Forming the French Communist Party

Following the paths of three French Communists, 1914-1920.

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Introduction

Why Three French Communists?

The purpose of this paper is to trace the transformation of the French Socialist Party up to the birth of the French Communist Party by following the paths of three of the leading figures in the transformation. Fernand Loriot, Marcel Cachin, and Luois-Oscar Frossard are representatives of the changes that took place in the French Socialist Party during the course of World War I and the Russian Revolution, and were responsible for leading the party into the Bolshevik controlled Comintern in 1920.

The transformation of the SFIO occurred in response to two major events, World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution. The impact of these two events can not be overemphasized. Since 1905, at the formation of the French Socialist Party, or SFIO (*Section française de l'Internationale Ouvrière*), the party had struggled to maintain unity both within itself and among other socialist parties in Europe. The SFIO formed in 1905 as a merger between five socialist tendencies in France that had taken shape in the late 1880s, each with varied interpretations as to what the policies and ultimate goals of the party should be. The two most important figures in the prewar period of the SFIO were Jules Guesde and Jean Jaurès. Guesde was a strict Marxist, dogmatic and self-assured that zealous rhetoric and activity were essential for preparing to make revolution at the proper moment. Jaurès, who was widely recognized as the leader of the SFIO until his assassination in 1914, did not ardently profess the Marxist class-struggle but saw in socialism a humanitarian cause for making France, and other nations as well, a more just and

moral society. His influence on the SFIO was tremendous in shaping its program his years as its leader and for the influence he exerted in attracting Frenchmen to socialism. The differences between Jaurès, Guesde, and others were mitigated before 1914 by Jaurès's masterful orchestration of the party and by the aura of good feeling that pervaded the years before the outbreak of the war.

When the war broke out in August, 1914, the international unity so arduously built by the Socialist parties in Europe was quickly shattered. The SFIO accused the German Social Democratic Party of endorsing the decision to invade France. The SFIO swiftly drafted a resolution that effectively declared the end of international unity until the end of the war. No one expected the war to last past Christmas. As German, British and French forces dug into the trenches of Europe in what became a violent war of attrition, the policies set forth by the SFIO began to come under internal attack.

By 1915, there were three emerging divisions in the SFIO. The largest was the *majoritaires*, who supported both government collaboration in the name of defense of the Republic and the cessation of relations with other socialist parties until war's end. The *minoritaires* were increasing their numbers as soldiers were lost on the battlefront. The *minoritaire* position in 1915 was in support of the government, but they wanted to see the regeneration of international relations. The third division was the Zimmerwaldians, or those who had adopted a stance in support of a conference held in December, 1915 in the small Swiss village of Zimmerwald. The Zimmerwaldians were the most ardently anti-war and anti-government.

In a reaction to the devastation caused by the war and to the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the three divisions in the SFIO were realigned. The *majoritaire* leaders increasingly fell into disrepute for their adamant stance, such that many *majoritaires* became *minoritaires*, and the *minoritaires* in fact became

the majority. The *minoritaires* moved further leftward on the political spectrum-- toward the prewar orientation of the SFIO. The Zimmerwaldians, in turn, were moving even further leftward-- toward support of the Bolshevik Revolution and the Bolshevik wishes of forming a new Communist International, in place of what they considered the dead and outdated Second International of 1905.

Fernand Loriot, Marcel Cachin, and L.O. Frossard were representatives of the three divisions of the SFIO, and the changing perspectives of the party. Loriot personified the Zimmerwaldian movement. It was represented in France by the Committee for the Resumption of International Relations, which had been formed in 1916 after the conference at Zimmerwald with the obvious intent of reconstructing broken international ties. Loriot, heavily influenced by Russian Revolutionaries (first Trotsky, later Lenin), worked tenaciously to define and refine the inconsistencies in SFIO party policy. He was first an anti-militarist, then became an anti-parliamentarian. He was opposed both to the *majoritaires* and to the *minoritaires*. At the end of the war, and with the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in the background, Loriot transformed the Committee for the Resumption of International Relations into the Committee for the Third International. The Third International was the manifestation of bolshevik wishes to replace the Second International, and implied a direct adherence to the revolutionary tactics of the Bolshevik party. Although Loriot and the Committee for the Resumption of International Relations were generally considered too radical to attract an large following, the paths taken by Loriot were later followed by the mass of the party, as were the paths of the Committee for the Third International.

Marcel Cachin personified the movement of the *majoritaire* become *minoritaire* become Communist. His was an interesting case that represented to a

greater extent the changing perceptions of the French working class that Cachin loved and followed dearly. Cachin was a Guesdist before 1914, and, like his idol, joined the government in 1914 for the purposes of defense of the Republic. As the horrors of the war mounted, Cachin increasingly questioned his committment to the war aims of the government. Cachin journeyed twice to Russia, and came back from both trips a changed man. The first voyage was in 1917, after the February Revolution. He left France as a patriot and returned as a pacifist. After his second journey in 1920 he returned a communist. This amazing sweep across the breadth of socialist opinion suggested, in light of his adoration of the working masses, the changed sentiment in France.

L.O. Frossard followed a tamer course than Cachin, but ended 1920 in a similar position. Frossard was attracted to socialism through the oratory of his idol Jean Jaurès. He personified the *minoritaire* position in the SFIO. Frossard began the war a patriot, and became in 1916 a pacifist who wanted to see the resumption of relations with foreign socialists. In 1918 he was elected General Secretary of the SFIO. This was a symbol of the growing strength of the *minoritaires*. Frossard had an exceptional talent for politics, which made him both a leader and a follower of the masses. In 1920 Frossard traveled with Cachin to Russia with the purpose of observing the only successful "socialist" revolution in Europe. He, too, returned to France a changed man, and opted publicly for adherence to the Third International.

Frossard's and Cachin's six-week journey in Russia merit particular attention not only because of their shocking turn to the Third International, but also for the window to the future that the Bolsheviks revealed of themselves in their treatment of the two delegates. The Bolshevik Revolution did not occur as traditional Marxist theorists had envisioned a revolution would. Russia was the least

developed of the major European powers industrially, and it had the smallest socialist parties. No Marxist theorist before 1914 would have declared Russia "ripe" for revolution in 1917. The instability of the tsarist regime, already tenuously holding itself together before the war, was pushed to the breaking point in 1917. The Bolshevik Revolution did indeed succeed against incredible odds, but it could only have happened in Russia. This created problems for Lenin, who claimed to be an orthodox Marxist. He found that theory was easily compromised, however. Lenin postulated that since the Russian proletariat was undeveloped, it was critical to ferment revolutions in the nations with a developed proletariat, namely in Germany and France.

Lenin felt that the prewar International had failed. One only need look to the trenches of Europe for proof. In its place, Lenin authorized the forming of a new International, the Comintern. The First Congress of the Comintern in 1919 met with no success. A second attempt was made in 1920, which met with relatively great success. But Lenin had realized that a lack of revolutionary conditions--especially in France-- limited the ability of prospective communists to agitate for revolution. For France, Lenin thus accepted a policy of manipulation to attract the leaders of the *minoritaires* into acceptance of the Comintern.

Frossard and Cachin were beautifully manipulated. They returned to France in August, 1920 full of bolshevik élan. From September to December, Frossard and Cachin led an ardent campaign for adhesion to the Third International which brought members of the *minoritaire*, and even some remaining *majoritaires* to the position Loriot had been calling for. The culmination of the transformation in the SFIO occurred at the Congress of Tours in December, 1920. By an overwhelming vote, three-fourths of the SFIO voted to join the Comintern. Thus the French Communist Party was born.

The problems that plagued the French Communist Party in the years that followed can be traced to its story of birth. On the one hand, by manipulating the SFIO to join the Comintern the bolsheviks brought into their tightly structured political ranks a party that had a history of intense factionalism and an admiration of independence. On the other hand, the disillusionment created by the war and the power emotional appeal of the Russian Revolution hastened the movement of the French Socialist masses toward the Third International. Both these stories are told by tracing the lives of Fernand Loriot, Marcel Cachin, and L.O. Frossard through the violent and unsure years between 1914 to the precarious formation of the French Communist Party in 1920.

