties*, p. 112.

Mollet probably had this in mind when he proclaimed during the Congress debate:

There is a fundamental class difference between us and the parties of the bourgeoisie, even when there is a temporary agreement on the tactical plane.

There is a community of class between us and the workers who follow the Communist Party, even though there are at present fundamental doctrinal and tactical conflicts between the Communist Party and us.⁷⁰

When orthodox Marxists spoke of 'the proletarianization of the middle classes' or of the middle classes 'coming to Socialism', they were in fact saying that the middle classes and the *petite bourgeoisie* were culturally negative, without the tradition or the values required to give a party identity and driving force. To become politically alive, they had to identify themselves with the proletarian system of values and symbols. This attitude helps to explain why Mollet made such a sharp distinction between the S.F.I.O. and the parties to its right; 'No enemies on the Left' was complemented in his scheme of things with the slogan, 'No friends on the Right'. Blum and Mayer, on the other hand, had argued from a proposition which is absolutely essential to Jaurès's writings on Socialism, namely, that humanism and republicanism, both good products of bourgeois thought, had to be reconciled with Marxist doctrines about the class struggle and revolution. Thinking specifically of post-war France, Mayer, Blum, and Philip were arguing that the Socialist Party had to adapt its values and traditions to meet the liberalism of those middle-class groups which it had to win over if it was to remain a major party. In particular, they wanted it to balance its previous emphasis on economic rights with a new stress on social rights and freedoms, and to participate in government to defend the Republic against the forces of reaction.

Mollet's other article of faith was that a party's integrity was measured by its adherence to classical Marxist doctrine. With Yves Dechézelles and Jean Rous, he maintained that Marx's analysis of capitalist society and his principles of action were still relevant to modern conditions, and that any party which did not adhere to them was no longer truly Socialist. He insisted, therefore, that the S.F.I.O.'s Declaration of Principles, drawn up in 1905, remained true and should not be changed. He claimed

⁷⁰*Le Populaire*, 1-2 Sept. 1946.

that once the practice of altering doctrinal principles was admitted, the process of revision would prove difficult to control, and that there would always be the danger of the S.F.I.O.'s committing itself to positions in which it would be unable to take revolutionary action. Beyond this, the orthodox Marxists' insistence on the inviolability of early doctrine was consonant with their faith in the Party's traditions (anti-clericalism, anti-colonialism, anti-militarism, economic egalitarianism, and so on) as the soundest guides for action. They argued that few situations could arise for which the Party had not been prepared by past experience, and that the Party should rely on the lessons derived from such experience in shaping its strategies. Traditional experience could be interpreted to the Party's rank and file in much simpler terms than the points at issue in doctrinal controversy; if the Party were faced with a sudden challenge, its unity of action would be greatly increased if its membership could be mobilized around slogans and commands expressed in traditional terms. Doctrinal adjustments at such a time would serve only to confuse the Party's following and prevent it from taking effective action. Inasmuch as the Party had to hold itself ready to act immediately in a wide range of situations, its ability to do so would be directly determined by the stability of its doctrine and its reliance on traditional experience to guide its membership.

In the political context of pre-1914 France, when the S.F.I.O. had every claim to be the workers' party, the Guesdists' emphasis on the need for doctrinal orthodoxy and conformity to traditions had much to recommend it. In the France of 1946, however, it was unrealistic. By that time it was quite clear that the Communists had become the major proletarian party and that French capitalism was not headed for a revolutionary crisis – and yet the orthodox Marxists still did not adapt their ideas to take proper account of the presence of the Communist Party in the party system. When the Communist Party was formed after the Tours Congress in 1920 those orthodox Marxists who had joined the new S.F.I.O. were at one with the revisionists in condemning the Communists' reliance on Leninist doctrine, their undemocratic organization, and their dependence on Russian guidance. But they refused to believe that the Communists would gain the allegiance of the working class, or that the S.F.I.O. needed to distinguish itself as clearly from the Communist Party as from those of the bourgeois centre. In fact, they saw as the real danger the possibility

that, in trying to make such a distinction, the S.F.I.O. would be drawn to the Right – away from the working class. This reasoning had point as long as the Communist Party remained electorally insignificant, but by 1946 (when it had become the dominant political force in nearly all the main industrial centres) it was completely unrealistic. It was equally unrealistic for left-wing Socialists to insist that violent revolution was still a possibility, when all the indications were that the existing economic order was prospering, that real wealth was becoming more evenly spread, and that the middle classes, far from disappearing, were continuing to expand. Above all, it was obvious that even if a revolutionary crisis did occur, it would be the Communists, and not the Socialists, who would achieve power.

As exponents of the revisionist case Mayer, Blum, and Philip were trying, in 1946, to make the Party recognize the altered circumstances and adjust its doctrine and strategy accordingly. Theirs was essentially a plea for facing the electoral facts, for accepting that the Party now rested upon a middle-class and peasant as well as upon working-class support, and that it was obliged to accept governmental responsibilities commensurate with its parliamentary strength. The revisionists were deeply concerned with questions of partisan integrity and identity; in their estimation, however, integrity was not so much a matter of preserving established symbols and traditions as of ensuring that the Party's doctrine was sufficiently attuned to political realities to enable it to act constructively within the party system. They did not deny that a party's doctrine, besides providing a guide to action, should reflect its basic values or ideology: they claimed that integrity was achieved when a proper tension was established between ideology, doctrine, and action. In their view, a doctrinally rigid party would find that, in a rapidly changing situation, its policies and strategies were being determined by expedient rather than by doctrinal considerations, and that, to use the Marxist term, it was acting opportunistically. In the special context of *tripartisme*, they were anxious that the S.F.I.O. should make a conscious effort to preserve an organic relationship between doctrine and action as well as between ideology and doctrine.

While agreeing with the orthodox Marxists that the S.F.I.O.'s action should be conceived in terms of Marxist thought, the revisionists claimed that Marx's contribution to the Left was a method of socio-economic analysis rather than a doctrine. They regarded Marxism not as a dogma but as a theory of history from

which doctrinal principles could be drawn; in their eyes Marx himself had been the first of the revisionists, having changed certain of his ideas when later analyses proved them incorrect. Unless scope for doctrinal adjustments were permitted, they pointed out, the S.F.I.O. would have no sound basis for action in the years that lay ahead, and would indeed endanger its existence as a progressive political force.

The Socialist controversies of 1945 and 1946 brought these differing concepts of integrity into sharp focus. While Blum and Mayer argued that a major doctrinal revision could no longer be delayed, and that the Party had to accept greater responsibilities within the bourgeois state, the Party's orthodox Marxists felt that the only safe course was to rely on the guidance supplied by traditional experience, whether as embodied in the 1905 Declaration of Principles or in the slogans of past conflicts – 'No enemies on the Left!', 'Fascism shall not triumph!' and the like. Most of the Party's rank and file agreed with the orthodox Marxists, more through their ingrained dislike of change than through conviction. Even Blum's attempt to revise the Declaration of Principles did not spark off a general debate on doctrine; it merely produced the demand that the old Declaration should be left basically as it was, mainly because of its traditional value. For all his radical appeal, Mollet spoke for the traditionalists when, at the Congress of 1946, he accused the Mayer leadership not only of being revisionist but also of having become too bourgeois in its public demeanour. His two accusations powerfully reinforced one another. In one sense, his victory at the Congress symbolized the Party's reluctance to admit that the need to make doctrinal adjustments had now become imperative. Yet the same Congress, in a less direct manner, also made clear its unwillingness to endorse the traditionalists' positive strategies of rigid opposition to all bourgeois parties and of a more or less permanent alignment with the Communists. The revolt against Mayer was essentially negative in character, a refusal by the Party to choose between the ideas of the revisionists and the orthodox Marxists, a refusal to admit that French Socialism was involved in a crisis of integrity.

The Ratification of the Second Constitution Bill

Until the very last moment, there was no certainty that the three main parties would reach agreement over the disputed sections of

the second Constitution Bill. The Socialists, although shaken by the results of their Congress, held steadily to a middle course between their two partners. For the sake of agreement, the Communists dropped their former objections both to the powers envisaged for the Council and the President and to the proposal that the latter should be elected by a joint meeting of both houses. But the M.R.P. behaved nervously and erratically during this period; keenly aware of de Gaulle's displeasure with the draft bill, and sensitive to conservative pressures from important sections of its supporters, it came several times within an ace of going over to the Right.

Once again, it was Auriol who came forward as the central negotiator during the critical stages in the discussions. Having consulted the party leaders on 2 September, he brought forward a series of compromise proposals⁷¹ which were accepted with two exceptions. The Communists objected to the procedure envisaged for the dissolution of the Assembly after two ministerial crises in the latter part of its term, but they later gave way on this point. The M.R.P. was reluctant to drop its objection to Auriol's suggested method for electing the Council of the Republic. He had proposed that special departmental colleges of *grands électeurs*, appointed by the cantons, should elect the councillors, a system which became known as 'election by universal suffrage in two stages'. Although the Communists supported the scheme, the M.R.P. wanted to have the councillors elected by 'local collectivities'. As a compromise, the Socialists suggested that the exact definition of the Council's electoral system should be left to the future parliament, which could pass an Organic Law for that purpose, and that only the basic principles involved should be referred to in the Constitution. Ramadier suggested to the Constitutional Committee that the following clause would suffice:

The two chambers are necessarily elected on a territorial basis, the National Assembly by direct universal suffrage, and the Council of the Republic within the framework of the Communes, Cantons, Departments or Overseas Territories, by universal suffrage in two stages.

The Constitution Committee adopted the clause on 10 September by nineteen votes to twelve with nine abstentions; the Socialist and M.R.P. members voted for it and the Communists against it,

⁷¹*S.C.C. II*, 3 Sept. 1946, pp. 400-7.

but the latter were hoping to persuade their Party to accept the proposal.⁷²

On the following day, the provisional agreement was nearly destroyed. In the morning the M.R.P.'s members astounded the Committee by announcing that their Party was not, after all, prepared to have the regulations governing the Council elections prescribed by an Organic Law. Philip threatened to resign as President of the Committee unless the M.R.P. honoured its previous undertaking.⁷³ However, just when the situation appeared likely to get out of hand, Bidault intervened by appealing to the M.R.P.'s parliamentary group to accept the Ramadier compromise. It did so by a bare majority of six votes.⁷⁴ The final test came that evening in the Assembly, when Paul Bastid, a Radical, proposed that the Council should be mentioned in the Constitution as representing 'communal and departmental collectivities', a formula dear to the M.R.P. His amendment was rejected by the close vote of 275 to 273, with the M.R.P. voting with the R.G.R. and the Right in the minority, and the Assembly then went on to adopt Ramadier's compromise clause by 427 to 120, with all three of the main parties voting for it.⁷⁵

The new tripartite understanding held good throughout the remainder of the first reading debate, which lasted until the 17th. No one could tell, however, whether it could survive an all-out attack from the Gaullists, who were obviously waiting to move over to the offensive once more. On 12 September came the first warning. René Capitant announced in a press statement that his *Union gaulliste pour la Quatrième République*, founded in July to support de Gaulle's 'Bayeux Constitution', would oppose the Constitution Bill.⁷⁶ Next, on 18 September, de Gaulle shattered what remained of the M.R.P.'s hopes by condemning, with a few reservations, the Assembly's draft proposals. He claimed that the arrangements suggested would leave too many powers with the National Assembly and that the organization proposed for the French Union was unsatisfactory. It would be better, in his opinion, for the Bill to be defeated by referendum than for

⁷²Ibid., 10 Sept. 1946, pp. 459-60; *Le Monde*, 11 Sept. 1946.

⁷³S.C.C. II, 11 Sept. 1946, pp. 472-5.

⁷⁴Wright, p. 213.

⁷⁵J.O. (A.N.C. II), *Déb.*, 11 Sept. 1946, pp. 3672-3 and 3675-6 (division lists).

⁷⁶*Le Figaro*, 13 Sept. 1946.

France to be left with *un Etat mal conforme*, and he strongly hinted that he would support those upholding his views at the next election.⁷⁷ The National Council of the *Union gaulliste* met on the following day and decided that the Constitution Bill did not measure up to the standards prescribed by the General, whereupon the M.R.P.'s representatives (amongst whom were Paul Viard, Léo Hamon, and Alfred Coste-Floret) resigned in protest.⁷⁸ But the M.R.P. remained undecided about committing itself definitely to a tripartite constitution. Blum appealed to it to make up its mind as to whether it wished to defend the Republic or not.⁷⁹

At this point, the highly controversial problem of the French Union threatened to break the tripartite alliance once and for all. The government submitted to the Constitutional Committee a new version of its former scheme for instituting a High Council and an Assembly of the Union, the latter body being empowered to propose legislation and to deal with matters submitted to it either by the government or by the metropolitan parliament.⁸⁰ This version was essentially conservative, since it proposed that the organization of the Union should be fixed by the Constitution and that it should remain under the control of the French Parliament. As such it disturbed the Left, who still preferred a looser federal arrangement with considerable political autonomy for the constituent territories and who therefore objected strongly to certain features of the government's scheme. At the first sign of trouble Bidault spoke before the Committee and threatened to take the matter before the Assembly as a question of confidence unless his proposals were adopted.⁸¹ His intervention had the desired effect; the Committee quietly accepted the government's suggestions, whereupon the African members marched out in protest against a clause providing for separate representation of natives and Europeans on the Union Assembly. The clause in dispute was later removed and the remaining proposals were adopted by the Assembly on 20 September.

Another crisis occurred four days later, when Paul Coste-Floret claimed in *L'Aube* that the Constitution Bill still required

⁷⁷*Le Monde*, 20 Sept. 1946.

⁷⁸*Ibid.*, 21 Sept. 1946.

⁷⁹*Le Populaire*, 20 Sept. 1946.

⁸⁰*J.O. (A.N.C. II), Doc., Annexe* no. II-894, 19 Sept. 1946, pp. 742-3.

⁸¹*S.C.C. II*, 19 Sept. 1946, pp. 585-7.

modification. He stated that the Council should represent territorial collectivities, that the President should be elected by secret rather than by open ballot, and that the regulations governing the formation of interim ministries after dissolutions required further amendment.⁸² Later, Coste-Floret told the Constitutional Committee that unless these 'fundamental' changes were made he would resign as *rapporteur* and the M.R.P. would vote against the bill. The seriousness of the situation was brought home when the M.R.P. members, following the rejection (by 21 to 21) of their proposal that the President be elected by secret ballot, walked out of the committee meeting. Auriol was again called in to act as mediator, and by the morning of the 26th he had persuaded the Party leaders to accept a four-point compromise. It was now agreed that the President should be elected by secret ballot, in keeping with traditional practice, but that there should be no specific provision for this in the Constitution, and that the Council should be elected by 'territorial collectivities', special colleges which were themselves to be elected by universal suffrage. Modified procedures governing the formation of interim ministries and the approval of the Premier's programme by the Assembly were also agreed upon. Having adopted these proposals, the Constitutional Committee went on to pass the draft bill as a whole by thirty-two votes to nil, with the Communist, Socialist and M.R.P. members voting together.⁸³ The following day the Assembly passed an Organic Law laying down the system for the election of the Council of the Republic. It was to consist of 315 members, of whom 242 were to represent metropolitan France. Of these, 42 were to be elected by the National Assembly (a concession to the Communists) and 200 by the departmental colleges of *grands électeurs*, consisting of delegates elected by cantons under proportional representation.

The final obstacles having been removed, the Assembly moved rapidly to the close of the debate. The vote on the bill was taken on the morning of Sunday the 29th, just before sunrise, when it was passed by 440 votes to 106. The majority was made up of the Communist, Socialist and M.R.P. groups in addition to a lone Radical, three members of the U.D.S.R. and Georges Ahnne, the deputy for Oceania; the Radicals and the Right voted against

⁸²24 Sept. 1946.

⁸³S.C.C. II, 24 Sept. (pp. 696, 705) and 26 Sept. 1946 (pp. 745, 759).

the bill and the members of the Algerian Manifesto group, who objected to the French Union proposals, abstained.⁸⁴

By contrast with its predecessor, the second Constitution Bill provided important checks on the power of the National Assembly. The Council of the Republic was to be accorded full parliamentary status, a suspensive veto over all bills except the budget, the right to propose amendments to legislation coming from the Assembly and the right to share in the election of President. The President was to be empowered to choose the Premier, who needed only to obtain the Assembly's approval for his programme before forming his cabinet. The government could be overthrown by the Assembly at any time during the first eighteen months of the legislature but after that period the government was entitled to dissolve the Assembly if two ministerial crises occurred within eighteen months of each other. Providing both the Premier and the President were willing to use their powers, they would be able to give the executive a stability and a freedom of action it had not enjoyed under the Third Republic. Yet within ten hours of its adoption by the Constituent Assembly, General de Gaulle was maintaining at Epinal that, if the bill were ratified, the President and the Council would have insufficient powers and that the French Union would not be adequately organized. He went on to arraign the parties themselves – for their 'omnipotence', their dissensions and their readiness to abandon principle for tactical ends.⁸⁵ This was a disturbing departure from de Gaulle's usual practice; from here it was a short step to attacking not only the parliamentary system, but the very principle of the party system itself.

Immediately, the Radicals and the P.R.L. made common cause with the General, and the referendum campaign from the outset took on the character of a pitched battle between Right and Left. Although committed to defend the bill, the M.R.P. took part in the exchanges with a desperation summed up in Maurice Schumann's slogan, *Sortir du provisoire pour sortir du tripartisme*. The Socialists were much more forthright in defending the bill, although they tended in their propaganda to point out that the Assembly would remain the most powerful institution in the proposed system, despite the important rights vested in the

⁸⁴J.O. (A.N.C. II), *Déb.*, 28 Sept. 1946, pp. 4259-60. See Appendix 4.

⁸⁵De Gaulle, *Discours et messages*, pp. 740-7.

President and the Council⁸⁶ – which was precisely de Gaulle's complaint! If anything, the Socialists treated de Gaulle with surprising sympathy and spoke of him as a well-meaning person who had accepted bad advice. Depreux, for example, went no further than expressing his regret that de Gaulle had wanted to establish a régime based on personal power. 'We shall never say that General de Gaulle wants to re-establish a Fascist régime. We shall merely say that it is to be regretted that he has cast doubts on the future of France and of the Republic'.⁸⁷ Blum, too, refused to see in de Gaulle another Louis Napoleon and credited him with sincerity in acting for what he believed to be the national interest.⁸⁸

Referendum day, 13 October 1946, came as a relief to all the parties. This time the Constitution Bill was approved by a 53 per cent majority of the valid votes. The actual figures, compared with those of the previous poll, are shown in Table VI.

TABLE VI *Voting in the Referenda of 5 May and 13 October 1946*⁸⁹
(Metropolitan France and Overseas Territories)

	5 May 1946	13 October 1946
<i>Oui</i> Votes	9,454,034	9,297,470
<i>Non</i> Votes	10,584,359	8,165,459
Valid Votes	20,038,393	17,462,929
Total Votes	20,567,378	17,792,008
Enrolments	25,829,425	26,311,643

The most striking feature of the result was the high rate of abstention; fully 32.4 per cent of the enrolled electors did not vote as compared with 20.4 per cent in the previous referendum. As a result, the *Oui* vote on this occasion, although it constituted the majority, was 157,000 less than the minority *Oui* vote in the May referendum. Although there was no concrete evidence to show that the M.R.P.'s supporters had resigned in the greatest numbers, this theory was accepted as true in the weeks immediately following the poll and further increased the M.R.P. leaders'

⁸⁶*Le Populaire*, 4 Oct. 1946.

⁸⁷*Ibid.*, 8 Oct. 1946.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, 9 Oct. 1946.

⁸⁹The figures for the referendum of 13 October are given in *J.O., L.D.*, 12 January 1947, pp. 346-9.

hostility to *tripartisme*. It was clear that the bill would not have been passed without the M.R.P.'s support. The heaviest *Oui* votes were again registered in the old republican areas – the Mediterranean coast, Languedoc, the Loire Valley, the North East, and the north-western part of the Massif Central – but the votes which had swung the result had come from the M.R.P.'s areas of strength, the Brittany-Normandy region, Alsace-Lorraine, and the southern Massif Central.

The bill became law on 27 October 1946 and a special copy of the Constitution Act, duly signed by all the ministers, was ceremonially sealed on 30 October at the Ministry of Justice. A small group of people gathered for the occasion in the *Salle des Sceaux*, where original copies of France's earlier Constitutions were kept in a glass case. Pierre-Henri Teitgen, the Minister of Justice, performed the sealing ritual; by tightening the screws on the Great Seal, he pressed together the two faces of the wax-filled matrix. The finished seal, enclosing the ends of the ribbons attached to the document, bore on its upper face a female figure symbolizing the Republic and on the reverse the motto, *Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*. The Fourth Republic had begun. General de Gaulle would have appreciated the ceremony, and might perhaps have been present, had not he shown such hostility to the Act. His absence was as symbolic as the sealing of the Constitution itself.

6

The Twilight of Tripartisme

Questions of Alliance

In Guy Mollet's opinion, the referendum campaign had invested the tripartite alliance with a solidarity which it had hitherto lacked and he suggested that the alignments of the constituent period would persist in the election campaign for the first National Assembly.

On one side the S.F.I.O. Socialists, Communists, trade unionists, left-wing Radicals, and the progressive wing of the M.R.P. form a solid coalition against which would break any attempt to harm the republican institutions.

On the other side, the forces of reaction are reorganizing and uniting – each must take stock of this. In the centre there is a floating, hesitant mass, probably in favour of the Republic, but nevertheless tired, dissatisfied and discontented.

The republicans, democrats and revolutionaries of this country must understand that the fate of the Republic is in their hands; they must see that the [republican] institutions are respected and loved; and they must, while stating their essential differences as adversaries or competitors, understand that THE ENEMY IS ON THE RIGHT.¹

It is interesting to find Mollet suggesting that there were progressive forces, with which the S.F.I.O. might co-operate, in the M.R.P. as well as in the Radical Socialist Party. But no matter how much he claimed that the enemy was on the Right and that the defence of the new Constitution was the first task of the future, it was almost inevitable that the first purely political problems of the Fourth Republic would be those of alliance. The full implications of the M.R.P.'s call, *Sortir du provisoire pour sortir du tripartisme*, now became apparent. Sooner or later moves would be made to establish a centre alliance as the basis for the next government.

¹*Le Populaire*, 15 Oct. 1946.

Even before the Constitution Bill had been enacted, the M.R.P. began pressing for its revision, particularly with a view to strengthening the powers of the President and the Council of the Republic. The tactical considerations behind this proposal were clear – the M.R.P. wanted to repair its relations with de Gaulle and to provide the basis for a new understanding with the R.G.R. On 15 October, the Party's executive called for a revision of the Constitution and invited the Socialists to choose between *tripartisme* and a centre alliance, 'the union of democrats attached to social progress and national independence'.² The latter proposal was later summed up by Maurice Schumann in the slogan *Bidault sans Thorez!* Within two weeks of the referendum poll, the M.R.P. was appealing to the electors to help it destroy the tripartite alliance and revise the Constitution it had done so much to create. With equal speed, the Communists produced their counter-slogan, *Thorez sans Bidault!*, as a symbol of their continued determination to establish a Communist-led Popular Front. They, too, asked the Socialists to make a positive choice. Thorez blamed the S.F.I.O. for having clung to *tripartisme* when it had been given the chance of joining a straight Communist-Socialist alliance, which he claimed could have been realized both in November 1945 and in January 1946.³

Blum used all his resources as a publicist to show the S.F.I.O.'s rank and file that the real choice facing the electors was not between Bidault and Thorez, but between progress and reaction. The cause of progress, he argued, would be best served if the electors were to make the S.F.I.O. sufficiently powerful in the National Assembly for it to form a *ministère homogène*, a straight ministry of its own. If, on the other hand, the election results made it necessary for the parties to form another coalition government, the Socialists would not take part in one which intended to revise the Constitution or from which the Communists were excluded. Blum insisted that if another coalition were established, its ministers should observe the conventions of collective responsibility and its programme should be based on the electoral programmes of the allied parties. But he always returned to the argument that the best arrangement would be a straight Socialist ministry supported by a tripartite alliance in the Assembly. The result, he claimed, would be greater flexibility; a disagreement between the allied parties would not automatically

²*L'Aube*, 16 and 19 Oct. 1946.

³*L'Humanité*, 18 Oct. 1946.

endanger the government but in cases of a serious difference of opinion it would be possible for an opposition party to provide temporary support for the ministry. For all its ingenuity, this scheme was recognized by the electors as a statement by the Socialists that they preferred *tripartisme* to either Marxist or a centre alliance. As Duverger remarked at the time:

The position of the Socialists is untenable in the long run; it amounts to refusing a right-wing as well as a left-wing alliance and taking refuge in a *tripartisme* in which [the S.F.I.O.] remains the ham in the sandwich, becoming thinner all the time.⁴

The revisionist campaign became more important as the campaign progressed. On 1 November de Gaulle gave a press interview in which he not only criticized the Constitution but also characterized the régime of parties as a threat to the State. He concluded his remarks by enjoining the voters to support in the election those who realized 'the absolute necessity of changing these bad institutions as quickly as possible'.⁵ Although this issue embarrassed the Socialists, they resolutely insisted that the Constitution should not be revised before it had been given a fair trial. Mollet told Raymond Millet of *Le Monde* that the Socialists were aware that they might have to act with the Communists to defend the Constitution and that their two parties, 'as representatives of the working class, adversaries of capitalism and disciples of Marx, find themselves agreeing in the domain of ideology despite their disagreements over methods'.⁶ Nor, once the lines were drawn, did the Socialists hesitate to attack the M.R.P. on such matters as the church-schools issue. On polling day, *Le Populaire* carried a cartoon in which the M.R.P.'s leaders trailed to battle under the banner, *Marchons au combat, à la gloire!* Francisque Gay, dressed as a *curé*, was followed by Robert Schuman, the Minister of Finance, churning out bank-notes from a hand machine; then came François de Menthon, weighed down with a loudspeaker (*Vox Dei*) through which a bishop, bringing up the rear, was addressing the faithful. Such anti-clerical pleasantries would have been inconceivable under the Mayer régime.

Election day, 10 November, was a subdued occasion for the electors were becoming tired of being called to the polls so often.

⁴*Le Monde*, 22 Oct. 1946. ⁵*Ibid.*, 2 Nov. 1946. ⁶*Ibid.*, 5 Nov. 1946.

In fact, 678,000 fewer voted on this occasion than in June, the abstention rate for metropolitan France rising from 18.2 per cent (on 2 June) to 21.9 per cent. The results showed significant changes in the strength of the main parties. (See Table VII.)

TABLE VII *Election of 10 November 1946**
(Metropolitan France only)

	Votes	%	Seats	%
Right	2,466,000	12.9*	70	12.9
Radicals and others	2,694,000	14.0	60	11.0
M.R.P.	5,058,000	26.3	158	29.0
Socialists	3,432,000	17.9	90	16.6
Communists	5,489,000	28.6	166	30.5
Unclassified	64,000	0.3		
Total	19,203,000	100.0	544	100.0

*Corrected percentage.

The Communists, whose share of the valid votes had risen from 26.2 to 28.6 per cent, had once more become the largest party, while the M.R.P., having lost over half a million votes, again dropped back to second place. However, the most ominous feature of the result was the serious decline in the S.F.I.O.'s electoral strength; its share of the vote had dropped from 21.1 to 17.9 per cent, involving a total loss of 756,000 votes.

Of the 100 constituencies contested by the S.F.I.O. in only six (Ardèche, Cantal, Manche, Nièvre, Nord I, and Orne) had it gained ground. In most of the others it had lost heavily and in thirteen seats (including all the constituencies of the Seine and Seine-et-Oise departments) the decline was over 5 per cent of the enrolled electors. As Goguel points out, when the regional Socialist vote for this election is compared with that of the 1936 election, the Party appears to have gained at the expense of the Radicals in the West, the South West, and the Franche Comté, while losing ground in traditionally radical areas.⁸ However, when the regional results of the November 1946 poll are compared with those of the October 1945 election, the Socialist decline within the short span of *tripartisme* is seen to be occurring in all regions

*Campbell, p. 113.

⁸Goguel, *Géographie électorale*, p. 98.

regardless of their social character.⁹ In the election of June 1946 Socialist losses had been serious enough, but in this election five months later they were twice as heavy and had the effect of altering the traditional configuration of the S.F.I.O.'s vote distribution pattern. In October 1945 the Party's plateaux of high votes (Midi, Languedoc, the South West, Bourgogne and the North) had been linked by ridges of moderate strength, but now all these features had been heavily eroded. Only the North and Languedoc remained as regions of important Socialist strength; the Party's vote in the Parisian region had fallen by 36.90 per cent between October 1945 and November 1946 compared with 26.43 per cent along the Mediterranean coast, 18.42 per cent in the North and 24.75 per cent in metropolitan France as a whole. The extent of this levelling process can be judged from Table VIII, which compares the ranges in Socialist votes at the constituency levels for the three elections under *tripartisme*.

TABLE VIII *Ranges of Socialist Votes by Constituencies*

Vote Ranges* %	Number of Constituency Votes in Each Range		
	21 Oct. 1945	2 June 1946	10 Nov. 1946
35-40	1	0	0
30-35	7	1	0
25-30	9	8	3
20-25	18	14	11
15-20	34	42	23
10-15	23	28	45
5-10	5	8	16
0-5	0	0	2
Uncontested	5	1	2
Totals	102	102	102

*In terms of valid votes taken as percentage of enrolments.

Two trends were particularly disturbing; the Party's increasing failure to win over 20 per cent of the votes and the important shift of seats from the 15-20 to the 10-15 per cent vote range. While the latter trend diminished the Party's chances of winning

⁹Compare the voting pattern of 21 Oct. 1945 (map 2) with that of 10 Nov. 1946 (Goguel, *Géographie des élections*, p. 99).

seats under proportional representation it also raised the possibility that, if *scrutin d'arrondissement* were restored, the S.F.I.O. would have to resort to numerous electoral alliances to maintain its parliamentary strength, a practice which would threaten its integrity as a distinct political movement.

The moral of the S.F.I.O.'s disaster was firmly drawn by the professional commentators, who agreed in describing the Party as the victim of *tripartisme*. Jacques Fauvet claimed that it had estranged 'its bourgeois elements' by its claim after the Congress of August 1946 to be moving leftwards but that it had not moved far enough in that direction to retain 'its working class elements'.¹⁰ André Siegfried took the same view, and wrote of the S.F.I.O.'s progressive wing moving towards Communism and of its conservative supporters going over to the M.R.P. and the Radicals.¹¹ The Socialist leaders themselves agreed that their Party had lost support to both sides, not because it had been a neutral centre between two poles of attraction but because it had been the only party honestly concerned to put the true facts before the electorate. Blum suggested that the Communist Party and the M.R.P., with their dramatic slogans, had created an unreal drama in which one presented itself as the anti-Communist force and the other as the symbol of anti-clerical and anti-reactionary feeling in the country, thus distorting the perspectives of the election campaign.¹² Mollet claimed later that the S.F.I.O. had been unfairly penalized because of its realistic but unpopular views on economic and foreign policies. It had lost to the Communists those who feared that it would not stand firmly against any revision of the Constitution and against the forces of reaction, as it had lost to the Right those whose economic liberalism prevented them from agreeing with the Socialists' policy of economic controls and those who, having joined the party during the Resistance, now wanted to rejoin de Gaulle.¹³ He told the National Congress of 1947 that the M.R.P. and Communist Parties, by concentrating on the slogans of *Bidault sans Thorez!* and *Thorez sans Bidault!*, had been able to campaign 'as though we had not existed'.¹⁴

¹⁰*Le Monde*, 12 Nov. 1946.