The SFIO Before 1914

The years between the formation of the SFIO in 1905 and the outbreak of war in 1914 are commonly considered the "golden age" of French Socialism. The year 1905 marked the union of five socialist factions in France under the SFIO umbrella, and in turn the coupling of the SFIO with other Socialist parties in Europe. But this golden age was a mask of sorts, for it hid under the SFIO umbrella factions that differed about both the methods and ultimate goals of socialism. Part of the key to understanding the way in which the Communist Party in France was formed, and the reactions taken for and against it, is to understand that even in this "golden age" there were men and groups with different interpretations regarding the role of French socialists in their country, and in Europe.

The program of the SFIO was primarily influenced by two figures, Jules Guesde and Jean Jaurès. They arrived as the leaders of the SFIO through unrelated paths, which was a reflection of their respective interests. Guesde had come from the generation of the Paris Commune. He was dogmatic, self-assured, and determined that revolution was inevitable. Preparation for the revolution was thus an absolute necessity. Jaurès, on the other hand, was a product of the bourgeois Republic, a student of its educational system, and committed to the belief that through reform and the gradual evolution of socialism a better, more moral and humanitarian world could be obtained.

Guesde and Jaurès were figures from two of the five Socialist tendencies that had taken shape in France in the late 1880s and 1890s, the Guesdists and Independents. The other tendencies were the Possibilists, the Allemanists, and the Blanquists. When the SFIO was formed in 1905 at the Second International at

Strasbourg it was a synthesis of these five tendencies that had in the past fought among themselves both to attract members and in interpreting what socialism was, and what it should be.

The Guesdists were the most strictly Marxist of the five. In 1880 Jules Guesde was the leader among a Socialist faction that formed the Workers' Party (*Parti des Travailleurs Socialistes de France*). As could be expected, the doctrines this party professed were for the overthrow of the state and collectivization of property. The Workers' Party did not meet with wide popular support, however. The rhetoric of Guesde was often considered too "anti-French"[1] because of its adoption of the foreign doctrines of Marx. Guesde found himself in a minority among other socialists, and decided, with his few followers, to form the *Parti Ouvrier Français* (POF) in 1882. The POF never became a large party, but the influence of Guesde on the SFIO would be significant.

Among the other Socialist parties of the 1890s were the Possibilists, who wanted political action on the local level and a slow infiltration of the state from below, the Allemanists, who viewed parliament with suspicion and stressed the role of the working class in its own emancipation, and the Blanquists, who looked to conspiratorial overthrow of the state and a dictatorship of the proletariat.[2]

The fifth group was the Independents. The Independents were the most moderate of the Socialists and wanted to press change through the French system, through parliamentarianism. They were not rigidly committed to doctrine. Ideological flexibility and idealism "typical of French revolutionary tradition rather than on the German materialism of Karl Marx"[3] were the essence of the Independent position.

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1. Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making, 1914-1924* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 4.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 7.

Jaurès was the leading figure of the Independents, and emerged as the SFIO leader and most important figure. Jaurès was an extraordinary figure in the pantheon of European Socialists, whose personality and ideology merit particular attention. Robert Wohl describes Jaurès as "that extremely rare phenomenon in modern politics: the moralist, the philosopher, the poet become parliamentarian and party leader. His entire career was a tribute to his effort toward synthesis of reform and revolution, of idealism and materialism, of individualism and collectivism, of nationalism and internationalism. For Jaurès, socialism was a series of discoveries and successive integrations."[4] With the roots of modern socialism, and the modern revolution, embedded in the French past, Jaurès stressed continuity and change in, and for, the French tradition. He did not view revolution as did Marx, or Marx's French disciple, Guesde. His thoughts about socialism were guided by humanitarian aims, not the class struggle as Marx saw it, and his influence on the later generation of French socialists was tremendous. L.O. Frossard himself declared on his conversion to socialism, "I did not discover the doctrine right away. Jaurès flooded me with light. I was captured forever by the ideal he erected high up in the sky like a wonderful triumphal arch."[5]

Jaurès's adept rhetoric and political maneuvering enabled him to minimize disputes within the SFIO ranks. His method of socialism was what he called "revolutionary evolution." This, as he said, "consists of introducing new forms of property into present-day society, forms that give this society the lie and go beyond it, that point to and prepare the way for the new order, and that by their inherent reach hasten the breakup of the old."[6] Jaurès also stressed moral idealism, which was part of his tremendous attraction. He strongly believed in the ability of men to

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4. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 8.
5. L.O. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Léon Blum* (1943), 24.
6. Quoted from Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 9.

shape their fate. And where others found antagonism, he found synthesis. He said, "I do not want to give to each his part, I do not want to say: there is a part of history directed by economic necessity and that there is another part directed by a pure idea, by a concept, for example by the idea of humanity, or of justice and of rights; I do not want to put the conception of materialism on one side of a barrier and idealistic conception on the other. I hold that they must penetrate each other."[7] This was a clear departure from Marx. For Jaurès, idealism and materialism were complementary. His version of socialism was humanitarian and highly moralistic.

Unity in the SFIO had not been achieved without fights. There were three major issues that brought socialists in France into direct conflict: the Dreyfus Affair, the issue of ministerialism, and the question of war. Although the first two took place before the formation of the SFIO, it was Jaurès who was able to hold the antagonists together under the Socialist umbrella, even when those antagonists included himself, as it often did. Nevertheless, the relationship was not as strong as it might have appeared.

The Dreyfus Affair took place before the creation of the SFIO in 1905, but it played a role on how the party was defined, and how it would operate. The Affair involved the trial of a French Jewish officer falsely accused of treason and sentenced to Devil's Island. The trial brought out the vengeance of the French right at what its leaders saw as the undermining of the nation by the liberalization of its laws. The reaction from Guesde was fairly simple: non-intervention. Since he viewed the the Affair as a struggle between members of the same bourgeois class, the class he was fighting against, he wanted no involvement. Jaurès, on the other hand, was drawn to the Affair, and in his brilliant prose defended the republican form of government against the hysteria and racism of the Anti-

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7. Quoted from Daniel Ligou, *Histoire du Socialisme en France; 1871-1961* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962), 234.

Dreyfusards.[8] His moral and humanitarian appeals drew new followers to the Socialist doctrine. Jaurès saw in the Dreyfus Affair a moral cause and a moral unjustness against Alfred Dreyfus that must be rectified.

The Dreyfus Affair became significant in this context when in June, 1898, Alexandre Millerand, an Independent Socialist, accepted a ministerial post in the government. A new government had been formed as a result of the Dreyfus Affair, with the intention of gaining support from the socialists in the name of defense of the Republic.[9] The question put forth by Millerand's cabinet post was whether or not a socialist could collaborate with a bourgeois government. Guesde issued a strong condemnation of this, declaring that to participate with the government betrayed his goals of socialism. Jaurès's view of moderation and parliamentarianism did not make Millerand a traitor. This issue was confronted in 1905 at the Second International, and the view of Guesde won over that of Jaurès. Participation with the government would not be allowed.

The third and perhaps most profound question confronting the SFIO was, what would the SFIO do when confronted with general war? Between 1905 and 1914 Europe appeared to be headed toward such a war. The Socialists were divided on this issue, as on so many others. Guesde offered what he thought to be the Marxist point of view.[10] He was opposed to anti-patriotism and anti-militarism, and believed that thinking to the contrary would be counterrevolutionary because it would direct the working class away from its primary goal of conquest of the State. He urged that the duty of the socialists was "to make a revolution here at home. The proletariat has no hold on German capitalism, but it has a hold on French

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8. Albert Lindemann, *A History of European Socialism* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1983), 154.
9. *Ibid.*, 155.
10. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 46.

factories and French employers."[11]

For Jaurès the issue was much more complicated. Jaurès maneuvered between the commitment of Guesde to class warfare and the ardent anti-patriotism of Gustave Hervé. Jaurès's policy was devised in a fashion which accommodated both tendencies. He believed that internationalism and patriotism could be combined. His position held that the working class had the right and duty to defend the nation against any aggressor, but that the party should remain true to the decisions of the International.[12] With this, he hoped that war could be avoided. His greatest assumption was that the International would do what was necessary to prevent war, but this did not happen. The war put an end to both Jaurès life, and his most cherished ideal-- peace.