¹¹*Le Figaro*, 13 Nov. 1946.

¹²*Le Populaire*, 13 Nov. 1946.

¹³Guy Mollet, 'Après les élections, Examen de conscience', *La Revue Socialiste*, no. 6, Dec. 1946, pp. 657-62.

¹⁴Minutes of the 39th S.F.I.O. Congress, Lyons, 14-17 Aug. 1947. Sitting of 16 Aug. 1947, p. 559.

The great illusion fostered at the Congress of August 1946 had now been shattered. The electoral reverse had apparently removed the possibility that the S.F.I.O. would be chosen to form its own *ministère homogène* with the resigned backing of its allies. A strong revulsion of feeling against *tripartisme* once more swept through the Party, whose militants became more concerned than ever to turn for strength to the traditions and myths of the movement's pre-war days. In their dealings with the other parties they displayed a stubborn pride, inspired by an *égoïsme de parti* (the phrase often used by Mayer when talking of this period).¹⁵ They refused to take any initiative in the work of arranging another coalition, and left the Communists and the M.R.P. to carry on the negotiations and the public bargaining which now became necessary.

Three major alliances were numerically possible in the new Assembly – another tripartite coalition, a Popular Front or a centre alliance. The various combinations may be illustrated with reference to Table IX, which gives the strengths of the party groups at the beginning of the winter and summer sessions.

TABLE IX *Group Strengths in the National Assembly**

Groups	29 November 1946	1 May 1947
1. Communist	169	168 (1)
2. M.U.R.F.	13	13 (1)
3. S.F.I.O.	101	103 (2)
4. M.R.P.	163 (1)	166 (2)
5. Radical Socialist	43	43
6. U.D.S.R.	23 (3)	23 (4)
7. Independent Republican	27 (1)	26 (2)
8. Peasant	6 (2)	7 (1)
9. P.R.L.	35 (3)	34 (3)
10. Muslim Group for Algerian Federalism – Benchennouf	8	6
11. Triumph of Democratic Liberties in Algeria – Lamine-Debaghine	0	5
<i>Non inscrits</i>	19	8
Not elected†	2	1
Total	619	619

* Number of attached deputies (*apparentés*) in brackets.

† The Deputy for Cochinchina had not been elected by May 1947.

Note: A three-member group of the Democratic Movement for Malgache Renovation was formed on 14 January 1947, but its members were arrested in April 1947 at the time of the Madagascar rebellion.

¹⁵Interview with Mayer, Paris, 22 June 1960.

On the figures for 29 November 1946, 447 deputies (well over the absolute majority of 310) would be the strength of a tripartite alliance, 326 that of a Popular Front (groups 1 to 3 and 5) and 334 that of a centre alliance (groups 3 to 6). Each of these three majorities could be extended; thus the Radical, U.D.S.R. and Independent Republican groups might be added to a tripartite alliance, or the two latter groups might be drawn into a centre alliance under certain circumstances. The first problem, however, was to secure agreement on a basic formula, which would not be possible so long as the S.F.I.O. refused to make its own preferences clear. Without its participation, no centre or Popular Front alliance could be constructed. Thus, while appearing to remain in the background, the S.F.I.O. stood in fact in the very centre of negotiations. The efforts of the M.R.P. and the Communist Party were primarily directed to forcing it into a decision and failing that, into stating whether or not it wanted *tripartisme*, as a formula of government, to be continued.

As the largest party in the Assembly, the Communists were obliged by custom to make the opening moves, and on 14 November their *Bureau politique* suggested that a Communist-Socialist government be formed under Communist leadership. Thorez told a correspondent of the London *Times* that his party was not requesting power to implement its own policy so much as to put into effect a programme of reconstruction and to nationalize further industries. It wanted also to reduce prices, to check black marketeering, to balance the budget, to carry out fiscal and monetary reforms and to assist agriculture.

It is clear . . . that the Communist Party, in its action as part of the Government and within the framework of the parliamentary system it has helped to re-establish, will hold strictly to the democratic programme which has won for it the confidence of the masses of the people. The progress of democracy throughout the world, in spite of rare exceptions which serve only to confirm the rule, permits the choice of other paths to socialism than the one taken by the Russian Communists. In any case, the path is necessarily different for each country.¹⁶

In a letter to Mollet, Duclos said that such a government, led by Thorez, would be able to form a parliamentary majority with the aid of some overseas deputies. He therefore proposed that

¹⁶*The Times*, 18 Nov. 1946.

delegations of the Communist and Socialist Parties should meet to discuss this possibility and that the *Comité d'entente* should be reconstituted in the interests of unity of action.¹⁷ In fact, as the Socialists pointed out, the proposal did not take sufficient account of the problem of rallying a parliamentary majority: the Communist, Socialist and M.U.R.F. groups would have only 280 members between them, whereas they required at least 310 if they were to have a majority in the Assembly. A special meeting of the S.F.I.O.'s National Council discussed the offer on 17 November and decided that, in the first place, only a national congress of the Party could sanction the reconstitution of the *Comité d'entente* and that, secondly, the Communists had not given enough details about what programme they thought the government should carry out. The Council therefore asked the Communist Party to define precisely

the limits of the majority on which it intends to rely, to obtain the co-operation of the other parties with which it proposes to govern, and, on the basis of the general ideas it has enunciated, to define . . . a programme of action, the essential measures for implementing this programme and its methods of government.¹⁸

The Socialists were in fact asking the Communists which of the centre parties, the M.R.P. or the Radicals, was to be asked to join the proposed alliance.

It was now the turn of the M.R.P. to canvass its solution for the crisis. Its executive, which met on 21 November, disapproved of the proposed Communist-Socialist alliance and suggested instead that the Bidault government should remain in office, having been granted special authority to deal with pressing problems.¹⁹ Behind the scenes, however, the M.R.P. was busily exploring the possibilities of forming a centre alliance under Bidault's leadership, but the Socialists refused to be drawn, Mollet stating that the S.F.I.O. would not be party to any coalition directed against the Communists.²⁰ Yves Dechézelles also rejected Maurice Schumann's proposal for a broad labour movement from which the Communists would be excluded. 'In the imagination of our "labourists",' Dechézelles claimed, 'the Socialist Party would be given the destiny of becoming the left-wing of a vast rally

¹⁷*Le Populaire*, 19 Nov. 1946.

¹⁸*Ibid.*; *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 21, Dec. 1946, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹*L'Aube*, 22 Nov. 1946.

²⁰*Le Populaire*, 21 Nov. 1946.

centred on the middle classes, serving as a rampart for the forces of social reaction'.²¹

The next move came from the Communists. After a long meeting on the evening of 27 November, their Central Committee announced that Thorez would be a candidate for the presidency of the Provisional Government and offered to settle with the Socialists and 'all genuine republicans' questions about the programme, composition, and leadership of the government. To this end it proposed that the various presidencies, those of the Assembly, the Provisional Government and, once the Constitution had come into operation, of the Republic and the Council, should be 'linked', that is, shared by prior agreement between the major parties. The Committee also laid down a lengthy governmental programme covering the problems of agricultural and industrial development, food distribution, price controls, monetary policy, and budgetary and fiscal reforms.²² Copies of the resolution were sent on the following day to the League of the Rights of Man, the C.G.T., the S.F.I.O. and the R.G.R. but not, significantly, to the M.R.P.; this was the first sign given by the Communists that they had the Radicals in mind as third partners in the alliance. On 30 November, the Communist and Socialist delegations met at the *Palais Bourbon* to discuss the proposals. According to a report which Mollet gave later to the S.F.I.O.'s National Council, the Socialists first asked the Communists what limits they had in mind for the governmental majority, a thrust which the Communists parried by claiming that if the two Marxist parties could reach agreement enough 'republicans' would be found to make up the majority. When questioned about economic policy, the Communists were unable to satisfy the Socialists that they were sufficiently determined to impose controls and to give priority in planning programmes to the need for industrial re-equipment, which the Socialists considered more important than ordinary reconstruction work. The discussions on the whole were inconclusive, although the Socialists did take the definite step of rejecting the proposal for 'linking' the presidencies.²³ Meanwhile, the U.D.S.R. and the Radical Socialist groups had signified their disapproval of the Popular Front idea, which had been canvassed

²¹Ibid., 27 Nov. 1946.

²²*L'Humanité*, 28 Nov. 1946.

²³*Le Populaire*, 4 Dec. 1946.

by such progressive Radicals as Queuille, Delbos, André Marie, and Vincent Badie.²⁴

The time remaining for negotiations was running out. Bidault and his ministers having resigned on 28 November, a new provisional government had to be formed to carry on until the permanent institutions provided by the Constitution had been established. The Council of the Republic would have to be formed; it would then have to join with the National Assembly to elect the President of the Republic, who would select the first Premier. The whole process would not be completed until late in January, and in the meantime the provisional régime would have to continue in force. A new President of the Provisional Government had now to be elected under Article One of the Act of 2 November 1945, that is, by an absolute majority (at least 310) of the membership of the National Assembly. The need to make this appointment had an immediate effect on the party situation, because the candidates offering soon made it clear that they stood for specific coalition formulae, Bidault for a centre alliance and Thorez for a Popular Front. The S.F.I.O., in deciding its attitude towards these candidatures, would be forced to consider seriously the questions of alliance which it had hitherto avoided.

This was the problem which faced the Party's National Council when it met on the evening of 3 December, a few hours after Auriol's election as President of the Assembly. It had to decide whether or not the Socialist group should vote for Thorez in the first ballot for the presidency, which was to be held on the afternoon of the following day. The moderate members of the Council, most notably Mayer, André Philip, and Depreux, claimed that the Party should not vote for Thorez on principle, while the anti-participationist spokesmen, such as Le Bail and Marceau Pivert (a colourful pre-war figure who had been readmitted to the Party), took the line that the Party should refuse to join any further coalition governments. On the other hand, Gouin, Boutbien, Lamine-Gueye, and Pierre-Bloch argued for the progressives that the deputies should not only vote for Thorez but that the S.F.I.O. should agree to join a ministry under his leadership. Fully alive to the dangers of hardening this division, Mollet and Tanguy-Prigent asked the Council to decide whether it would recommend that the Socialist group vote for Thorez and

²⁴*Le Monde*, 1-2 Dec. 1946; *Le Populaire*, 3 Dec. 1946.

leave aside the question of whether the Party should join a Communist-directed coalition. Mollet's 'realistic' approach was undoubtedly based on the shrewd calculation that even if the Socialists did support the Communist leader he could not possibly be elected, so that the issue of governmental participation would not in fact arise. Augustin Laurent, who supported Mollet on this occasion, suggested that the Party should vote for Thorez to avoid being accounted anti-Communist and that it should provide conditional support for the subsequent government. Arguments of this kind carried the day, and the Council eventually decided to support a Communist candidate by 3,121 mandates to 843, with 458 abstentions and 63 absent. Several moderate federations, including Haute-Vienne and Landes, voted in the minority alongside such anti-participationist federations as Gironde.²⁵

The issue had stirred up the factional rivalries which had lain dormant since August, but whereas then the attack on the leadership had come from the left of the Party it was now coming from the right. Mollet was now experiencing the difficulty of keeping support for a centre policy in a divided party. On the following afternoon, when Thorez was defeated in the first ballot for the presidency (he obtained 259 votes, 51 short of the constitutional majority), a significant number of the Socialist group's moderate deputies deliberately flaunted their National Council's ruling; while 77 Socialists voted for Thorez, two voted for Le Troquer, four cast blank voting papers (a form of abstention), and nineteen failed to record votes.²⁶ The dissident deputies were in many cases important figures; André Philip and Georges Gorse had cast blank voting papers, while Defferre, Depreux, Froment, and Valentino had not voted. Philip, Gorse, and Defferre offered to resign from the Party but were refused permission. However, a meeting of the *Comité directeur* later decided to bring their cases before the next national congress.²⁷

On the evening following Thorez's defeat, the S.F.I.O.'s National Council met for a second session, this time to decide whether or not it should now support Bidault's candidature for the presidency. The delegates were fully aware of the fact that if the Party voted for Bidault it would at the same time sanction

²⁵Ibid., 4 Dec. 1946; *Le Monde*, 5 Dec. 1946; *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 21, Dec. 1946, pp. 3-4.

²⁶J.O. (A.N.), *Déb.*, 4 Dec. 1946, pp. 57-8. See Appendix 4.

²⁷*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 22, Jan. 1947, p. 2.

the formation of a centre government under his leadership, and the discussions immediately centred on this possibility. Mollet could no longer avoid taking sides; he joined with the progressives in advocating the adoption of a resolution submitted by the Sarthe federation, which proposed that the Socialist Party should not support any ministry, or belong to any government or parliamentary alliance from which the Communists were excluded or which did not have a policy conforming generally to the detailed programme of reforms which the Council had adopted on the day before. To meet this direct attack on the idea of a centre alliance, the moderates and anti-participationist delegates united behind a motion put forward by the Vaucluse federation, which came out against the Party's joining any government but suggested that it should provide conditional support to a ministry with whose policies it agreed. The moderates had at last reached the stage of openly suggesting that the Party should break with the Communists, even if this involved its supporting an M.R.P.-R.G.R. coalition in power. Mollet, finding his newly-established authority seriously challenged from this quarter, did not press his case too hard, and asked only that the Council should not rule out the possibility of the Party's joining another coalition; that it request the parliamentary group to abstain when Bidault's candidature came before the Assembly; and that it leave a wide area of discretion to the *Comité directeur* and the parliamentary group to deal with the other parties in the forthcoming negotiations. The vote on the rival motions was very close indeed; the Sarthe motion was adopted by 2,242 mandates to the 2,125 given to the Vaucluse text, there being 55 abstentions and 63 absentees. The result could have gone the other way had several of the federations usually voting with the moderates, such as Oise, Calvados, Landes, Bouches-du-Rhône and Haute-Savoie, not aligned themselves with the progressives in backing the Sarthe proposal.²⁸ But the incident marked the definite beginnings of a serious attack within the Party against connection with the Communists, and it was clear that Mollet, if he continued to identify himself with that connection, would find increasing difficulty in avoiding open warfare between the rival factions. When the second ballot for the presidency was held in the Assembly on the following day, the Socialists, along with the

²⁸Ibid., no. 21, Dec. 1946, pp. 3-4; *Le Populaire*, 5 Dec. 1946; *Le Monde*, 6 Dec. 1946.

Communists and about half the members of the Radical and U.D.S.R. groups, cast blank voting papers, with the result that Bidault obtained only 240 votes, 70 short of the constitutional majority.²⁹

The defeats of Thorez and Bidault had shown that there were not sufficient areas of agreement amongst the Assembly's membership to provide a majority either for a Popular Front or for a centre alliance. *Tripartisme* still remained the only practicable parliamentary basis for government. The main parties involved were slowly coming round to accepting this fact; they soon began exploring the possibilities of extending the old combination further to the right, by incorporating in the majority the Radical Socialist group and possibly even the U.D.S.R. and Independent Republican groups. But they had also to decide from which party the next President should be chosen. Blum expressed a widely-held view when he suggested that, since the Communist and M.R.P. nominees had already been rejected, either a Socialist or a Radical would be suitable for the post.³⁰ Correctly sensing the shift in opinion, the Socialists now came out openly with the proposal that they should be seriously considered once more as the main party of government. On 8 December, *Le Populaire* carried a special inset supplement giving full details of the programme which had been adopted by the S.F.I.O.'s National Council on the 3rd. It dealt with the need for checking inflation, for reducing military and public expenditure, for increasing the control of the state over the distribution and allocation of raw materials, and for implementing the policies recommended in the Monnet Plan, especially with regard to industrial re-equipment and the drawing up of investment and production priorities.

A period of negotiations between 5 and 11 December, in which Auriol played a leading role, served mainly to isolate the outstanding points of difference. While the main parties were now resigned to continuing *tripartisme*, they could not agree about which centre-right groups should be invited to join the combination; the Communists and Socialists, to conciliate the M.R.P., were willing to admit the groups of R.G.R. (the Radicals and the U.D.S.R.) but drew the line at the Independent Republicans, whose inclusion they claimed would make the alliance a National Union in which the parties of the Left would

²⁹*J.O. (A.N.), Déb.*, 5 Dec. 1946, pp. 67-8.

³⁰*Le Populaire*, 7 Dec. 1946.

be forced to compromise policies and principles. There were also policy differences; the M.R.P. complained that no policy was being defined to meet the serious situation in Indo-China and that the Communists and Socialists were not justified in advocating the nationalization of further industries.³¹

It was not until the evening of Wednesday the 11th that the question of another candidate for the presidency was raised, and then in rather dramatic circumstances. News that the Radicals wanted to nominate Robert Schuman as the head of an interim government shocked the Communists into pressing the Socialists to nominate one of their leaders for the presidency. The latter agreed, and eventually persuaded Léon Blum to stand for the position, despite his doctor's advice to the contrary. The other parties immediately rallied round Blum's candidature, and when the Assembly met on the afternoon of the following day he was elected President of the Provisional Government by 575 votes out of 590.³² His return to power delighted the people. Memories of the leader of the Popular Front, the martyr of the Riom Trials, the frail hero of Buchenwald came flooding back as press photographs again showed him in his characteristic moods and attitudes. His kindly, almost ascetic face inspired a confidence and affection which few other post-war leaders, including de Gaulle, had enjoyed. He was to broadcast frequently in the days ahead, speaking evenly and with assurance, a leader addressing his people.

Blum first tried to form a National Union coalition, containing representatives of all parties from the Communists on the Left to the Independent Republicans on the Right, although later, under Communist pressure, he agreed that only one Independent Republican should be invited to join the ministry.³³ He failed to reach his objective because the M.R.P. and the R.G.R., who were becoming extremely concerned about the situation in Indo-China, refused to agree that the Communists should be given cabinet responsibilities commensurate with their importance as the largest party in the Assembly. The Communists were asking that one of the Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, and Defence be given to a member of their Party, a request which the M.R.P. considered unreasonable. On Monday 16th, in a last

³¹*Le Monde*, 11 and 12 Dec. 1946.

³²*J.O. (A.N.), Déb.*, 12 Dec. 1946, pp. 90-1.

³³Michel Morin, *Le Populaire*, 17 Dec. 1946.

effort to produce a settlement, Blum went to the length of offering the Communists the Ministry of National Defence, which he intended to associate with three subordinate ministries, each under the control of a minister from a different party. This arrangement was accepted by the Communists but was turned down by the M.R.P. and R.G.R. groups.³⁴ His resources exhausted, Blum did not explore the possibility of establishing an alternative alliance but took the initiative in ending the five-weeks' crisis by forming a straight Socialist government, the *ministère homogène* of which the Party had spoken for months.

The new cabinet consisted of eighteen ministers, as compared with twenty-four in the previous team, and twelve under-secretaries of state. Blum's care to recruit the best talent available, without trying to favour one side of the Party against the other, is borne out by the following list of ministers:

Léon Blum	President, Foreign Affairs
Guy Mollet	Minister of State
Augustin Laurent	Minister of State
Félix Gouin	Minister of State
Paul Ramadier	Justice
Edouard Depreux	Interior
André Le Troquer	National Defence
André Philip	National Economy and Finance
François Tanguy-Prigent	Agriculture
Robert Lacoste	Industrial Production
Marcel Naegelen	Education
Jules Moch	Public Works, Transport and Reconstruction
Marius Moutet	Colonies
Daniel Mayer	Labour and Social Security
Eugène Thomas	Posts and Telegraphs
Dr Pierre Ségelle	Health and Population
Max Lejeune	Ex-Servicemen and War Victims
Albert Gazier	Secretary of State to the Presidency

On Tuesday the 17th, Blum read his ministerial statement to the Assembly, announcing that the legislation prepared by the outgoing government, including the 1947 budget, would be passed by his administration. Many of the measures contemplated, he pointed out, would be unpopular, but they were necessary if

³⁴Duclos, *J.O. (A.N.), Déb.*, 17 Dec. 1946, pp. 106-7. See also *Le Monde*, 17 Dec. 1946; and Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, p. 86.

public confidence was to be restored. The Assembly then accorded him a vote of confidence by 544 votes to 2.⁸⁵

While the formation of the Blum Ministry had ended the ministerial crisis, it had done nothing to solve the underlying parliamentary impasse. Socialist opposition to either a Popular Front or a centre alliance, Communist distrust of a full National Union, the refusal of the M.R.P. and the R.G.R. to accept anything less than a National Union if the Communists were to be included in the government – these had created the deadlock. As a result, the Socialists had been given a golden opportunity to prove their real value to the nation, and all their energy was now directed to making their ministry a success in the major fields of policy.

From Blum to Ramadier

Two days after the formation of the Blum ministry, war broke out in Indo-China. On the evening of 19 December, Viet Nameese troops and irregular militia attacked French soldiers and civilians in Hanoi and risings occurred in other parts of the country. On the 21st, Viet Minh forces in Cochin China resumed hostilities after a seven-weeks' truce. The government had been taken unawares, but it responded immediately by sending Marius Moutet, the Minister of Colonies, and General Leclerc on a special mission to the area.

To visit the battlefield was one thing, to apportion responsibility for the rising of 19 December was quite another. The sequence of events which had led to this incident, and through it to war, began on 9 March 1945, when the Japanese troops stationed by agreement in Indo-China swept aside the French administration and installed in power a Viet Nameese government headed by the Emperor Bao Dai. This ministry was later replaced by another provisional government led by Ho Chi Minh, who on 2 September 1945 declared Viet Nam to be independent of France. Following the Japanese surrender, the task of disarming the enemy troops was entrusted to Chinese forces in areas north of the sixteenth parallel and to British troops in the areas south of that line. The French were represented in the British zone by a small expeditionary force commanded by General Leclerc and by a civil service corps under Admiral Thierry d'Argenlieu, the High Commissioner. They were able to

⁸⁵ *J.O. (A.N.), Déb.*, 17 Dec. 1946, pp. 102-5 and 127-8 (division list).

establish their control over Cochin China and southern Annam but they chose to leave Ho Chi Minh's government secure in Tonkin China and northern Annam. The Chinese troops in the north were not well-disposed towards the French, but they eventually withdrew from the country after an agreement had been concluded on 3 March 1946 between the French and Kuomintang Governments.

Leclerc and d'Argenlieu differed greatly in their attitudes to Ho Chi Minh's régime. Leclerc was impressed with its stability and claimed that the French should enter into negotiations with the Viet Nameese with the object of achieving a mutually satisfactory understanding. On the other hand, the High Commissioner wanted to take strong action to re-establish French authority in the north, even by resort to force. General de Gaulle appears to have sympathized with this approach, but after his resignation in January 1946 the Gouin ministry encouraged the idea of negotiations with the Viet Nameese Government. Jean Sainteny, a Commissioner of the Republic in the area, on 6 March concluded an agreement with Ho Chi Minh whereby France recognized the Viet Nameese Republic as a free state (with its own government, army, and financial system) within the Indo-Chinese Federation and, through it, of the French Union. Under the terms of the agreement, the French Government undertook to ratify referenda decisions for the unification of the country which might be taken by any of the three Indo-Chinese provinces, Tonkin, Annam, and Cochin China. Both Governments agreed to guard against hostilities between their troops and to hold discussions about the future political organization of Indo-China, French economic and cultural interests, and Viet Nam's relations with foreign countries.³⁶

The Viet Nameese began to doubt the sincerity of the French authorities when Admiral d'Argenlieu established a puppet régime in Cochin China, instead of holding a referendum to decide whether that province wished to become part of a united Viet Nam. Relations between the French and Viet Nameese were not improved by the protracted conference of their delegations at Fontainebleau, in France, between 6 July and 2 August 1946. Ho Chi Minh was most dissatisfied with the terms proposed by

³⁶For an accurate text of this agreement see Jean Sainteny, *Histoire d'une Paix manquée, Indochine 1945-1947*, pp. 182-4. The text given in A.P., 1946, p. 553, is inaccurate.

the French and it was not until 14 September that he and Moutet reached agreement on a *modus vivendi*, which was to come into force on 30 October. Both Governments undertook to follow the course mapped out by the preliminary convention of 6 March and to bring to an end 'the acts of hostility and violence' which were still occurring in Cochin China and southern Annam, while Viet Nam signified her approval of the creation of a monetary and customs union for the whole of Indo-China.³⁷

Some Frenchmen thought that Ho Chi Minh would lose ground to the extreme wing of the Viet Minh movement on his return to his homeland, but he found his authority and popularity undiminished. Difficulties soon arose over the application of the *modus vivendi*; guerrilla fighting continued in the south and the French authorities tried to assert customs control over Viet Nameese ports by aggressive and unilateral action instead of by negotiation. An incident was inevitable. On 20 November, at the Tonkinese port of Haïphong, a customs dispute over the unloading of a Chinese launch led to an outbreak of fighting. A series of armed clashes culminated in a French naval bombardment of the town which killed thousands of Annamese civilians. Before long, the French military had taken over Haïphong and the neighbouring airfield.

Admiral d'Argenlieu was in Paris at the time but his deputy, General Valluy, instructed the French commander to demand that Viet Nameese forces withdraw from the Haïphong area. The Viet Nameese were understandably reluctant to comply with this ultimatum, for Haïphong was their main export port and the focus of the communications system on the Red River Delta. Their request for a joint mission of enquiry was rejected. A letter which Ho Chi Minh sent to Blum suggesting a truce was mysteriously delayed in transmission. Unable to gain any ground by peaceful means, the Viet Nameese forces took the offensive at Hanoi on 19 December, an incident which was reported to France as unprovoked aggression.

French opinion had been badly informed about this drift towards the most wretched of colonial wars. There had been few press correspondents in Tonkin during the critical period, and the reports channelled through the *Agence France Presse* had

³⁷Philippe Devillers, *Histoire du Viêt-Nam de 1940 à 1952*, pp. 309-10. I have relied heavily on the accounts by Devillers and Sainteny about the course of this war.

inevitably been unfair to the Viet Nameese position. Reports giving the other side of the story, coming mainly from the Associated Press, were delayed so long that they lost their immediacy and news value.³⁸ Without the facts, attitudes in France had been shaped by emotion and prejudice. The M.R.P. and the Right, maintaining that if Viet Nam were allowed to establish her independence the break-up of the whole French Empire would follow, had characterized the policy of conciliation as *la politique d'abandon*. When the fighting began, they denied that Ho Chi Minh's government was representative of Viet Nameese opinion and hence that no purpose would be served by negotiating with it. Lacking the information necessary to formulate a convincing counter-argument, the Left were unable to take strong action to prevent war after the first reports of the Hanoi rising had been cabled to Paris.

Le Populaire had done its best to keep pace with the trend of events in Indo-China. Before he became Minister of Colonies, Moutet had written three good articles about the Viet Minh movement,³⁹ and in 1946 both Oreste Rosenfeld and Michel Morin had criticized the policies being pursued by Admiral d'Argenlieu, and argued the need to deal fairly with Ho Chi Minh. When he gained some indication of the real facts behind the Haiphong incident, Blum pointed out in a forceful article that the alternatives facing the French in Indo-China were a policy of military reconquest or one of working for a political settlement under the terms of the agreement of 6 March 1946. He had no doubt that the latter was the only means of preserving French cultural influence in the country.⁴⁰ This statement squared well with the anti-colonial tradition which still flowed strongly within the S.F.I.O. To an important extent, its integrity as a party was dependent on its ability to adhere consistently to certain policies which arose directly from its past emotional experience. Anti-clericalism, internationalism, economic egalitarianism and anti-colonialism were issues on which Socialist militants and intellectuals were reluctant to compromise, because to do so would be to expose the Party to a crisis of conscience, a demoralising break between action and belief. Anti-participationist sentiment in the Party was based on this concern; if governmental responsibilities

³⁸Devillers, p. 358.

³⁹*Le Populaire*, 26, 27 Dec. 1945, and 1 Jan. 1946.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 10 Dec. 1946.

seemed likely to oblige the S.F.I.O. to compromise its principles then it should move quickly over into the opposition. A loss of influence was infinitely preferable to a loss of moral identity.

However, one of the tragedies of post-war Socialism in France is its share in the responsibility for the war in Indo-China. Marius Moutet, the Socialist Minister of Colonies, had held that post since January 1946, in both the Gouin and Bidault governments, and he had been disturbingly reluctant to oblige the Saigon administration and Admiral d'Argenlieu to honour the agreements of 6 March 1946. Nor had he made a determined effort to produce a settlement at the Fontainebleau talks. And now, instead of acting promptly to arrange a cease-fire in Tonkin, the Blum government resorted to the ruinous expedient of 'restoring order', of neglecting to contact Ho Chi Minh, and of sending responsible observers to 'report back' on the local situation. Blum told the Assembly on 23 December that every effort was being made to protect French lives and interests and that, once the crisis was over, the work of organizing a free Viet Nam within the framework of the French Union would be resumed.⁴¹ Moutet and Leclerc arrived in Saigon shortly afterwards, but while the General flew on immediately to the north, the Minister of Colonies lingered amongst the administrative officials in the south. He did visit Hanoi eventually, on 2 January, but then stayed for only thirty hours and made no attempt to get in touch with Ho Chi Minh. He left Indo-China a week later, having stated that the political problems would be re-examined after the army had restored order.⁴² In the meantime, the French military had successfully cleared the vital Hanoi-Haiphong and Langson-Tien Yen roads, and seemed well on the way to total victory. The Blum government accepted Moutet's interpretation of events, and chose to allow the military operations to continue, thus committing itself to the very policy which Blum himself had condemned within a week of taking office – a war of reconquest. The full shock of this commitment did not strike the Party until February, too late to reverse the policy but by no means too late to inquire into its origins.

In its economic policy, however, the Blum government was more successful. It had taken office at a time when inflation appeared to be getting out of hand; between July and December 1946, the wholesale price index had risen from 531 to 771, and

⁴¹*J.O. (A.N.), Déb.*, 23 Dec. 1946, pp. 320-2.

⁴²Devillers, p. 363.

wholesale food prices had all but doubled.⁴³ Blum decided to call for a general lowering of industrial, commercial, and agricultural prices by 5 per cent from 2 January onwards, with a further 5 per cent decrease to follow on 1 March. He explained his policy, which became known as the *baisse Blum*, on New Year's Eve in a radio broadcast, and the necessary measures were decreed on 2 January.⁴⁴ As a deflationary policy, the *baisse Blum* was something of a gamble, an attempt to prevent stocking and hoarding at a time when the demand for consumer goods far exceeded the supply and when the government lacked the necessary powers to implement effective controls. It was based on the assumption that the spring of 1947 would bring an increase in industrial and agricultural production which would remove the gap between supply and demand. But this did not occur. At the time, however, the *baisse* was an outstanding political success, and created a wave of public approval for the S.F.I.O.