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11. Quoted from Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 46.
12. *Ibid.*, 47.

War, Revolution, and the Development of the Zimmerwaldian Left

Despite diplomatic efforts to settle the disputes of July, 1914, the result was the largest and most destructive war in European history. Diplomacy had worked Morocco in 1905 and in the Balkans in 1912 to prevent a general war, and there was reason to believe that in July, 1914, it could work again. In retrospect, many of the events and causes leading to the first world war are clear, and their inevitability of clashing obvious, if not in 1914 then soon thereafter. But to most Europeans of 1914, the picture was not the same.

When the war began, it struck like a bombshell. The German invasion of Belgium on August 3, 1914 began a series of events that lasted four years, and destroyed beyond repair the European world of 1914 in what Trotsky described as "a furious pogrom of human culture."[1] The war was not expected to last past Christmas. "No, no one suddenly heard that slamming of a door which closed itself behind us forever," wrote a young French intellectual, Raymond Lefebvre.[2]

For European socialists, the "golden age" of international cooperation was lost, although its return was expected at the end of the war. The leaders of the SFIO blamed the German Social Democratic Party for cooperation with the German government, which they claimed was a *carte blanche* approval for the invasion of France, and were opposed to resuming relations with them. This gave the SFIO no other choice than to retreat to the ranks of the French regime and vote for war credits. Poincaré, the French President, proclaimed the Union sacrée, which declared all political parties invalid until the War's end, and France watched

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1. Leon Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*, New York, 1921, 17.
2. Raymond Lefebvre, *Le Sacrifice d'Abraham* (1919), 1. Quoted from Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*.

intently as General Joffre valiantly led the defense at the Marne in November, 1914. Stalemate ensued. Socialists, France, and the world would never be the same. What lay in the future was unknown.

On August 2, 1914, the SFIO drafted a War Manifesto which proclaimed that the party would defend France in the face of German aggression. At the same time the party leaders pledged to preserve their ties with the International, so far as events allowed. As the prospects of a long war grew, however, so did the division become greater between these two proclamations. The leaders of the SFIO increasingly supported the former and disregarded the later. By September of 1914, the SFIO had violated the two basic principles on which their unity had been built.[3] SFIO leaders, including Jules Guesde, joined the government for purposes of national defense. By allowing this, the SFIO admitted that the class struggle was temporarily adjourned. Consequently internationalism, too, had to be put off until the war was over and France was safe.

The purpose of this paper is not, however, to directly trace the course of the SFIO through the war. Rather, the gradual building of the Left in the party is the focus, leading to the formation of the French Communist Party in 1920. Defining precisely what the Left was in the SFIO is difficult. There was no clear and continuous growth, nor was it coherent. The Left took shape as a response to events during the war, first as opposition against it, than to the tremendous impact of the Russian Revolution. But the responses were rarely unanimous.

Loriot and the Zimmerwaldians

The faction that seemed to precede the transformation in the SFIO was headed

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3. Robert Wohl, *French Communism in the Making, 1914-1924* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1966), 58.

by Fernand Loriot, a long limbed and bearded schoolteacher whose dogged pursuit of ideological consistency put him into positions that were generally considered too extreme for him to attract a mass following. Yet the positions he took were later followed by the mass of the party.

Although opposition to the war in its first years was scarce, there were a few socialists and syndicalists who dared to speak out against it. The Fédération des Syndicats d'Instituteurs, a teachers' union that had almost disappeared in the first year of the war, became one of the first organizations to begin distributing anti-war propaganda in the summer of 1915.[4] Its bureau had been reduced to a secretary, and a treasurer, Loriot. Loriot began 1914 as an active chauvinist but became by the summer of 1915 a proponent of negotiated settlement. His work with the teachers' union was relatively ineffective and went unheard, but events in autumn of 1915 would give him, and the war's opponents, a new rallying cry in France.

The rallying cry occurred at Zimmerwald in September, 1915. The conference was called by the socialist parties of the neutral powers, the Scandinavians, the Swiss, and the Italians, who did not want to accept the postponement of internationalism to the war's end. The SFIO sent no delegates. It was committed to the belief that an international conference could take place only after responsibility for the war was fixed and sanctions against the German socialist party were taken.

Despite its disappointing size, the Zimmerwald conference was important from a historical point of view. It marked the first step in the process that led to the creation of the Communist International. At Zimmerwald the Leninist Left made its international debut; and it was there that representatives of the French opposition first made contact with those ideas that only four years later would

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4. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 60.

divide them.[5] The manifesto from Zimmerwald represented the Leninist influence. Written by Trotsky, it stated that the responsibility for the War lay with capitalist imperialism, called for action for peace, and attacked the leadership of the various Socialist parties for their chauvinism and participation in the War.[6]

Loriot was not present at Zimmerwald, but the proclomations made in the small Swiss village did not elude him. The next year was a fruitful year for Loriot and the Zimmerwaldians (as the followers came to be known). After the December Congress of the SFIO, its leader's policies of collaboration with the government remained intact. Loriot set out to organize opposition in a more coherent fashion. In January, 1916, the Committee for the Resumption of International Relations was formed, which brought together Socialists, syndicalists, anarchists, and a number of Russian revolutionaries living in Paris. Together they formulated a position against both the *majoritaires* in the party who wanted to continue the SFIO's current policies, and against the emerging current of *minoritaires* who were turning pacifistic and calling for the regeneration of the old International. Loriot wrote a pamphlet, entitled *Les Socialistes de Zimmerwald et la Guerre*, which stated the position of the Committee.[7] The regeneration of the old International, he observed, seemed more and more unlikely. The unity of the SFIO was no more than a phantom. As for the minority, its members bore before the masses and history a large part of the responsibility for "the transformation of organized socialism into a docile instrument of the imperialist bloc."[8] Their policy was contradictory and inconsistent to the point where they voted both for the resumption of international

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5. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 66.
6. *Ibid.*, 66.
7. Loriot wrote the pamphlet in collaboration with Trotsky. Alfred Rosmer, *Le Mouvement oubrier pendant la guerre* (Paris, Libraire du Travail, Vol II, 1936), 145.
8. Comité pour la Reprise des Relations Internationales, *Les Socialistes de Zimmerwald et la Guerre*, pp. 8-10. The pamphlet is cited in Rosmer, *Le mouvement ouvrier pendant la guerre*, pp 145-146.

relations and for a government that made those international relations impossible, both for internationalism and for nationalism. "If the policies of the official majority of the Socialist Party undermine the future of French and international Socialism," wrote Loriot, "the policies of the minority threaten to compromise for good the very idea of opposition to governmental socialism."[9]

The rest of the pamphlet was devoted to proving "that national defense IS NOT SOCIALIST," and that "the proletariat's attitude toward the war could not be determined by the military or strategic position of the belligerent countries."[10] The pamphlet concluded that it was the duty of the working class to demand an end to the fighting and force the Socialist deputies to withdraw from the government and vote against the war credits.

By the time of the SFIO National Congress in December, 1916 Loriot's efforts at pointing out the inconsistencies in SFIO policy became influential, but the platform of the Committee for the Resumption was still considered too radical for it to be adopted by the mass of the party. The *minoritaires* had made significant progress in promoting a platform that took the anti-war attitude of Loriot, and combined it with the idea of regenerating the old International. In the background to the Congress were the terrible losses at Verdun and the Somme, and the growing realization that the SFIO alone was preventing a meeting of the International because of its adamant stance taken against the SPD. At the Congress, the change in *minoritaires* strength brought about a change in SFIO policy. Pacifism became respectable. Eleven of the twenty-four seats on the SFIO Central Committee were taken by *minoritaires*.