By mid-January, preparations for establishing the first constitutional government of the Fourth Republic were complete. The elections to the Council having ended, it became possible to hold a joint meeting of both houses to elect the President of the Republic. When the ballot was taken on 16 January, Vincent Auriol was elected by 452 votes (10 over the constitutional majority), his nearest rivals being Champetier de Ribes (M.R.P. – 242 votes), Jules Gasser (R.G.R. – 122 votes) and Michel Clemenceau (P.R.L. – 60 votes).⁴⁵ Auriol's victory had its mysterious side because he had obviously attracted thirty or so votes from some unexpected quarter. As the ballot was secret, only the names of those who had voted were recorded in the *Journal officiel* and not the division list. Only 408 deputies and councillors of the Communist, Socialist, and M.U.R.F. groups were shown to have voted, which suggests that Auriol must have won the votes of various colonial deputies and of those Radicals who belonged to Herriot's following. Herriot was elected President of the Assembly in Auriol's place on 21 January, and it is just possible that he may have arranged for Auriol to have the support of a portion of his group in the previous ballot in return for Marxist support for his own candidature.

⁴³A.P., 1946, p. 585.

⁴⁴J.O., L.D., 2 January, 1947, pp. 66-7. Decree No. 47-1 of 2 January 1947.

⁴⁵J.O. (A.N.), Déb., 16 Jan. 1947, pp. 1-4.

Once Auriol began to consider his choice of a Premier, the whole question of establishing a stable parliamentary alliance, neglected since December, was revived once more. There was some talk in M.R.P. circles of having another Socialist *ministère homogène* but the Communists opposed the idea and Blum himself announced that he had no intention of remaining in office any longer. Auriol was convinced that only the National Union formula had any reasonable chance of success and that a Socialist leader would be best placed to bring it about. On 17 January he announced that he had nominated Paul Ramadier, Minister of Justice in the Blum government, as Premier. Ramadier's selection surprised many people, not because he lacked either experience or ability but because he had hitherto been an isolated figure inside his own party. Like Auriol, Ramadier came from the south; born at La Rochelle in 1888, he had studied Law and Commerce at the University of Toulouse. In 1919, he became mayor of Decazeville, a left-wing town in the predominantly conservative department of Aveyron, and between 1928 and 1940 he represented the Aveyron constituency of Villefranche-de-Rouergue in the Chamber of Deputies. At first he belonged to the right-wing of the S.F.I.O. but in 1933 he, along with Renaudel and Marquet, broke away to found the *Union socialiste républicaine*, a revisionist splinter party. Unlike Marquet, however, Ramadier remained a republican and a democrat; he held posts in the Blum, Chautemps, and Daladier ministries before the war and on 10 July 1940 he had the courage to vote against the granting of full powers to Marshal Pétain. During the war he played a prominent part in the southern resistance movement, and after liberation he rejoined the S.F.I.O., serving in de Gaulle's provisional government from November 1944 until May 1945 as Minister of Food.⁴⁶ A thick-set man, whose goatee beard and prominent nose were the delight of cartoonists, Ramadier was devoted to Blum and shared his doctrinal views. In the months ahead, he was to become not only a resourceful Premier but the rallying point within the Socialist Party for the strong moderate movement against the Communist connection and Mollet's leadership.

Ramadier had little difficulty in forming a National Union alliance. He persuaded the parties to agree that the Ministry of National Defence should be given to a Communist, and that the

⁴⁶See his obituary notice, probably written by David Thomson in *The Times*, 16 Oct. 1961, p. 17.

three subsidiary portfolios of War, Marine and Air should be given to representatives of three other parties. The M.R.P. was at first reluctant to take part in the proposed alliance but the Radicals, reassured by the early success of the *baisse* that inflation could be brought under control, were only too willing to join. Both they and the M.R.P. may well have calculated that the centre of gravity in the National Union would probably shift in their direction and that a situation could easily arise in which the Socialists, having clashed with the Communists, would agree to become part of a centre alliance.⁴⁷ On the evening of the 19th, Ramadier informed Auriol that he was able to form a government, whereupon Auriol sent a formal message to the President of the Assembly informing him that Ramadier was his choice as Premier. Two days later, Ramadier outlined his ministerial policy before the Assembly. He undertook to continue the *baisse Blum*, to produce a balanced budget, to increase production, to fix money wages, and to stop the fighting in Indo-China as soon as order was restored. The Assembly then invested him by 549 votes to nil, the significant abstentions being those of the P.R.L. group and of sixteen Independent Republicans.⁴⁸

His cabinet, which was formed on the evening after the investiture vote, was as follows:

Socialist

Paul Ramadier	Premier
Félix Gouin	Minister of State, President of the Monnet Plan
Edouard Depreux	Interior
André Philip	National Economy
Jules Moch	Public Works and Transport
François Tanguy-Prigent	Agriculture
Robert Lacoste	Industrial Production
Marcel Naegelen	Education
Marius Moutet	Colonies

⁴⁷Guy Desson gives interesting accounts of these negotiations in *Le Populaire*, 18, 19-20, and 21 Jan. 1947. Ramadier's press statement, *ibid.*, 19-20 Jan. 1947.

⁴⁸*J.O. (A.N.), Déb.*, 21 Jan. 1947, pp. 28-33 and 37-8 (division). See Appendix 4.

Communist

Maurice Thorez	Vice-Premier
François Billoux	National Defence
Charles Tillon	Reconstruction
Ambroise Croizat	Labour and Social Security
Georges Marrane	Public Health and Population

M.R.P.

Pierre-Henri Teitgen	Vice-Premier
Georges Bidault	Foreign Affairs
Paul Coste-Floret	War
Robert Schuman	Finance
Jean Letourneau	Commerce

Radical

Yvon Delbos	Minister of State
André Marie	Justice
André Maroselli	Air

U.D.S.R.

François Mitterand	Ex-Servicemen and War Victims
Pierre Bourdan	Youth, Arts and Letters

Independent Republican

Marcel Roclore	Minister of State
Louis Jacquinot	Navy

The Socialists, who held nine of the twenty-six places, had been entrusted with the portfolios they required to carry further the policies initiated by the Blum government, especially the Ministries of National Economy, Public Works and Transport, Industrial Production, and Agriculture. Of the other parties, the Communists and the M.R.P. had been given five portfolios each, the Radicals three and the U.D.S.R. and the Independent Republicans two each. Ramadier was not required by the Constitution to submit his cabinet for the Assembly's approval but on the 28th he allowed the discussion of interpellations bearing on the composition of his ministry. At his insistence, the Assembly passed a special *Order of the Day of Confidence*. This received 519 votes, and only twelve deputies – ten members of the P.R.L. and two Independent Republicans – opposed it. It is interesting to note that those deputies who abstained included fourteen Independent

Republicans and fourteen M.R.P. deputies, the latter representing the hard core of anti-participationists in their group.⁴⁹

The Departure of the Communists

There was no doubt that the National Union underlying the Ramadier government was bound to break up sooner or later; what really concerned the politicians was not this prospect, which they took for granted, but the difficulty of judging which issue might produce the final crisis. The structure of the new alliance could be represented by a diagram in which the parties are shown running from left to right but separated from each other by lines of cleavage. One such line, tracing the division on the church-schools issue, would mark off the M.R.P. from the *laïc* parties; another would indicate the boundary between the centre forces and those left-wing Socialists who joined with the Communists in supporting the principle of negotiations with Ho Chi Minh, severe economic controls to check inflation, and a pro-Russian foreign policy; two others, both cutting across the M.R.P., would separate those for and against the nationalization of further industries and those for and against the revision of the Constitution. The alliance could fracture along any one of these lines, depending on how serious the issue raised and how urgent the need for action. The contrast between this alliance and classical *tripartisme*, which had been held together by the overriding necessity to produce a constitutional settlement, was obvious. The Ramadier government embarked on its policies with ill-concealed nervousness, watching anxiously for the signs of impending crisis.

By March, the political issues arising from the war in Indo-China could no longer be ignored. The French army units in the country had won control of the Red River Delta and the inland valleys, so that people in France were led to assume that the military problem had been solved; few suspected, in view of the inadequate press reports reaching Paris, that the Viet Minh guerrilla forces were in fact established in the forested, mountainous regions of northern and western Tonkin. The political problem now came to the forefront. The Communists and the left-wing Socialists (who were now better informed about the

⁴⁹Ibid., 28 Jan. 1947, pp. 85-6. The *Journal officiel* lists 519 deputies as having voted for the motion but claims that there were 521.

causes of the war)⁵⁰ insisted that negotiations should be resumed with Ho Chi Minh and the Viet Nameese Government, and that the settlement of 6 March 1946 should form the basis for discussion. This case was argued most forcefully inside the S.F.I.O. by Yves Dechézelles,⁵¹ the Administrative Secretary, who was rapidly becoming the focus of left-wing opposition to Mollet's policy of conciliating the moderates of the Party. The Right, the R.G.R. and the M.R.P., on the other hand, stood for *une politique de fermeté*, by which they meant that France should negotiate from the strength of her new military dominance, establish a puppet government in Viet Nam and integrate it within the French Union under the terms of the Constitution rather than those of the agreement of 6 March 1946.

Ramadier set himself to find a middle course between these two positions. Thus although he pleased the Left by removing d'Argenlieu as High Commissioner for Indo-China, he conciliated the M.R.P. and the Right by appointing in his place Emile Bollaert, a Radical with conservative views. When after 11 March the Assembly began its debate on the situation in Indo-China the Socialists produced a compromise policy of *ni abandon, ni reconquête*; they called for a rapid end to the fighting, but opposed the withdrawal of French troops from Tonkin; they called for negotiations with qualified Viet Nameese representatives, not necessarily Ho Chi Minh or his ministers, and then on the basis of the constitutional provisions for the French Union rather than of the agreement of 6 March 1946.⁵² To cap everything, Moutet on the 18th gave the Assembly an incredible version of the war's origins. He claimed that the Viet Nameese had been planning war throughout the whole of 1946, and that the Hanoi rising had been prepared well in advance. Ho Chi Minh, he suggested, had been pushed aside by extremists, and the rebels were now being controlled by a sinister central executive, which included representatives from the extreme left-wing of the Kuomintang and from the Japanese 'Black Dragon sect'. He claimed that the Annamese people themselves no longer supported Ho Chi Minh,

⁵⁰Thanks to the articles published by Léon Boutbien in *Franc-Tireur* and by André Fontain in *Le Populaire* (24 Jan. to 4 Feb. 1947).

⁵¹See *ibid.*, 26-27 Jan. 1947, and 'L'Union Française en danger, Les événements d'Indochine', *La Pensée Socialiste*, no. 12, Feb. 1947, pp. 4-7.

⁵²See Mayer, *J.O. (A.N.)*, *Déb.*, 14 Mar. 1947, pp. 853-5.

hence there was no point in negotiating with him.⁵³ Ramadier followed on from Moutet by making the proposal that, having restored order in the country, the French should enable the Annamese people to choose, in the absence of fear or restraint, leaders with whom the French could negotiate. France, claimed Ramadier, wished to have the Indo-Chinese provinces freely associated within the French Union, as one state if they so desired, but he insisted that the French Government should have control over Indo-Chinese foreign and defence policies and that peace should be negotiated under the Constitution rather than under the previous agreements. He appealed to the Communists to support his policy in the interests of national unity.⁵⁴

The Communists were in no mood to conciliate and, in a gesture which earned them the respect of anti-colonialists in other parties, they abstained when a motion of confidence in the government was adopted by 410 to nil. The Communist ministers, however, had covered themselves by voting for the motion.⁵⁵ Rumours of a ministerial crisis became more frequent on the following day, but matters were smoothed over at a special meeting of ministers.⁵⁶ By chance, the S.F.I.O.'s National Council met on the same day (19 March) to discuss the Party's policies on the electoral law, but it soon became clear that the delegates were more interested in the Indo-Chinese problem. Léon Boutbien insisted that negotiations be carried out with Ho Chi Minh's government while Moutet, aware of the hostility towards him, gave a weak defence of his policy. The Council appointed a Committee of Resolutions to work out a generally acceptable statement on the questions in dispute.⁵⁷ On the evening of the same day, the Central Committee of the Communist Party met and reaffirmed its demand for negotiations with Ho Chi Minh, authorizing its parliamentary group to oppose the granting of further military credits (the government was contemplating an additional military budget of 3,000 million francs) for the war.⁵⁸ This decision created a crisis situation. Ramadier was determined to put a question of confidence to the Assembly and did so on the afternoon of the 20th, after the position had been considered by a special meeting of ministers. In keeping with Article 49 of

⁵³Ibid., 18 Mar. 1947, pp. 875-83.

⁵⁴Ibid., pp. 904-5.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 929-30.

⁵⁶*Le Monde*, 20 Mar. 1947.

⁵⁷*Le Populaire*, 20 Mar. 1947; *Le Monde*, 21 Mar. 1947.

⁵⁸*L'Humanité*, 20 Mar. 1947.

the Constitution, however, the actual vote was delayed for one full day, until the morning of Saturday the 22nd.⁵⁹

The affair of the military credits altered the bearing of the second day's debate at the meeting of the S.F.I.O.'s National Council. The progressives, sensing that the ministerial crisis could easily deteriorate into a crisis of alliance, wished the Council to reaffirm its decision of 4 December 1946 to oppose the Party's joining any coalition from which the Communists were excluded. Many of the moderates argued that the Socialists, for the sake of the *baisse Blum*, should not follow the Communists into opposition should an open break occur, but a surprisingly large number of delegates suggested that, in such a situation, another *ministère homogène* should be formed. In an effective speech, Ramadier pointed out the consequences which could flow from a division of the nation into Communist and anti-Communist blocs, appealed to the delegates not to destroy the Party's 'bridge' position between Right and Left on Indo-Chinese policy, and asked the Council not to adopt too rigid an attitude towards the ministerial crisis. Depreux took the same line, urging that the Council should entrust the *Comité directeur* and the parliamentary group with the responsibility for taking whatever course of action seemed most appropriate under the circumstances.⁶⁰ The Council fell in with this advice and adopted a resolution which enjoined the *Comité directeur* and the parliamentary group, in the event of a ministerial crisis, not to lend themselves to a division of the major parties into two opposed blocs, and approved a motion on Indo-Chinese policy which conformed to the main outlines of the 'bridge' policy of *ni abandon, ni reconquête*. The motion stated that the Indo-Chinese problem would not be solved either by withdrawing the French troops or by using force to re-establish 'an outmoded régime', and called for the limitation of military operations to ensure the security of the civilian population and of garrisons; a cease fire which would reflect the intention of both sides to restore peaceful relations; the use of every opportunity of negotiating with the Viet Nameese government 'truly desirous of obtaining' the integration of Viet Nam within the French Union on the basis of the Constitution; and the appointment in Indo-China of civil servants who had given indisputable proof of their

⁵⁹*J.O. (A.N.), Déb.*, 20 Mar. 1947, pp. 948-57.

⁶⁰*Le Populaire*, 21 Mar. 1947; *Le Monde*, 22 Mar. 1947.

attachment to democratic and republican institutions.⁶¹ There was no mention of Ho Chi Minh and no mention of the agreement of 6 March 1946. The Party's left-wing, led by Dechézelles and Boutbien, was not slow in voicing its opposition to the Party's having compromised on an issue which was so important in terms of its anti-colonial traditions.

At the last moment a ministerial crisis was averted. On the morning before the crucial vote, the Communists' *Bureau politique* declared that the Communist group, by abstaining in the vote for additional military credits, would not be placing other governmental policies in question and that there was hence 'no occasion for the Communist ministers to break ministerial solidarity'.⁶² Duclos explained this attitude to the Assembly later in the day; the Communists, he said, were impressed by the need to preserve the coalition and ministerial solidarity and wished to support Bidault at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, which was just beginning. Ramadier chose not to insist that all the parties of the National Union should support the motion as an indication of their solidarity. The motion was passed by 411 to nil, the Communist ministers voting for it and the remainder of the Communist group abstaining.⁶³ Ramadier had thus been obliged to accept the principle, observed in practice during both the Constituent Assemblies, that ministerial solidarity did not have to be reinforced by parliamentary solidarity; that as long as his ministers voted together and did not publicly disavow his policies, there was no need for the parties of the National Union to vote as a unit in Assembly divisions, provided that the government was assured of a majority.⁶⁴ The implications of this practice were alarming, for if a party disagreed with a specific governmental policy, it could now afford to state its case publicly without jeopardizing its places on the cabinet. Such a convention was made to measure for the Communists who could now afford the electoral advantage of being an opposition party while still having the benefit of a direct influence on governmental policies.

This state of affairs annoyed the M.R.P. and the R.G.R. a great deal. A meeting of the M.R.P. group on the 22nd discussed

⁶¹*Bulletin intérieur*, no. 24, Mar. 1947, pp. 1-5.

⁶²*Le Monde*, 23-24 Mar. 1947.

⁶³*J.O. (A.N.)*, *Déb.*, 22 Mar. 1947, pp. 1022-4, 1037-8 (divisions).

⁶⁴See his remarks at a press interview on 3 April (*Le Populaire*, 4 Apr. 1947).

the possibility of withdrawing from the coalition, but voted by 95 to 25 against taking such a step.⁶⁵ However, the dissatisfaction remained; Alfred Coste-Floret later told Gabriel Robinet that Ramadier's acceptance of the convention had simply substituted a crisis of régime for a crisis of government.⁶⁶ The Radicals also came near to leaving the alliance. On the afternoon of the vote of confidence, a meeting of the R.G.R. intergroup voted on a show of hands that the Radical ministers should resign their posts; Herriot arrived at this stage and insisted on the taking of another vote, by which the meeting decided by 28 votes to 26 against leaving the government.⁶⁷

Another issue in colonial policy arose later in the month, this time with regard to the situation in Madagascar. A rising occurred there on 29 March, with the alleged connivance of the Madagascan group in the Assembly. While the French militia on the island moved forward to suppress the uprising with unwarranted severity, the six Madagascan parliamentarians (three deputies and three councillors) were placed under arrest, and legal proceedings were instituted to suspend their parliamentary immunity. The matter was considered at a cabinet meeting on 16 April, and most of the ministers wanted to refer the matter to the Assembly; the Communists, however, called for the annulment of the warrants of arrest, and this having been refused, they walked out of the cabinet room in protest.⁶⁸ Ramadier told a press conference that their action did not constitute a breach of ministerial solidarity because the ministers concerned had not positively indicated their dissent from the decision taken, namely, to refer the matter to the Assembly.⁶⁹ The Assembly considered the matter later in the month but deferred its decision.

While the Indo-Chinese and Madagascan issues had had the effect of straining relations between the Socialists and the Communists, General de Gaulle's new campaign for a revision of the Constitution tended for a period to drive them together again. Speaking at Bruneval on 30 March, the General declared that the time would come when 'the great mass of Frenchmen will rally to France' to reshape the Constitution.⁷⁰ When this statement

⁶⁵According to Guy Desson, *ibid.*, 23-24 Mar. 1947.

⁶⁶*Le Figaro*, 1 Apr. 1947.

⁶⁷*Le Monde*, 23-24 Mar. 1947.

⁶⁸*A.P.*, 1947, p. 64.

⁶⁹*Le Populaire*, 18 Apr. 1947.

⁷⁰*Le Monde*, 1 Apr. 1947.

was relayed to Ramadier, who was visiting his constituency, he replied firmly by defending the parliamentary régime as a means of producing decisions after a full presentation of different points of view.⁷¹ On 2 April, the government decided that unless he were speaking at official functions, de Gaulle was not to have the support of the army or the use of the radio for the direct transmission of his speeches. But the General was well into his stride; he declared at Strasbourg on 7 April that a 'Rally of the French people' should be formed to promote and ensure the success of 'a great movement for the general welfare and the extensive reform of the State'.⁷² The name caught on; *Rassemblement du Peuple Français* (R.P.F.) became the title of his new movement, in which he invited all Frenchmen to join together to achieve a revision of the Constitution, the liberation of the state from the control of parties and the creation of a strong presidential régime.⁷³

The Communists immediately denounced the R.P.F. as a reactionary manoeuvre and set about organizing a system of local vigilance committees. While agreeing that the new movement was a threat to the Constitution and to the parliamentary régime, the Socialists refused to regard de Gaulle as a 'tool of reaction' or to join with the Communists in setting up these vigilance committees. They felt that the real danger in the situation was that de Gaulle would be driven over to the Right and that he would sanction the use of illegal means, perhaps a neo-fascist organization, to stage a drive for power. The M.R.P., which still looked back on its days as *le parti de fidélité* with nostalgia, took some time to define its attitude but on 27 April its executive refused to join the R.P.F.⁷⁴ The R.G.R. was even more undecided, and the U.D.S.R. went to the length of permitting its members to join the R.P.F. as individuals.⁷⁵ When the R.P.F.'s parliamentary intergroup was formed later in the year, it recruited many of its members from the R.G.R. and its first president, Paul Giacobbi, was a Radical. Ramadier's National Union was never less a union than when confronted with the Gaullist challenge.

One of the factors which had persuaded the Communists to remain in the government at the time of the crisis over Indo-Chinese policy had undoubtedly been their concern to provide

⁷¹*Le Populaire*, 1 Apr. 1947.

⁷²*A.P.*, 1947, pp. 323-6.

⁷³*Ibid.*, p. 326.

⁷⁴*Le Monde*, 29 Apr. 1947.

⁷⁵*Le Populaire*, 19 Apr. 1947.

the maximum support for Bidault at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in March and April. With the M.R.P., the Communists believed that a resurgence of German militarism could be prevented by the Allies' pursuing a policy of political decentralization, heavy reparations, and territorial reductions in dealing with post-war Germany. They were in complete agreement with the case which Bidault put at the beginning of the Moscow Conference, when he argued that the Saar should be integrated into the French monetary and economic systems, that German coal should be supplied in assured quantities for French industrial needs, and that adequate financial and material reparations should be exacted from Germany. The French Communists appreciated the fact that their government's policy coincided with that of Russia on several points (both wanted the Oder-Neisse line to be Germany's eastern frontier; both wanted heavy reparations, German coal for devastated countries, and international control of the Ruhr), which meant that, for the first part of the Moscow Conference, France was able to occupy a position mid-way between Russia and the Anglo-Saxon countries. Later in the proceedings, however, Bidault drew closer to the western powers. On 21 April he reached an understanding with the representatives of the United States and Great Britain, who agreed that the Saar should be integrated into the French economy under certain conditions and that France should receive limited coal supplies from the western military zones of Germany.⁷⁶ France dropped her other demands and the Conference ended on 24 April with the Russian and western delegations at loggerheads. It has frequently been suggested that the breakdown of the Moscow Conference, and Bidault's alignment with the western powers removed one of the main reasons for which the French Communists had remained in the Ramadier government.⁷⁷ But this is reading too much into the event. At the time it was not generally accepted that the Moscow breakdown was definitive, and there remained some hopes that a German peace treaty would be signed when the foreign ministers resumed their talks later in the year. Nor had Bidault's understanding with the Anglo-Saxon powers constituted in itself a commitment of France to the Western Bloc in the Cold War; this commitment was made

⁷⁶A.P., 1947, pp. 54-5 and 83-4.

⁷⁷See Fauvet, *La IV^e République*, pp. 111 and 117; Goguel, *France under the Fourth Republic*, p. 25.

gradually in the course of the following months. In April 1947, therefore, the Communists could still believe that Russian foreign policy interests would be served by their remaining in the Ramadier ministry.

While public opinion had been focused on more spectacular issues, the conditions for crisis had been building up in the field of economic policy. By April there was no longer any chance of denying that the *baisse Blum* had failed as a deflationary measure. It was intended to effect two 5 per cent decreases in price levels, one taking effect after 2 January and the other after 1 March, but as Table X shows, instead of dropping by 10 per cent, general wholesale prices and wholesale food prices fell by only 3.1 and 5.4 per cent between January and April.

TABLE X *Prices Indices, January to April 1947*⁷⁸
(Base: 1938 = 100)

	General Wholesale	Food Wholesale
January 1947	874	992
February 1947	889	1021
March 1947	860	965
April 1947	847	938

The possibility of a wage increase had been raised by the C.G.T. and the C.F.T.C. in February but, at the request of the government, they had agreed not to make any further wage claims until after 1 July, when the situation was to be re-examined.⁷⁹ But with their real wages still depreciating the workers were not content to wait so long, and a small strike at the Renault works on 25 April soon snowballed into a general demand for a wage increase, which the C.G.T. was forced to support.

The Communists, who had long been worried about their inability to support such demands as a party of government, were extremely embarrassed. Their ministers wavered at first but finally, at a cabinet meeting on 30 April, they supported the C.G.T.'s position and claimed that the government had failed to halt inflation.⁸⁰ On 1 May, when the traditional May Day rally was

⁷⁸A.P., 1947, p. 367.

⁷⁹J.O. (A.N.), *Déb.*, 2 May 1947, p. 1427.

⁸⁰*Le Figaro*, 2 May 1947.

held in the *place de la République*, Communist and C.G.T. speakers drew applause by advocating wage increases while the Socialists, still clinging to the philosophy of the *baisse Blum*, were heckled unmercifully. Once more there was a ministerial crisis. Another cabinet meeting was called but still the Communists held their ground, with the result that Ramadier, on 2 May, put a question of confidence to the Assembly. He based his case on the claim that the government's deflationary policy would work provided no wage increases were granted earlier than the date previously accepted by the unions, the 1 July. Duclos argued that the *baisse* had not reduced prices to the extent predicted and that real wages were still below pre-war standards; wage increases need not induce inflation if they were made at the expense of capitalist profits.⁸¹ After the constitutional delay of one day, the motion of confidence was adopted on 4 May by 360 to 186, the Communist group, ministers included, voting in the minority and most of the P.R.L. members withholding their votes.⁸²

Thorez and other Communist ministers had expected that Ramadier would now announce the resignation of his cabinet, but instead, having held a special meeting of ministers, he issued a communiqué claiming that the negative vote of the Communist ministers constituted a rupture of ministerial solidarity and that, at the request of the cabinet, Auriol would entrust the more important of the Communists' portfolios (National Defence, Labour and Reconstruction) to other ministers for the time being.⁸³ On Monday 5 May, a special decree terminated the duties of four of the five Communist ministers and reallocated their portfolios; the fifth Communist minister, a member of the Council of the Republic, resigned his post later on the same day.

The effect of these developments on the S.F.I.O. may be imagined. In direct contravention of the resolution adopted by the National Council on 4 December (the Sarthe motion), the Socialist ministers had remained in a coalition cabinet from which the Communists had been excluded, thus breaking one of the cardinal principles of the Party's post-war strategy. For this reason, Mollet argued that Ramadier should resign for the sake of his party, but the moderate leaders, and Ramadier, argued that the ministry should remain in office even without the Communists,

⁸¹J.O. (A.N.), *Déb.*, 2 May 1947, pp. 1428, 1429-34.

⁸²Ibid., 4 May 1947, pp. 1473-4. See Appendix 4.

⁸³*Le Monde*, 6 May 1947.

to ensure the success of the *baisse Blum* and for the sake of the country. No one was in doubt, however, that the real question in dispute was the Party's understanding with the Communists and that Mollet would be hard pressed to hold his ground against the combined attack of the parliamentary group and the moderate wing of the Party. Mollet won the first round. On Sunday afternoon, before the Communists had left the cabinet, the *Molletistes* and non-parliamentary members of the *Comité directeur* obtained a decision, by 12 votes to 9, that the Ramadier ministry should resign. Léon Blum and the deputies and ministers present voted in the minority. The Socialist parliamentary group then met and decided by 69 votes to 9 that the government should remain in office, but that Ramadier should, as a temporary measure, entrust the Communists' portfolios to other ministers until a specially convened meeting of the S.F.I.O.'s National Council had discussed the matter. Afterwards the *Comité directeur* met again and this time decided, by 10 votes to 9, to endorse the decision of the parliamentary group. Fauvet claims that Lamine-Gueye and Pierre-Bloch, having previously supported resignation, abstained on this division and that Mme Emilienne Moreau changed sides and voted for the ministry's remaining in office.⁸⁴

The National Council met at 2 p.m. on Tuesday 6 May and argued the toss until 3 a.m. on the following day.⁸⁵ Ramadier and Blum took the line that unless the ministry stayed in office, inflation would get worse and that the resultant economic discontent could strengthen the R.P.F. movement to the point of endangering the Republic. Less sophisticated delegates stated quite bluntly that the Party would gain by breaking with the Communists. The case for resignation was pitched at several levels; some argued that another ministerial crisis would give the parties a chance to define their policies and relationships clearly, as they had done in December 1946, and that a new alliance (Communist-Socialist or Socialist-M.R.P.-R.G.R.) or possibly another Socialist *ministère homogène* might be the result. The anti-participationists, led by Marceau Pivert, claimed that the time had come for the Party to leave a government which had

⁸⁴Fauvet, *Le Monde*, 6 May 1947; *Bulletin intérieur*, no. 25, Apr.-May 1947, p. 4.

⁸⁵See *ibid.*, pp. 1-2; *Le Populaire*, 7 and 8 May 1947.

forced it to share in the creation of the Indo-Chinese war and the devaluation of real wages. In fact, the Party's failure to side with the Communists and the C.G.T. in supporting the demand for wage increases had obviously disturbed a great many of the progressive delegates, who argued that the significance of the strike should not be overlooked. Expanding this theme, Mollet claimed that if the Party remained in government with the parties of the bourgeoisie it would run the risk of coming into conflict with the working class. He suggested that another *ministère homogène*, based on an agreement with the C.G.T., was possible and much preferable to the centre alliance created by the break with the Communists. The maintenance of the Ramadier government, he claimed, would be a precarious venture; the Radicals and Republican Independents would go over to the opposition, leaving the S.F.I.O. and the M.R.P. in a bipartite coalition, a combination which Mollet said he would refuse to accept. He then put to the vote the question, 'Should the Ramadier government resign?' 2,125 mandates were cast in the affirmative as against 2,529 for the ministry's remaining in office. There were two abstentions. The mandates of the progressive and anti-participationist federations made up the minority, while the majority consisted of the mandates, not only of the moderate federations but also of many 'neutral' or swinging federations who had still been prepared to support Mollet in the divisions of December 1946.⁸⁶ This was his first defeat, and he was sobered by it.

At the time of the break, neither the Communists nor the Socialists appear to have regarded their separation as final or definitive. The Socialists, indeed, went to some length to prove that they had not been anti-Communist in their action. In June, Blum recalled that the Socialists had agreed to remain in the coalition

reluctantly, without any feeling of malice or animosity, without the least intention of forcing the Communists to remain out of office permanently, but on the contrary, with the genuine and passionate wish that the separation would be short-lived and that it would end once the circumstances producing it had been removed. For their part, the Communists seemed to understand this way of looking at things perfectly. They responded to it by assuring the Socialist Party of their good will

⁸⁶See Appendix 2 and cf. ballots 7 and 8.

and their true sympathy in the infinitely difficult task which it had to assume.⁸⁷

In fact, relations between the two parties deteriorated steadily through the summer and autumn of 1947. The Socialists blamed the Communists for inciting the wave of strikes which swept through French industry, and disapproved of their opposition to the Marshall Plan and their support for Russia during the early stages of the Cold War. The revival of the Cominform in September 1947 and the Czechoslovak coup of February 1948 completed the rupture. Although it appeared as quite a gentle separation when it was first arranged, the departure of the Communist ministers from the Ramadier cabinet stands out in retrospect as one of the dividing-lines in the politics of post-war France. The Socialists had consented to remain in a coalition alliance without their allies of the Resistance and of *tripartisme*, departing in doing so from one of the strategic principles which they had pursued consistently since the Liberation. Even in the restricted framework of the events of 1947 it was an important decision; seen across the span of the Fourth Republic it appears as one of the utmost significance.