A new twist was added at the conference, however, which would further divide the lines between *minoritaires*, *majoritaires*, and Zimmerwaldians. This was

9. Comité pour la Reprise des Relations Internationales, *Les Socialistes de Zimmerwald et la Guerre*, pp. 8-10.
10. *Ibid.*

Wilsonianism, based on the United States' President Woodrow Wilson's new initiatives for peace. Wilsonianism gave the majoritaires a window to answer a vexing question, how could the *majoritaire* position of defending the Republic be kept without admitting that the policy of Sacred Union was a mistake?[11]

In Wilson's acclaimed "peace without victory" speech made January 22, 1917, the American President's insistence on peace without annexations or reparations struck a vital chord for the *majoritaires*. They quickly endorsed Wilson's words, and the *majoritaire* position of peace without victory was formalized at the National Council of March 4, 1917. By endorsing peace, the *majoritaires* were able to attract those *minoritaires* who were not ardent anti-war believers.

Loriot also sensed a change in the Zimmerwaldian perception which he thought was developing into a crisis for the Committee for the Resumption of International Relations. He saw that the *minoritaires* were in a crisis of self-definition, brought about by the changed *majoritaire* position. He wrote to a friend, "It is disastrous that it should be this hesitant minority, without clearly defined ideas, that benefits from the revolt of the socialist conscience."[12] He felt that Wilsonianism was stretching socialist thought to the breaking point, and accused members in the Committee for Resumption who were sympathetic to the *minoritaires* of "platonic internationalism" by "placing themselves in the tow of Wilsonianism."[13] Thus Loriot forced a split in the Committee, pushing out those leaders he viewed as sympathetic to Wilsonianism, which in turn gave the Committee a more purely socialist character.[14]

To keep account of the changes in the SFIO by the end of 1916, the basic

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11. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 80.
12. Quoted in Rosmer, *Le mouvement ouvrier pendant la guerre*, Vol. II, 212.
13. *Ibid.*, 212.
14. Annie Kriegal, *Aux origines du communisme français, 1914-1920* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1964) 138.

divisions had thus become: the *majoritaires*, who had forsaken the policy of war to the end, but who refused to meet with enemy socialists until the SPD acknowledged its guilt in supporting the war; the *minoritaires*, who were eager to end the party's participation in the government because of its war aims; and the Zimmerwaldians, represented by the Committee for the Resumption, who refused to accept the principle of national defense, and rejected Wilsonianism as an illusion. These shifts in the SFIO took a greater turn in 1917.

The February Revolution in Russia

Events in Russia in 1917 changed everything. On March 8, 1917, bread riots broke out in Petrograd. Within a week the Tsar had abdicated and a Provisional Government had taken office. The initial reaction in France, among both the French regime and French socialists, was to greet the Revolution as the rejection of autocracy in favor of a more democratic government.[15] But this was guarded optimism. The revolution may have been the triumph of democratic institutions but there was an ominous concern about what effect the revolution might have on the Russian war effort. For the French regime, and even for the SFIO majoritaires, there was a fear that the revolution would put an and to Russian participation in the war. This meant that Germany would be able to concentrate all of its forces on France.

For the Zimmerwaldians, however, the revolution had a different meaning. The members of the Committee for the Resumption hailed the February Revolution with a manifesto, written by Loriot, which praised the Russian proletariat for redeeming the honor of international Socialism and announced that the Russian Revolution was only the first in a series of revolutions that would follow inevitably

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15. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 86.

as a consequence of the War. The manifesto included a savage attack upon patriotic socialists. The *majoritaires*, it said, pretended to welcome the Russian Revolution; in fact, they were working behind the scenes to strangle it. They falsified what was happening inside Russia; they prevented the Russian revolutionaries from returning home; they accepted the war aims of the Allies. The manifesto ended with an appeal to follow the Russian example: "Everywhere rebellious peoples must rid themselves of their class governments and replace them with the delegates of workers and soldiers who have gone over to the people. The Russian Revolution is the signal for the universal revolution. And the universal revolution will assure the definitive success of the Russian Revolution."[16]

In April 1917 Loriot entered Switzerland illegally to confer with others about the Zimmerwaldian movement. While he was there he met Lenin. Up to that time he seems to have had only a vague idea of the Leninist position of the war, but he grew more radical under the influence of Lenin. Loriot was anxious to escape from the ideological confusion that had plagued the French opposition throughout the War, and he was quick to seize on the lessons of the Russian Revolution. On May 1, 1917, he wrote of the Third International, which Lenin had desired as early as 1914, as an established fact, and warned there could be no compromise between Zimmerwald and patriotic Socialism. "The time of dangerous equivocation and of subtle, conciliatory formulas in which everyone finds the justification of his deeds is over. The time has come for definitions."[17]

The SFIO met on May 27-28 in the midst of the February Revolution in Russia and a series of crises on the domestic front that gave the impression that change was at hand. An abnormally cold winter in 1916-17 had led to failed crops and forced rationing, which coincided with anger and disillusionment with the war.

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16. Quoted in Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 100.
17. Quoted from Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 101.

Strike activity increased. And an epidemic of mutinies were occurring on the military front, where the failure of the Nivelle offensive on April 16 left 30,000 dead and another 90,000 wounded. The most important issue at the Congress was a proposal from the *minoritaires* to send delegates to the proposed International Socialist Conference at Stockholm. Approval of the proposal would mean nothing less than the resumption of international relations, which the *majoritaires* dreaded. Loriot claimed that the conference was irrelevant. Despite efforts to the contrary, the *majoritaire* position emerged victorious. The issue was beaten by a vote of 13-11.

Loriot was pushed to the background, but he did not give up. Already at this point Loriot is said to have favored a split and the formation of a new, revolutionary party.[18] But he knew he was the only member of the left wing to hold this opinion; and thus he stayed on within the ranks of the SFIO to personify and further define the Zimmerwaldian point of view. Events in Russia would help.

The Bolshevik Revolution

On the night of November 9, 1917 the Bolshevik forces in Russia acted to take control of the Russian government, which had been weakened considerably in the the previous summer and early fall. Kerensky's forces fell, and the world watched in surprise as the first "socialist" revolution succeeded. The details of the Bolshevik Revolution and its effects on French socialism will be considered in greater detail in the following chapter, but there are certain aspects which need explanation before continuing with the development of the SFIO Left.

For the French regime, the Revolution was a nightmare become reality. The regime's fears of Russian withdrawal from the war became fact when the

18. Kriegal, *Aux origines du communisme française*, 145.

Bolsheviks signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in the Spring of 1918. Accusations were made against Lenin that he was a German agent: he had traveled from Switzerland to Russia on a German train.

The Revolution was both greeted and feared by French socialists. For the Right, the Revolution greatly endangered the French war effort. For the Center and Left, the Revolution was, indeed, the first "socialist" revolution in Europe, but was interpreted with a great degree of caution. Russia was the least developed of the major European powers, and its socialist party the smallest. Little was known of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, and what information there was was not easy to come by. Accurate interpretations were not easily had.

The manifesto[19] with which the Committee for Resumption greeted the Bolshevik Revolution also showed a certain reserve which was reflective of the lack of information. It approved the revolutionary steps of the Bolsheviks and applauded them for their energy. But it went on to point out that the Bolsheviks had benefited from a particularly favorable situation that did not exist in the other belligerent countries, and it concluded: "Whatever efforts a minority may make to arouse the masses, a revolutionary situation is created by a cluster of factors, some of which escape its influence." The manifesto ended with an appeal to the revolutionary spontaneity of the masses: "The duty or the proletarians of all countries is, therefore, by a mass action against their oppressors, either to take power themselves in order to conclude a peace, or to exert irresistible pressure on their rulers to accept the Russian proposals."

The reserve taken by Loriot in the manifesto diminished as a result of disagreements within the SFIO. Loriot turned further to the Leninist side. After the National Council of the SFIO in February, 1918, in which Loriot had refused to support the *minoritaires* because of what he considered to be their ambiguity on

19. The manifesto is quoted in Rosmer, *La mouvement ouvrier pendant la guerre*, Vol. II, 249.

the question of national defense, the *minoritaires* reproached the Zimmerwaldians for their "unfriendly political attitude." Loriot replied with a series of articles in which he argued that the real conflict in the party was not between *minoritaires* an *majoritaires*, but between those two groups on the one hand and Zimmerwald on the other.[20] He insisted that he conflict between *minoritaires* and *majoritaires* had always been superficial. For the leaders of the two factions, at least, it had been more a struggle for personal influence than for different policies. Sooner or later, the two factions would merge.

Six weeks later Loriot tried to define more fully the difference between his own position and the "essentially bourgeois" conception of the *minoritaires*. For the minority, he Loriot, a refusal to vote for war credits was a weapon to be used against one bourgeois government in order to replace it with another. "We do not intend to grant the credits to any bourgeois government. We regard the refusal to vote for them as a form of protest by the still oppressed working class, a protest not against a ministry, not against the way the War is being conducted, but against war itself and the capitalist system."[21]

This reflected a move toward Lenin's viewpoints expressed at Zimmerwald. But Loriot did not yet completely accept Lenin. As Wohl says, "If Loriot was a Leninist, then, he was only half a Leninist; and the half of Leninism that he accepted in 1917 and 1918 was the half that coincided with the revolutionary doctrines of the Second International, which he felt had been trampled in the dust by the majoritaires and the minoritaires in their espousal of national defense."[22]

At the end of the war the Zimmerwaldian current emerged in a position of extreme weakness. They ended up voting with the *minoritaires* against the former

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20. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 102.
21. *Ibid.*, 103.
22. *Ibid.*, 105.

majoritaires at Party congresses, even though Loriot himself admitted that the Left was unable to detach the *minoritaires* from the bonds that tied it to the *majoritaires*. Once the War was over, the ostensible reason for the Committee for Resumption no longer existed. The *minoritaires* emerged as the largest division in the SFIO, and the process of rebuilding the International became the Party program

A different man might easily have given up, but Loriot persisted in his belief that it was necessary to purge the party, to bring its ideology up to date, and to set it on the path laid out by the Bolshevik Revolution. He believed that the homogeneity of the minority was only an illusion which would disappear at the first breath of revolution.[23] In December, 1918, Loriot boldly proclaimed, "Socialism has written its name in letters of fire above the entire universe with this one word: Bolshevism."[24] In January, 1919 Loriot wrote an article in which he insisted that Bolshevism was not a peculiarly Russian phenonomen, arguing that it existed everywhere "in principle", and that it alone represented socialism.[25]

The creation of the Third International in 1919, which is detailed later, breathed new life into the Zimmerwald faction and gave it a reason for being. The Committee for Resumption announced for immediate adherence to the Third International, and defended this position at the April congress of the SFIO. On May 8, 1919, the Committee for Resumption transformed itself into the Committee for the Third International.

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23. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making.*, 132.
24. From Loriot's speech given befor the Federal Council of the Federation of the Seine. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 133.
25. *Ibid.*, 137.

Moving to the Left

The previous section has jumped ahead somewhat to show the path of Loriot's Left moving toward Russia, but two major factors have only been touched upon. This is the shifting role of the *majoritaires* and the *minoritaires* leftward. The shift brought a greater number of the SFIO members and had a greater impact on the policies of the SFIO. The strength of the *minoritaires* increased as opposition to the wartime policies of the SFIO's leaders grew. The gains made by the *minoritaires* came largely at the expense of the *majoritaires*, such that by 1918 the *minoritaires* were in fact the majority.

The National Congress of October 6-9, 1918 marked an important shift in the SFIO. Marcel Cachin became Editor in Chief of *l'Humanité*, the Party newspaper, L.O. Frossard became General Secretary, and Loriot Treasurer. The new leaders represented the new orientation of the SFIO.

Cachin From Right to Left

Marcel Cachin is an excellent representative of a *majoritaire* becoming *minoritaire*. He was a stocky, mustached, man of the people who loved both the spoken and printed word, especially his own. He had a deep veneration for the working masses, which is a key to understanding his shifting position between 1914 and 1920. Cachin was a former Guesdist, and it was not suprising that in 1914 he burst into a patriotic frenzy, like Guesde himself did. Cachin moved with the majority of the French working class, which he had supported since his becoming a member of the *Ligue des Droites de l"Homme et du Citoyen*, a positivist, anti-clerical, and republican left wing group formed in 1898.[1]

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1. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 170.

Early in the war Cachin became a representative of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Italy, where he is believed to have supplied funds to Benito Mussolini in hopes of bringing Italy into the war on the Allied side. Between the February Revolution in Russia and the SFIO National Council in May, 1917, a delegation of French Socialists that included Marcel Cachin left for Petrograd, with the blessing of the government, to attempt to revive the interest of the Russian Socialists in the pursuit of the War. In Russia, Cachin was submitted to an unpleasant cross-examination by the Petrograd soviet, and was accused of being an agent of French imperialism. He came back a changed man. At the National Council in May, with the February Revolution, increased number of strikes, and the failed Nivelle offensive in the background, Cachin pleaded the case of the Soviets, and made appeals for the SFIO to clarify its war-time poicy and to send delegates to the conference at Stockholm.

Through insisting that the delegation be sent to Stockholm Cachin made clear that he had denounced the *majoritaires* -- who were not ready to reconvene the International -- and opted in favor of the *minoritaires*. Cachin's speech persuaded the National Council to reverse its stand and send a delegation to Stockholm.[2] To further confirm Cachin's new stance, he requested and was granted the opportunity to speak before the government in a closed session concerning his trip to Russia. The regime had denied passports to the SFIO delegates to travel to Stockholm, and Cachin hoped to force the government to reconsider the decision. The decision was upheld, which pushed Cachin and other former *majoritaires* further leftward in a reaction against the government.

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2. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'; European Socialism versus Bolshevism, 1919-1921* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), 175.

Frossard Leads the *minoritaires*

Frossard's election as General Secretary of the SFIO in June, 1918 was symbolic of the strengthening of the *minoritaires*. He claimed to have been a pacifist during the war, opposed to the fighting but not to a violent degree, and had adopted a position in support of the Russian Revolution in 1918. Support of the Russian Revolution did not mean adherence to bolshevik proclamations. On the contrary, Frossard was a Reconstructionist, hoping to see the return of the Socialist International, in a new form, one that was neither the old nor the Communist. These hopes represented an adherence to Jaurèssian ideals, yet they admitted that the war had ended any hope of a return to the Jaurèssian age. The position enabled Frossard to be in a position of compromise, neither fully in support nor opposed to the left or right factions of the SFIO.

For those unfamiliar with French parliamentary politics, where backroom deals and unthinkable alliances were never a surprise, Frossard might appear to be enigmatic. He was a master at forming alliances, and shared some of the same characteristics and practices of his idol Jaurès -- among these the ability to reconcile the irreconcilable -- which would be put to a great test in the coming two years. The key to understanding Frossard's shifts, his ambiguity, and his craftiness, is to understand that for him socialism was a lofty, vaguely defined, ideal. It was a religion and a mystique to which he had been drawn not by dogmatic doctrine but by the idealistic oratory of Jaurès.

Frossard was by no means a radical revolutionary. He joined the SFIO at the age of sixteen, seeing it as the tool to achieving greater justice in France, and attracted to the Jaurèssian tolerance for allowing different doctrinal interpretations. He was of humble origins. His father was a small artisan who sacrificed everything for his son's education and success. Frossard's father wanted him to

become a school teacher, but Frossard was "drawn to politics like a duck to water."[3] He had exceptional talent for politics; he was an outstanding administrator, had a prodigious memory, and a golden voice that could move a crowd to tears or laughter.[4] Frossard would have to put all these abilities to use as General Secretary of the SFIO. He led a precarious, unsure, and unstable party in an equally perplexing and uncertain time.