It was left to Ramadier to lead the Party from a crumbling *tripartisme* to the third force alliance which kept the Fourth Republic alive for just over a decade. His decision not to resign in May 1947 was dictated mainly by his concern to avoid an economic crisis which could have had grave political consequences, but his later refusal to break with the M.R.P. and the Radicals after the final split with the Communists rested on the principle that, in the last resort, French Socialism stood for liberal republicanism rather than for revolution. *Tripartisme* having ceased to exist in spirit, the choice which faced the S.F.I.O. in mid-1947 was that between a centre and a popular front alliance, although it was clear that, whatever decision was taken, the Party was in a decline from which it might never recover. Ramadier, the thickset, imperturbable *méridional*, gained no glory by opting for the centre but it was the only course he

⁸⁷*Le Populaire*, 5 June 1947. See also J. R. Tournoux, *Carnets secrets de la politique*, p. 133. In a letter of 17 January 1958 to Tournoux, Ramadier recalled that the withdrawal of the Communists from his ministry in May 1947 had not been regarded seriously. *La rupture avec les communistes se présentait comme un simple événement de politique intérieure française et n'avait pas d'incidences internationales.*

could have taken under the circumstances, as the rest of the Party admitted after the Czechoslovakian coup of 1948. Had the Socialists decided, on the contrary, to break with the M.R.P. and to form a popular front with the Communists, the collapse of the centre forces would have been only a matter of time; a clash between Right and Left could then have led easily to civil war, the collapse of the Fourth Republic, and the obliteration of the S.F.I.O. as a political force. By committing themselves to the strategy of the third force, the Socialists showed that for them the preservation of parliamentary democracy was as important as the socialist transformation of the French economy, and reaffirmed their belief that one without the other would never produce a truly socialist order.

Appendix 1

Socialist Members of the Provisional Consultative Assembly, 7 November 1944 to 3 August 1945

1. *Those appointed in accordance with the Decree of 14 October 1944*

As a representative of the C.N.R.: Daniel Mayer

As representatives of the Metropolitan Resistance:

Gaston Defferre	Marcel-Edmond Naegelen
Edouard Depreux	Robert Verdier
Just Evrard	Mme Andrée Viénot

As representatives of the Parliamentary Resistance:

Jean-F. Audeguil	Jean Meunier
Vincent Auriol	Jules Moch
Georges Bruguier	Louis Noguères
Edouard Froment	André Philip
Félix Gouin	Jean Pierre-Bloch
Louis Gros	Jean-Louis Rolland
André Le Troquer	Henri Sénès
Robert Mauger	

2. *Those appointed in accordance with the Ordinance of 22 June 1945*

As a representative of the Metropolitan Resistance: Etienne Bécart

As representatives of the Parliamentary Resistance: Camille Bedin,
Jean Biondi, Max Lejeune.

3. *Those registered on lists of signatories for important Socialist Bills (The delegates' official affiliations are given in parentheses)*

Abbreviations:

Resistance Areas

M.R.	= Metropolitan Resistance Group
P.R.	= Parliamentary Resistance Group
E.R.	= Extra-metropolitan Resistance Group
D.C.	= Group of Overseas Departmental Councils

Resistance Organizations

C.G.A.	= <i>Confédération générale de l'agriculture</i>
C.G.T.	= <i>Confédération générale du travail</i>
C.D.L.R.	= <i>Ceux de la Résistance</i>
O.C.M.	= <i>Organisation civile et militaire</i>
M.P.W.D.	= Movement of Prisoners of War and Deportees

Signatories of a Bill outlining the Socialists' Monetary Policy, 20 February 1945 (*J.O. (A.C.P.), Doc., Annexe* No. 316, 20 February 1945, pp. 405-11)

Raymond Blanc (D.C. - Oran)

Albert Bosman Van Wolput (M.R. - *Libération Nord*)

Jean Bourgoïn (E.R. - Indo-China)
Albert Bouzanquet (M.R. - C.G.T.)
Roger Deniau (M.R. - *Libération Nord*)
Maurice Desétages (D.C. - La Martinique)
Georges Izard (M.R. - O.C.M.)
Max Juvenal (M.R. - *Combat*)
Pierre-Olivier Lapie (P.R.)
René Louis (M.R. - C.G.A.)
Gérard Ouradou (M.R. - C.G.T.)
Francis Perrin (E.R. - United States Committee)
Henri Ribière (M.R. - *Libération Nord*)
Henri Seignon (E.R. - Gabon)
Pierre Stibbe (M.R. - C.D.L.R.)
Jean Texcier (M.R. - *Libération Nord*)
Paul Valentino (D.C. - La Guadeloupe)
Gilbert Zaksas (M.R. - *Libérer et fédérer*)

Signatories of Bills outlining the Socialists' nationalization plans, 31 March 1945 (ibid., *Annexes* Nos. 421-5, 31 March 1945, pp. 487-508)

Jean Dulac (M.R. - C.D.L.R.)
Etienne Gagnaire (M.R. - M.P.W.D.)
Albert Gazier (M.R. - C.G.T.)
Jean Germinal (M.R. - *Libération Sud*)
Joseph Girot (E.R. - Madagascar)

With the exception of Albert Gazier, all the above delegates signed Socialist Bills during the Assembly's summer session (7 June to 3 August 1945). See ibid., *Annexes* Nos. 451, 476, 485, 501 and 520. Gazier did not sign *Annexes* Nos. 476 and 485.

Appendix 2

Important National Congress and National Council Divisions, 1945 to 1947

The following eight divisions have been chosen to illustrate the main factional cleavages of the period, the growth of the opposition to the Mayer leadership and the subsequent decline in Mollet's hold over the National Council. The results of the divisions, and the issues at stake, are as follows:

1. National Congress, 15 August 1945. Following a disagreement in the Committee of Resolutions two motions were put to the vote; that sponsored by Daniel Mayer recommended that the Socialist ministers should remain in General de Gaulle's government, while that submitted by Guy Mollet urged that they should resign. The Congress adopted the Mayer motion by 7,625 mandates to 2,916 for the Mollet motion (64 abstentions, 28 absent). This was the first indication of anti-participationist strength in the post-war Party. See pp. 97-8.
2. National Congress, 15 August 1945. A motion submitted by Mayer seeking approval for an alliance with the U.D.S.R. was challenged by a motion of the Sarthe federation for an alliance with the pro-Communist M.U.R.F. The delegates gave 6,104 mandates to the former and 2,718 to the latter (1,806 abstentions, 5 absent). The vote was nevertheless regarded as a serious Left-wing demonstration against the leadership. See pp. 97-102.
3. Conference of Federal Secretaries, 24 February 1946. Veillard, of the Seine-et-Marne federation, proposed to amend the last paragraphs of the draft Declaration of Principles with a view to increasing their Marxist bias. His motion, which received support from the progressive and anti-participationist federations, was defeated by 2,549 mandates to 1,597 (73 abstentions, 241 absent). See pp. 159-62.
4. Conference of Federal Secretaries, 24 February 1946. The moderate federations wanted to delete the word 'communist' from a clause of the draft organizational rules, but their move was defeated by 2,287 mandates to 1,848 (57 abstentions, 268 absent). Both this division and the one above provide a clear picture of which federations composed the cores of the Left- and Right-wing groups. See pp. 159-62.
5. Extraordinary National Congress, 29 March 1946. To indicate their disapproval of the leadership's policies, the Left-wing federations proposed to postpone the debate on electoral tactics until that on the programme had been completed. With the aid of some dissatisfied moderate and 'swinging' federations, they won approval for their motion by 2,882 mandates to 1,439 (133 abstentions, 31 absent), a sure sign that Mayer was losing control of the Party organization. See pp. 165-6.

6. National Congress, 29 August 1946. To signify their disapproval of the *Comité directeur* and of Mayer's leadership, the delegates rejected the *rapport moral* by 2,975 mandates to 1,365 (145 abstentions), an even heavier censure than that recorded at the preceding Congress of March 1946 (division 5. Cf. also division 2). See p. 207.
7. National Council, 4 December 1946. Following the defeat of Thorez in the first ballot for the presidency of the provisional government, the S.F.I.O.'s National Council had to decide whether it would participate in any coalition which might be formed in the event of Bidault's election. Two motions were presented: the first, brought forward by the Sarthe federation and supported by Mollet, recommended that the S.F.I.O. should not join any government from which the Communists were excluded; the second, sponsored by the Vaucluse federation, suggested that the S.F.I.O. should not join any coalition but that it should support any ministry whose policies it approved. Mollet's authority was sufficient to secure the adoption of the Sarthe motion, which obtained 2,242 mandates against 2,125 for the Vaucluse motion (55 abstentions, 63 absent), the latter being supported by the anti-participationist and some moderate federations. This result made it clear that support was now flowing away from Mollet. See pp. 238-40.
8. National Council, 6 May 1947. Following the resignation of the Communist ministers, the National Council was required to decide whether the Ramadier government should resign in consequence. Mollet, who favoured this course, found himself unable to sway the meeting, which decided by 2,529 mandates to 2,125 (2 abstentions) that the ministry should remain in office. See pp. 262-3.

The following table shows the number of mandates held by the federations at the 1945 and 1946 National Congresses (in 1945 one mandate equalled 25 members; in 1946, 50), and records on which side they voted in the divisions described above. The characteristics of the various factions, and the inconsistency of the smaller federations are discussed in Chapter 2, pp. 88-9.

Abbreviations used in the table:

- b = bloc vote
- m = majority vote
- sm = simple majority vote
- eq = evenly divided vote
- an = abstention
- at = absent

(In the table the issues presented in each division have been stated as simple propositions and the votes grouped under 'for' and 'against' categories.)

Sources:

Bulletin intérieur, No. 6, July-August 1945, pp. 6-7; No. 11, February-March 1946, pp. 3-4; No. 12, April 1946, p. 3; No. 18, August-September 1946, p. 6; No. 21, December 1946, pp. 3-4; No. 25, April-May 1947, pp. 1-2.

Federations	National Congress Mandates		Congress 15 Aug. 1945				Conference 24 Feb. 1946			
			(1) Participation in government		(2) Alliance with U.D.S.R.		(3) On Veillard amendment		(4) Declaration of Principles. Retention of the word 'communist' in text.	
	Aug. 1945	Aug. 1946	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
Ain	53	22	b		m		(an)		(an)	
Aisne	132	56	m		(an)		b		b	
Alger	34	21	b			b	(at)		(at)	
Allier	141	63	b		m		b		b	
Basses-Alpes	94	26	b		b		b			b
Hautes-Alpes	15	6	(at)		m		b			b
Alpes-Maritimes	101	46	b		m		b			b
Ardèche	61	17		b		b	b		b	
Ardennes	81	32	b		m		b		b	
Ariège	81	43	m		(an)		b		b	
Aube	54	14	b			b	b			b
Aude	221	78	b			b	b		b	
Aveyron	55	30	b		(an)*		b		b	
Bouches-du-Rhône	201	177	b		b		b			b
Calvados	34	17	m		b		b			b
Cantal	58	22	b			b	(at)		(at)	
Charente	54	21	(eq)		b		b		b	
Charente-Maritime	94	45		b	m		b		b	
Cher	45	23		m	(an)		b		b	
Constantine	81	31	b		(an)		b			b
Corrèze	54	24	b		(an)		b			b
Corse	61	22	b		m		b			b
Côte-d'Or	61	31		b	b		b		b	
Côtes-du-Nord	94	41	m			b	b		b	
Creuse	47	31	b		b		b		b	
Dordogne	201	76	m		m		b			b
Doubs	73	31	b		m		b		b	
Drôme	73	27	b		(an)		b			b
Eure	55	23	b		b		b		b	
Eure-et-Loir	46	25	b			b	b		(an)	
Finistère	101	50	m		m		(at)		(at)	
Gard	321	99		b	m		b		b	
Haute-Garonne	234	82	b		b		b		b	
Gers	89	34	b			b	b		b	
Gironde	331	130	b		(an)		b		b	
Hérault	201	89		m	m		b		b	
Ille-et-Vilaine	61	24	b		(an)		b			b
Indre	141	50	m		m		b		b	
Indre-et-Loire	111	44	b		b		b		b	
Isère	223	80		m	m		b		b	
Jura	34	21	b		(an)		b		b	
La Guadeloupe	5	5	b		(at)		b		b	
Landes	281	86	b		b		b			b
Loir-et-Cher	57	35	b		b		m		b	
Loire	101	39	b		m		b			b
Haute-Loire	41	12	b			b	b		b	
Loire-Inférieure	77	37		b	m		b			b
Loiret	47	22		b	b		b	(at)	b	
Lot	39	21	m		m		(at)		(at)	
Lot-et-Garonne	121	31	m		m		b		b	
Lozère	29	10		b	m		b			b

* Two mandates were cast against the proposal.

Congress 29 Mar. 1946 (5)	Congress 29 Aug. 1946 (6)	Nat. Council 4 Dec. 1946 (7)	Nat. Council 6 May 1947 (8)
To postpone debate on electoral tactics	Adoption of <i>rapproch moral</i>	Participation in government with Communists	Resignation of Ramadier Government

For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
b	(an)		b	(eq)			m
b		m	m		m	m	b
	b		b		b		b
	m		m			b	m
	b	b	m		b		m
b			m			m	
b			m		m	m	
b			m		b		b
b		sm	m			m	m
	b		m		b		m
	b	m			b		m
	b	b	b		b		b
b	(at)		m		m	b	
b			m			m	
b		(eq)					b
b	b	m			b		m
b			m	(at)			m
b			m	(an)		(at)	
	b		m		m		b
b	b		sm		b	m	m
			m			m	
b			m		b	m	
b			m		b	m	
	b		m				b
b			m		b		b
b			m		m		m
	b		b			b	
b			m		m		
b			sm		b	b	
(at)		b	m		b		b
(at)			b		m	b	
(an)			b	(at)			m
(at)							m
(at)	b		sm		b	m	
(at)			sm		b	m	b
b			b		m	m	
	b		m			m	
(at)		b			b	(at)	
b			sm		b	m	b
	b		b		b		
		(eq)	b		b		b

FRENCH SOCIALISTS AND TRIPARTISME

Federations	National Congress Mandates		Congress 15 Aug. 1945				Conference 24 Feb. 1946			
			(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
			Participation in government		Alliance with U.D.S.R.		On Veillard amendment		Declaration of Principles. Retention of the word 'communist' in text.	
	Aug. 1945	Aug. 1946	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
Maine-et-Loire	51	22	b			b	b		b	
Manche	27	17	b		b		b		b	
Maroc	23	10	b		b		b	(an)	b	
Marne	75	35	b			m			b	
Haute-Marne	27	11	b		b		(at)		(at)	
Martinique	—	—	(at)		(at)		(at)		(at)	
Mayenne	21	10	b		m			b	(an)	
Meurthe-et-Moselle	97	43	b		m			b		b
Meuse	14	11	b		b		(at)		(at)	
Morbihan	41	20	b		m			b		b
Moselle	13	9	(at)		b		b		b	
Nièvre	54	19		b		m		b		b
Nord	741	327	b		b			b		b
Oise	68	40	m		m			b		b
Oran	89	37	b			b		b		b
Orne	10	6	b		(eq)			b		b
Pas-de-Calais	829	309		m	b		b		b	
Puy-de-Dôme	201	87	b		(an)		b			b
Basses-Pyrénées	81	31		b		m	b		b	(at)
Hautes-Pyrénées	71	27		m	b			b		
Pyrénées-Orientales	101	52		b	(an)			b		b
Bas-Rhin	53	23	b		b			b		b
Haut-Rhin	41	25	b		b		b		b	(at)
Haut-Rhin (Belfort)	29	16	b			m	(at)		(at)	
Rhône	121	41		m	m		(an)		b	
Haute-Saône	41	11	b			b		b		b
Saône-et-Loire	81	47	b			b		b		b
Sarthe	113	47	b			b		b		b
Savoie	53	26	b		m		b			b
Haute-Savoie	67	32	b			b		m		b
Seine	481	216	m		m		b		b	
Seine-Inférieure	112	46		m	b		(at)		(at)	
Seine-et-Marne	67	33		b		m	b		b	
Seine-et-Oise	361	166	m		(an)			b		m
Sénégal	81	26	b			b	(at)		(at)	
Deux-Sèvres	63	28	b		(an)			b		b
Somme	234	81	b		m			b	m	
Tarn	109	52	b		b		b			b
Tarn-et-Garonne	41	21	b		b			b	b	(at)
Tunisie	41	17	b			b	(at)		(at)	
Var	189	81	m		m			b		b
Vaucluse	113	47		b	b			b		b
Vendée	49	24	b			b	b		b	
Vienne	49	18	b			b		b		b
Haute-Vienne	229	76	b		b		b		b	
Vosges	41	21		b		b	b		b	
Yonne	40	19	m		b			b		b
A.E.F. (Equatorial Africa)	—	—								
	10,633	4,485								

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For	Against	For	Against	For	Against	For	Against
b			b		m		m
(at) b		b	b	(at)	m	(at)	m
b		m		b		m	m
b (at)		(at) b		b (at)			m
b	b	m	b	b	m		m
b			b	b	m		m
b	b		b		b		m
	b		m	b	b		b
	b	m			b		b
b		m		m			m
b			m	b	m	b	m
b			b				
b			m	m		m	
b			m	b	b	m	
b (an)		m	m	b		m	m
b		b	m	b		m (at)	
	b	b		b	m		b
b			m	(at)		m	m
b		m	m	b			
b			m		b		b
b			m	b		m	
b			m	(at)		m	
b			m	b	m		b
b			m			m	
b		(eq)	m	m	m	m	
b			m	b	m	b	m
b			m	m			m
b			m	b		m	
b			m	m	b		
b			m				
b			m		b	m	
b			m	m		b	m
b			m	b	b		m
(an)		m	m	b		b	m
b	b	m	b	m	b		b
b			b			m	
b			m	b			m
							b

Appendix 3

Percentage Socialist Votes by Constituencies in the Elections of 1945 and 1946

(Valid votes expressed as percentages of enrolled electors)

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>21 Oct. 1945</i>	<i>2 June 1946</i>	<i>10 Nov. 1946</i>
Ain	14.68	12.69	10.72
Aisne	21.41	17.68	14.06
Allier	27.90	22.82	18.45
Basses-Alpes	30.34	26.42	22.92
Hautes-Alpes	11.46	10.37	5.50
Alpes-Maritimes	13.87	16.34	10.41
Ardèche	14.44	13.03	13.53
Ardenne	24.19	22.10	18.81
Ariège	24.01	22.57	20.90
Aube	23.29	17.93	15.71
Aude	30.63	26.64	24.72
Aveyron	15.97	14.14	13.40
Bouches-du-Rhône I	21.57	19.46	13.33
Bouches-du-Rhône II	33.08	29.61	23.16
Calvados	11.29	12.13	9.69
Cantal	23.42	17.18	17.72
Charente	14.06	15.88	14.48
Charente-Maritime	18.90	17.03	14.20
Cher	16.93	15.19	12.16
Corrèze	18.50	16.79	13.73
Corse	8.20	7.63	—
Côte-d'Or	27.50	23.00	22.70
Côtes-du-Nord	16.74	18.51	16.18
Creuse	18.86	18.78	15.52
Dordogne	24.24	19.37	16.08
Doubs	21.39	19.28	17.55
Drôme	11.76	17.13	14.78
Eure	13.69	11.77	8.99
Eure-et-Loir	14.98	12.28	10.09
Finistère	16.29	17.54	12.75
Gard	24.30	19.97	17.29
Haute-Garonne	25.78	24.15	20.70
Gers	18.73	17.49	17.08
Gironde	26.10	21.78	17.02
Hérault	17.95	18.77	15.76
Ille-et-Vilaine	15.08	15.83	13.75
Indre	16.13	15.26	12.05
Indre-et-Loire	24.15	20.53	17.26
Isère	14.92	15.33	12.01
Jura	14.58	14.91	13.33
Landes	34.48	30.46	26.66

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>21 Oct. 1945</i>	<i>2 June 1946</i>	<i>10 Nov. 1946</i>
Loir-et-Cher	19.45	15.33	13.53
Loire	—	7.48	6.11
Haute-Loire	—	8.34	5.28
Loire-Inférieure	14.63	12.70	9.32
Loiret	13.85	12.47	10.42
Lot	17.20	18.25	17.79
Lot-et-Garonne	17.36	12.79	9.94
Lozère	—	—	4.24
Maine-et-Loire	15.66	13.76	11.80
Manche	14.29	15.41	18.03
Marne	19.64	14.44	10.58
Haute-Marne	15.29	10.40	7.67
Mayenne	12.45	15.60	14.16
Meurthe-et-Moselle	17.15	18.13	13.51
Meuse	16.41	13.15	10.78
Morbihan	12.97	13.09	12.06
Moselle	6.43	5.82	3.01
Nièvre	18.63	17.28	17.76
Nord I	20.62	25.22	25.87
Nord II	24.08	25.10	21.75
Nord III	26.84	25.16	21.90
Oise	20.79	16.62	13.52
Orne	6.69	11.18	14.20
Pas-de-Calais I	26.70	23.38	20.20
Pas-de-Calais II	32.68	28.65	24.81
Puy-de-Dôme	17.03	16.10	14.07
Basses Pyrénées	14.01	11.76	11.33
Hautes Pyrénées	13.91	13.65	10.87
Pyrénées-Orientales	29.43	20.40	17.17
Bas-Rhin	—	8.83	6.49
Haut-Rhin	21.71	20.14	14.23
Belfort	17.44	18.23	15.19
Rhône I	14.56	11.71	7.48
Rhône II	9.14	10.69	5.42
Haute Saône	—	8.70	7.28
Saône-et-Loire	17.05	15.15	11.36
Sarthe	33.79	23.66	21.23
Savoie	10.56	9.87	—
Haute-Savoie	14.49	10.09	8.59
Seine I	18.07	15.92	10.64
Seine II	15.60	14.20	8.93
Seine III	20.19	16.63	9.97
Seine IV	19.57	18.74	13.45
Seine V	20.15	18.30	11.57
Seine VI	17.06	16.61	10.48
Seine-Inférieure I	15.08	12.93	10.67
Seine-Inférieure II	13.40	14.98	10.62
Seine-et-Marne	18.62	14.42	11.34
Seine-et-Oise I	18.88	17.70	12.42
Seine-et-Oise II	16.49	16.32	11.06
Deux-Sèvres	23.59	17.58	13.48

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>21 Oct. 1945</i>	<i>2 June 1946</i>	<i>10 Nov. 1946</i>
Somme	25.63	22.22	19.45
Tarn	19.44	18.92	17.18
Tarn-et-Garonne	18.71	17.47	15.51
Var	32.13	23.41	19.94
Vaucluse	25.06	20.49	16.13
Vendée	13.11	12.39	11.35
Vienne	8.50	9.58	8.52
Haute-Vienne	36.66	28.22	26.99
Vosges	18.66	13.79	10.61
Yonne	22.55	15.13	14.76

Sources:

Election of 21 October 1945: *J.O. (A.N.C. I)*, *Déb.*, 6 November 1945, pp. 7-41; 7 November 1945, pp. 47-9; 8 November 1945, p. 53; 2 December 1945, p. 192.

Election of 2 June 1946: *J.O. (A.N.C. II)*, *Déb.*, 12 June 1946, pp. 2497-2528; 13 June 1946, pp. 2533-5; 19 June 1946, p. 2549; 26 June 1946, pp. 2574-6; 11 July 1946, pp. 2666-7.

Election of 10 November 1946: *J.O. (A.N.)*, *Déb.*, 28 November 1946, pp. 7-36; 29 November 1946, pp. 42-3; 30 January, 1947, p. 103.

Appendix 4

Analysis of Important Parliamentary Divisions, 1946 and 1947

1. First Constituent Assembly, 19 April 1946

The first Constitution Bill was adopted by 309 to 249 under *scrutin public à la tribune*.

Groups	For	Against	Abstained	Did not vote	Absent	Totals
P.R.L.	—	33(2)	—	1	—	34(2)
Rep. Ind.	—	15	—	1	—	16
Paysan	—	4(4)	—	1	—	5(4)
Rad. Soc.	1	19(3)	—	3	2	25(3)
U.D.S.R.	2(1)	22(1)	1	2	—	27(2)
Muslim	4	—	—	—	—	4
M.R.P.	2	143	1	1	3	150
S.F.I.O.	140	—	—	2	1	143
M.U.R.F.	7(1)	—	—	1	—	8(1)
Communist	149	—	—	3	—	152
<i>Non inscrit</i>	2	3	2	—	—	7
Totals	309	249	4	15	6	583

2. Second Constituent Assembly, 28 September 1946

The second Constitution Bill was adopted by 440 to 106 under *scrutin public à la tribune*.

Groups	For	Against	Did not vote	Abstained voluntarily	Excused or absent	Totals
P.R.L.	—	31(3)	1	—	—	32(3)
Rep. Ind.	—	20(2)	1	—	—	21(2)
Paysan	—	6(2)	1	—	—	7(2)
U.D.S.R.	3	12(1)	3	1	1	20(1)
Rad. Soc.	1	28	1	1	1	32
M.R.P.	158(3)	—	6	1	1	166(3)
Algerian Manifesto	—	—	11	—	—	11
S.F.I.O.	124(1)	—	2	—	2	128(1)
M.U.R.F.	7	—	—	—	—	7
Communist	141(1)	—	4	—	—	145(1)
<i>Non inscrit</i>	1	1	—	2	—	4
Totals	440	106	30	5	5	586

Apparentés are shown in parentheses.

3. National Assembly

(i) 4 December 1946

On the first ballot for the election of the President of the Provisional Government, Thorez failed to obtain the requisite minimum of 310 votes.

Groups	For Thorez	For Le Troquer	'Bulletins blancs' Did not take part	Absent	Totals
P.R.L.	—	—	35(3)	—	35(3)
Rep. Ind.	—	—	27	(2)	27(2)
Paysan	—	—	5(1)	—	6(1)
Rad. Soc.	—	—	42	—	43
U.D.S.R.	—	—	22(3)	1	23(3)
M.R.P.	—	—	163(2)	—	164(2)
S.F.I.O.	77	2	4	19	102
M.U.R.F.	12	—	—	—	12
Communist	168(1)	—	—	1	169(1)
Muslim	—	—	8	—	8
Non Inscrit	1	—	3	12	16
Totals	259	2	318	35	617

Of the Socialists, Lamarque-Cando and Le Bail voted for Le Troquer; Marcel David, Gorse, Leenhardt and André Philip cast *bulletins blancs*, and the following did not vote:

Apithy, Aubame, Aubry, Auriol (who was President of the Assembly), Gaston Charlet, Defferre, Depreux, Diallo, Froment, Guesdon, Jadfard, Mme Lempereur, Mazuez, Rabier, Rincen, René Schmitt, Senghor, Valentino and Véry (listed as Hermence-Véry in the division table).

Aubry and Mme Lempereur said that had they been present they would have voted for Thorez (*J.O. (A.N.)*, *Déb.*, 4 December 1946, p.58).

(ii) 21 January 1947

Ramadier, nominated by Auriol for the Premiership, was invested by the National Assembly by 549 to nil, although the P.R.L. members and some members of the Independent Republican group did not vote.

Groups	For	Did not take part	Excused or absent	Totals
P.R.L.	—	35(3)	—	35(3)
Rep. Ind.	12(1)	15(1)	—	27(2)
Paysan	6(1)	—	—	6(1)
Rad. Soc.	40	3	—	43
U.D.S.R.	22(5)	1	—	23(5)
M.R.P.	162(2)	—	2	164(2)
S.F.I.O.	100	1	—	101
M.U.R.F.	12	—	—	12
Communist	169(1)	—	—	169(1)
Muslim	7	1	—	8
Algerian	—	5	—	5
Madagascan	3	—	—	3
Non Inscrit	6	1	—	7
Totals	549	66	2	617

(iii) 4 May 1947

An order of the day expressing confidence in the general policy of the Ramadier government was adopted by 360 to 186.

<i>Groups</i>	<i>For</i>	<i>Against</i>	<i>Not</i>			<i>Absent or</i>	<i>Totals</i>
			<i>Did not</i>	<i>Voluntarily</i>	<i>able</i>		
			<i>take part</i>	<i>abstained</i>	<i>to vote</i>	<i>excused</i>	
P.R.L.	3(1)	—	28(2)	1	—	—	32(3)
Rep. Ind.	17	—	8	1(2)	—	—	26(2)
Paysan	(1)	—	1	6	—	—	7(1)
Rad. Soc.	37	—	4	—	—	2	43
U.D.S.R.	21(3)	—	1(1)	1	—	—	23(4)
M.R.P.	163(2)	—	1	—	—	2	166(2)
S.F.I.O.	102(2)	—	—	—	—	1	103(2)
M.U.R.F.	—	13(1)	—	—	—	—	13(1)
Communist	—	168(1)	—	—	—	—	168(1)
Muslim	6	—	—	—	—	—	6
Algerian	—	—	5	—	—	—	5
Madagascan	—	1	—	—	2	—	3
<i>Non Inscrit</i>	2	2	2	1	—	—	7
Totals	360	186	53	12	2	5	618

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Wright has an excellent bibliographical essay dealing with this period in *The Reshaping of French Democracy*, pp.263-8. See also *La Science Politique en France 1945-1958*, ed. Jean Meyriat, Paris, 1960, published by the *Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques*.

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(ii) Records of Bills introduced and other papers:

*Documents de l'Assemblée consultative provisoire**Documents de l'Assemblée nationale constituante élue le 21 octobre 1945**Documents de l'Assemblée nationale constituante élue le 2 juin 1946**Assemblée nationale, Documents parlementaires*

(iii) Records of Legislation:

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(B) Proceedings of the Constitutional Committees

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(C) Parliamentary Membership Lists

*Assemblée nationale constituante, Liste par ordre alphabétique et par départements de Mesdames et Messieurs les députés avec indication de leurs adresses, bureaux, groupes et commissions, mars 1946, Paris, 1946.**Assemblée nationale. Liste par ordre alphabétique et par départements de Mesdames et Messieurs les députés avec indication de leurs adresses, bureaux, groupes et commissions, mars 1947, Paris, 1947.**Notices et portraits, 1945-46, Paris, 1945.**Première Législature, Notices et portraits, Paris, 1947.**Newspapers and Periodicals*

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This book studies, in its historical context, a period brief in span but significant both for French political development and for its wider implications: the struggle to maintain an alliance of ideologically opposed parties, against the opposition of conservative party membership, when the alternative is totalitarian government.

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