As General Secretary of the SFIO Frossard remained an opportunist. Facing the left and right factions, he tried to steer the party on a course consistent with the prevailing tendency, though usually in a reserved, conservative fashion, with party unity always in mind. After 1917 the prevailing tendencywas the *minoritaires*, who were disillusioned with the war and enticed by the success of the Bolshevik Revolution. The powerful emotional appeal of the Russian Revolution cannot be understated, no matter how sparse and inaccurate knowledge of it may have been at the time. As Frossard later stated:

> The working masses turned toward Moscow as if it were the city of socialist saints. There, revolution was made in pain and sacrifice. Assailed by a world of enemies, it strived, through the elements and wild men, in spite of the pangs of hunger, to build a city of justice and harmony that we dreamt of. Socialism, prohibited or banned as it was elsewhere, was in Russia triumphant. That which the socialists in all the countries had wished for, desired, prepared for, waited for in vain, the socialists of Russia, animated with an implacable will, had done. Over the ancient empire of tsars flew the red flag of the International.[5]

Frossard's position in support of the Russian Revolution was adopted at the International Labor and Socialist Congress of Bern in February, 1918. The

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3. L.O. Frossard, *De Jaurès á Léon Blum* (Paris: Flammarion, 1943), 11.
4. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 175.
5. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lénine* (Paris: Bibliothèque de documentation sociale, 1930), 34.

Congress was an attempt to rebuild the old International, but the war had shattered any possibility that this might happen. Further complications arose when the bolsheviks expressed their outrage against those who wanted to rebuild or reform the Second International. Lenin had expressed his desire to form a new International since 1914. He now had a more powerful hand to play, in that the bolsheviks were the only party with the credentials of revolutionary success.

Turning Toward Moscow

In December, 1918, Lenin called for the meeting of the First Congress of the Communist International in Moscow. Made in reaction to the reformist movement and hastened because of the revolutionary situation in Germany, where the Reich had collapsed and a massive political vacuum was left to be filled, the Congress was a massive flop. The Allied blockade of Russia made communication with the West difficult if not impossible. The invitations were sent by telegram on January 24, 1919. Such an ineffective method resulted in many unreceived invitations and, even for those who did receive invitations, many were not able to get into Russia because of the distressed conditions on its borders, where Russia was at war with Poland. Of the fifty-two persons who participated at the congress, only twelve were legitimate spokesmen for Communist or Socialist groups, and eight were from the Soviet Russian Communist Party.[6]

The purpose of the congress was propaganda.[7] The Comintern attempted to identify bolshevism with expected proletarian uprisings in Europe. The Manifesto written at the Congress, most likely by Trotsky,[8] accused the capitalist countries of causing the war, and blame was directed at socialists of the right and center for not

6. James W. Hulse, *The Forming of the Communist International* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964), 17.
7. *Ibid.*, 21.
8. *Ibid.*, 21.

taking action. It was clear that the bolsheviks dominated at the Congress. Yet the pronouncements made at the Congress left doubt concerning the nature of the new Communist International, especially because it was impossible to question the Moscow leaders about the general implications and exact application of their thesis.[9]

The SFIO had met in April, 1919, for its first post-war Congress. The congress was held under considerable anxiety, due to working-class demonstrations, protest over a French military envoy sent to Russia, and news of the First Congress of the Communist International. The party pronouncements were cautious. There was a call for revolution along traditional lines, which meant at the proper historical moment when the proletariat was prepared. There was little sense of revolutionary immediacy during the congress.[10]

Between the Party Congress and the Congress at Strasbourg in February, 1920, the left of the SFIO, led by Fernand Loriot, gained influence. This was due in part to Loriot's agitation and work, and in part by the electoral flop in November. The flop was a result of an amendment approved at the Party Congress, which encumbered the party from gaining parliamentary seats, despite capturing a large number of votes, by rejecting electoral alliances to run on a purely socialist ticket. The SFIO was beat hardily by a right-wing coalition in France, which ran an impassioned anti-bolshevik campaign. The result of the election failure gave further credence to Loriot and his followers in the SFIO, who were critical of the parliamentary path.

With the party drifting to the left, the National Congress of the SFIO met in Strasbourg from February 25 to 29, 1920. The Congress faced three resolutions, reflections of the three major tendencies in the party: the Reconstructionists, who

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9. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'*, 69.
10. *Ibid.*, 71.

wanted to leave the Second International and begin negotiations with the USPD and the bolsheviks in hopes of founding a new International; the former majoritaires, who condemned the Bolsheviks and wanted adherence to the Second International; and the left, represented by Loriot and his newly created Committee for the Third International, who called for immediate adherence to the Third International and immediate revolutionary action. With Loriot's growing influence, Strasbourg became the first congress at which the Left was able to provide real opposition to the center and challenge its leadership of the party.[11] Nevertheless, the Reconstructionists won by a huge margin, and a resolution was passed to leave the Second International and to begin negotiations with Moscow, the USPD, and the Swiss and Italian Socialist parties in order to prepare a conference of "all those parties resolved to continue to act on the basis of the traditional principles of Socialism."[12]

The *minoritaires* were optimistic after Strasbourg that reconstruction of the International was possible. In France, however, labor unrest and a general strike in May, responded to forcefully by the government (many of the SFIO leaders, like Loriot, were jailed), lent a new sense of urgency to the issue of a united Socialist International. It was clear that no international conference could be held without the cooperation of Moscow. The SFIO had voted at Strasbourg to send a delegation to Russia, consisting of Marcel Cachin and Jean Longuet. Concern about the allegations made at the First Communist International, which branded Longuet as a "social pacifist," led the National Council of the SFIO to later replace Longuet with Frossard.

The delegates were given a mandate, written by Frossard on April 23, 1920, which was a refinement of the resolution passed at Strasbourg. The task given to

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11. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 155.

12. *Ibid.*, 156. Wohl is citing from the SFIO, *17^e Congrès*.

the delegates was to: 1) begin discussions with the bolsheviks and other groups associated with the Third International about the possibilities of reestablishing socialist unity; 2) gather information about the present political, economic, and social situation in Russia.[13] The mandate stressed that there were no "essential" theoretical differences separating the Comintern and the SFIO, but it recognized that the party had to explain why the SFIO had not immediately joined the Comintern. The reasons given for this were that since the Comintern did not represent all revolutionary parties, the best way to create an International of all European countries was to arrange a conference of the Comintern and these parties where differences could be resolved and unity achieved. The mandate also stressed that the Comintern must recognize certain idiosyncrasies of French socialism, and expressly stated that the SFIO would reject the authority of the Comintern to excommunicate individual members of the party. It was clear that Frossard did not want to subject his party to authority that was not French, and that he hoped negotiations with Moscow would result in a new international that would grant equal authority to national parties and allow a certain leeway for individual parties to act independently.

Frossard had reason to be concerned, considering the denunciations made by the bolsheviks at the First Communist International against the center and right of the SFIO. He also had a deep veneration for allowing polemics in party politics; he had been attracted to socialism in part for this very reason, and he no doubt used factionalism to better his own standing in the party. Furthermore, it was contrary to the Juarèssian structure of socialism that Frossard was raised in.

Before detailing the reaction of the bolsheviks to the French delegation, and the

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13. *Le Congrès de Tours, 18e Congrès national du Parti socialiste* (Paris: Éditions Sociales, 1980), 88. The text of the mandate was published in a special edition of *L'Humanité* on September 12, 1920.

shocking turn taken by Frossard and Cachin while in Russia, it will be first necessary to know something about the bolshevik perception of, hopes for, and tactics in dealing with the French.

To the bolsheviks France was an enigma. It was home to both the revolutionary tradition ingrained in bolshevik thinking, and to the strongest and most entrenched bourgeoisie of Europe. The fiasco of the May Strike in 1919, and perhaps even more importantly the fact that France was a victor nation in the war, led the bolsheviks to conclude that there was both a lack of revolutionary leaders and revolutionary conditions in France, which was undoubtedly true. Yet the inclusion of the SFIO into the Communist International was important. France was a leader in the Allied blockade, thus any support against its regime would be both a practical and symbolic act of support for the bolsheviks. Furthermore, the bolsheviks believed that in order to make their revolution fulfill its Marxist potential revolution was necessary in the West. The bolsheviks thus adopted an unconventional strategy for dealing with the SFIO: manipulation. In order to attract the SFIO into the Comintern, the bolsheviks decided to invite the center of the SFIO to affiliate itself formally with the Comintern and to consent to a centrist leadership of the party.[14]

To understand why the strategy of manipulation was unconventional it is necessary to look at the development of bolshevik theories concerning revolution and the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the relation of this to France. One can describe it in two parts: the indigenous characteristics of Russia during and after the Revolution; and the international situation exasperated by the war.

There is a tendency to interpret the Russian Revolution in two broad perspec-

14. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'*, 141.

tives, the Communist history and anti-Communist history.[15] The Communist interpretation holds that the revolution was the inevitable uprising of thousands of workers and peasants, and the expected consequence of the bourgeois-proletariat class struggle. On the other hand, anti-Communist interpretations see the revolution as the outcome of historical circumstances in an antiquated, backward, and wartorn nation. Yet as Robert Daniels notes, "The stark truth about the Bolshevik Revolution is that it succeeded against incredible odds in defiance of any rational calculation that could have been made in the fall of 1917."[16] In this reality lies the development of the dogmatic, and at times unorthodox, theories that the bolsheviks developed.

Although Lenin claimed to be a Marxist, the revolution he led was far from being Marxist. Russia was unprepared industrially in Marxist terms, and its proletariat paled in comparison to the massive proletariat in Germany and France. But Lenin had an almost unparalleled ability to turn a situation into what he wanted it to be in theoretical terms, and he also had the acumen to recognize that where a Marxist situation did not exist, theory could easily be compromised. Thus the slogan "land, peace, and bread" could be used to agitate an eager and hungry peasant mass to rise.

The development of the dictatorship of the proletariat came out of the necessity-- and it could only have happened in Russia-- of using an organized elite to create revolution. With Lenin's success in October, 1917, he confirmed that the dictatorship worked, and that it might be used outside of Russia to foster revolution. The failures of revolutions in Germany and Hungary in 1918 reinforced this viewpoint, and led him to conclude that the failures were a result of

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15. Robert Daniels, *Red October: The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967), 215.
16. Ibid., 215.

poor leadership. Revolution could only be made by a "pure" revolutionary party. Thus one can follow his affinity for authorizing party splits. It was based on "a proposition of syllogistic reasonableness: a revolutionary had the obligation to break away from a party and establish a new one when he believed that the old party was making revolution impossible."[17] It was with such reasoning that the First Congress of the Communist International could lay the blame for failed revolutions in the West on feeble and incompetent leadership, and make the call to revolutionaries such as Loriot to break away from their party and form a pure, revolutionary one.* But the lack of proper conditions in France, and his concerns about having the French in the Comintern, forced Lenin to accept an "impure" French party. He now had to manipulate the French into accepting his doctrine.

17. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 121.

* There are many complications to this reasoning, such as by what standards does one determine if an organization is making revolution impossible? and when is the proper moment to split? This is given consideration by Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 121-123.

Frossard and Cachin in Russia, and the Campaign for Communism

The shifting orientation of the SFIO through the Spring of 1920 has been detailed, as the *minoritaires* usurped a large faction of the *majoritaires* and moved toward a position near the Zimmerwaldian Left. The decision to join the Comintern-- already opted for by Loriot and the Committee for the Third International-- occurred as a result of a twisting six-week journey by Frossard and Cachin in Russia. The culmination of the move toward Moscow finally took place at the Congress of Tours in December, 1920, and brought to the new French Communist Party over three-fourths of the SFIO.

Frossard and Cachin in Russia

Frossard and Cachin left Paris on May 31, 1920, stopping in Berlin on June 2, where they met the correspondent of *L'Humanité*, O. Cohen. The mandate Frossard had written said nothing about a stay in Berlin, so it can be assumed that their two-day stay was unofficial.[1] Whether or not there was to be a last-minute deal with the USPD, as Loriot charged, in hopes of forming an alliance against the Bolsheviks is unknown, and there is no mention of it in Frossard's writings. After two days in Berlin, Frossard and Cachin reached Reval on the ninth.

A Soviet diplomatic delegation coolly received Frossard and Cachin in Reval, telling them that the Second Congress of the Communist International was now scheduled for late July. They waited in Reval until the thirteenth, when they left for Petrograd. Arriving in Petrograd, the two delegates found no one waiting to receive them. Afraid to leave the train station, Frossard and Cachin were left alone

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1. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 165.

until the fourteenth, when they caught the train for Moscow. The journey to Moscow lasted an irksome twenty-two hours, the train stopping at every station along the route.

They arrived in Moscow on June 15. Frossard was amazed at the gala reception given to the Italians, who had arrived hours before on a special train and found the station ornately decorated with red flags and emblems everywhere. Frossard interpreted this as a shun: the Italian socialists were "pure"-- they had adhered to the International; the French, on the other hand, were "social traitors." Left alone, Frossard and Cachin wandered about Moscow, finding empty shops, dirty streets, and a rampant black market. In frustration, Frossard apparently sent a telegram to France stating that he and Cachin had finished their business and would be returning to Paris by July 1.[2] It is possible that the telegram was sent with the intention of having the bolsheviks notice it, because on the fifteenth-- the day the telegram was sent-- the quarantine ended. Frossard and Cachin were met by Jacques Sadoul, his wife, and Taratouta (Sadoul and Taratouta were members of Loriot's Committee for the Resumption of International Relations), who made apologies, saying, "Lenin is sorry." Frossard was little impressed: "I saw well that the quarantine was finished. It lasted as long as was necessary for us to understand the difference between vulgar social democrats and good communists."[3] He added cautiously, "It is the purgatory, as it were, before the paradise. But purgatory all the same. We have not been designated to enter paradise immediately."[4]

Sadoul and Taratouta stayed close to the sides of Frossard and Cachin, escorting them around Moscow and flooding them with facts and figures about the regime. Frossard was not overly impressed with this sudden friendship and said

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2. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'*, 172.
3. Frossard, *De Jaures à Lenine*, 54.
4. *Ibid.*, 55.

that Sadoul's efforts to inform them on doctrine was to "put us in a state of grace before we were called to appear before the most redoubtable of tribunals: the Executive Committee of the Communist International."[5]

Before Cachin and Frossard met with the ECCI, they were invited to a meeting of the Executive Council of the All-Russian Council of Soviets on June 16, assembled to honor the foreign delegates to the Second Congress. Cachin was asked to take the podium and speak. He addressed the crowd, begging forgiveness for the crimes of the French bourgeoisie, and received a wild ovation. Kamenev and Bukharin responded to Cachin vehemently, attacking him and the SFIO for weak leadership that was indirectly causing death and starvation of Russians because of their nonrevolutionary work. The attack apparently brought Cachin to tears, and did not end here. The next day, in a meeting with a semi-official "French Group," they were again exposed to verbal abuse against the leadership of the SFIO.[6]

It was now time to meet the "most redoubtable of tribunals," the ECCI, on June 19, to discuss the SFIO's relationship to the Comintern. There was an abnormal number of attendees, which Frossard remarked had been "lured by these choice morsels: two victims prepared for sacrifice -- and handed over defenseless to the claws of Lenin."[7] Frossard and Cachin read prepared speeches, hoping to ease what they thought would be the onslaught from Lenin. Frossard also formally requested to be admitted to the sessions of the Second Congress.[8] (Frossard and Cachin had left Paris on May 31, the day before the invitations to the Second Congress were issued.)

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5. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Léninie*, 56.
6. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 174.
7. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'*, 174. Lindemann is citing from Frossard, *Mon journal de voyage en Russie des soviets.*
8. *Ibid.*, 174.

When Lenin arrived, he first thanked Cachin and Frossard for coming, and expressed his dissatisfaction with the USPD for remaining in Germany. He then informed Frossard and Cachin that their viewpoints were not those of the Communist International. There were "profound differences" between the SFIO and the Comintern -- not essential agreement, as Frossard's mandate maintained. Differences arose over the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the role of a communist party in it, Lenin argued.[9] He insisted that the most advanced section of the working class, formed into a disciplined party, must become the state itself, imposing a firm dictatorship not only on the bourgeoisie but also on the less advanced ranks of the proletariat. Yet he did not demand that the French make a revolution immediately, but only prepare for it. On the question of excommunications, Lenin spoke in soft terms, saying it was not the person that counted but rather the idea the person represented that needed to be purged.

The attack was much less than Frossard and Cachin expected. Yet despite Lenin's soft tone, Frossard was apparently ready to return to France. Cachin wanted to stay, and in the delay caused by disagreement the bolsheviks were able to return "warm" treatment in order to keep the French delegates in Russia. It was clear that the Bolsheviks wanted to make the point that theirs was the only acceptable way to revolution. But the bolsheviks also wanted to keep the French from leaving and destroying hopes for a Comintern that embraced a large number of important parties. Kamenev and other Comintern representatives visited Frossard's room and assured him that they wanted agreement and understanding with the French. Frossard admitted, "it is clear that they want the affiliation of the French party, that they attach the most extreme importance to it, that they consider it of capital importance for the future of the International."[10] On June 27 they

9. *Le Congrès de Tours*, 99.
10. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'*, 178. Lindemann is citing from Frossard, *Mon Journal de voyage en Russie des soviets.*

decided to stay and sent a telegram to the SFIO's National Council, which granted them permission on July 4.

By confusing Frossard and Cachin with the "carrot and stick" treatment, the bolsheviks were able to manipulate the two into accepting Comintern doctrine. Cachin had been humiliated by the bolsheviks. For a person easily given to the sway of the crowd-- as Frossard described, "For him the noises of a crowd were like a woman's caress"[11]-- Cachin found concessions easy to come by. He had, after all, been an emotional social patriot, and had only changed his position when he sensed the masses were changing theirs. Making concessions to the bolsheviks posed no moral problems, and Cachin became eagerly attracted to bolshevik propaganda.

Frossard, on the other hand, faced agonizing dilemmas during his stay, which led him into intense periods of self-doubt and incertitude. He was angered and dismayed by the vexing bolshevik treatment. Yet he was deeply attracted to the revolution, as he wrote:

> the Russian Revolution overcomes us with a new atmosphere, it accustoms and forces us-- almost against our will-- to feel, understand, think [in new ways]... It encloses us, tightens around us, conquers us, penetrates us, uproots us... Outside of it nothing counts, nothing is worth the trouble. The necessities of the Revolution are the supreme law.[12]

On June 29 Cachin read before the ECCI the answers he and Frossard had composed to questions asked them on the nineteenth. It was a general statement of their evolution in favor of communism.[13] Cachin stated that the role of a

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11. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lenine*, 48.
12. *Ibid.*, 105-106.
13. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 179.

professional elite was necessary for revolution, and that revolution need not wait for the majority of the population to want it, since the "poisoned" bourgeoisie controlled both the state and means of communication within it. He accepted "as a necessary fact" that violence and terror would have to be used to impose and maintain "definitively the social regime of the future."[14] He admitted to the Comintern the SFIO's past weakness and insufficiencies in dealing with the French bourgeoisie, and that the Comintern was right for condemning them "for not acting with more vigor." Cachin ended by saying, "We assure you that it is not with words, but with hearts and with reason that our comrades [in France], like ourselves, will give ourselves completely to the communist cause, to the cause of the struggle to the death against capitalism."[15] These concessions to the Comintern went distinctly beyond the general statement of SFIO principles voted on at Strasbourg in April.[16]

The Second Congress of the Communist International began on July 19, 1920. Beginning in Petrograd, the first day of the congress was used to create an atmosphere of celebration; the bolshevik genius for pageantry was in evidence, such that the opening day resembled that of a royal or religious ceremony.[17] Frossard was amazed at the ability of the bolsheviks to produce such propaganda, which, he said, "left a lasting memory in our minds."[18] Lenin and Zinoviev made grandiloquent opening speeches, carefully worded, trying to sell their program to those delegates who still had reservations.[19] The Congress then moved to Moscow, where it resumed on July 23. On the train to Moscow, Frossard met a young girl

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14. *Le Congrès de Tours*, 101.
15. *Ibid.*, 102.
16. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 179.
17. Hulse, *The Forming of the Communist International*, 193.
18. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lenine*, 113.
19. Hulse, *The Forming of the Communist International*, 192.

who worked at the Museum of the Revolution in Petrograd. His conversations with the young girl led him to remark that life in Russia was hard but that the bolshevik regime was competent and coherent. He was told by the girl that if peace was reestablished, progress would be certain.

According to the official protocol of the Congress, 167 delegates had voting rights, and 51 others had deliberative or consultative status. The bolsheviks benefited both from having the Congress in Russia, and by giving themselves an imposing bloc of votes to insure their influence. Of those who could cast decisive votes, 65, or about 40 per cent, were representatives of the Russian Communist Party.[20] The voting strength of the delegations was not based on the size or power of the Communist parties in the various countries, nor were the delegates recognized on the basis of legitimate mandates from existing parties.[21] Frossard and Cachin were given consultative status, but five other men-- two of whom had no mandates at all from France-- voted in the name of the French proletariat.

The sessions in Moscow began on July 23. Each national group was assigned a table to work on, which put Frossard and Cachin next to the the other five Frenchmen who were from the far-left of French socialism. A delegate from England remarked about Frossard's *mal à l'aise* in the situation: "He certainly looked out of place in this camp of revolutionaries, very uncomfortable and worried."[22]

Frossard found himself in a state of confusion and self doubt. He had reason to believe, after meetings with Zinoviev, that he could strike an agreement with the Comintern that would not seriously compromise what he saw as the best chance for a strong and effective communist party in France. The questions of exclusions was

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20. Hulse, *The Forming of the Communist International*, 192.
21. *Ibid.*, 192.
22. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 190. Lindemann is citing James T. Murphy, *New Horizons* (London, 1941), 141.

crucial, for in order for Frossard to maneuver the party to accept the Comintern, it would have to be done with the inclusion of centrists, the most controversial of which was Jean Longuet. Longuet was a friend of Frossard's, and an important figure in the SFIO. He had been the first of the French socialists to oppose the war, and had made a valiant journey to Zimmerwald in 1915, after which he became the leader of the Zimmerwaldian movement in France.

Zinoviev had been evasive over the question of exclusions, but had given Frossard enough indication to lead him to believe that Longuet could be included. Frossard still expressed reservation about the Comintern: "Their Revolution, viewed superficially from a distance, had seduced first the small sects of fanatics... [who have] no socialist culture."[23] But he held that, "On the day when the International will give them and impose on them a statute, a doctrine, sure and precise directions, and severe discipline, they will rear themselves."[24]

Frossard's positive feelings were constantly challenged by the bolsheviks. He sensed a "network of intrigues"[25] surrounding Cachin and him, and he wanted often to return to France. He and Cachin were falsely informed by the bolsheviks on July 23 that the SFIO National Council had voted in favor of joining the Comintern.[26]

When Cachin proposed to send a telegram to France announcing that they favored joining the Comintern, Frossard was suspicious and apprehensive. After much discussion between the two, Frossard himself decided to send off the telegram. He reasoned that it was impossible that the SFIO would not adhere. Frossard's deliberations over the telegram are a good indication of both his hopes and fears for an alliance. He could not deny the massive appeal of the Russian

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23. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lenine*, 122.
24. *Ibid.*, 123.
25. *Ibid.*, 131.
26. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 191-192.

Revolution-- Frossard was both aware of it and deeply affected by it-- but he worried about the militant and extreme tendencies of the bolsheviks. These tendencies would pose serious dilemmas on his goal of keeping unity in the SFIO, and on his ability to act independently of the Comintern. He was forced to choose a side to support. If he and Cachin returned to France without any agreement, the split would occur on the left, they reasoned, leaving them, as centrists, with the right, the smaller faction of the party. With some type of agreement with Moscow, however, they would be able to pull the center of the party toward the left, which would enable them to outmaneuver the left in the campaign for communism. They made the decision to break from the reformist right.

Frossard hoped to maneuver the centrists toward the left in a manner that would blunt the left's sharp sword as the only supporters of the Revolution. It was fidelity to the Jaurèssian tradition: move the mass of the party into the prevailing current, and maintain maximum unity. Frossard was aware of the momentous decision he was taking, and worried about the possible consequences. "... a crushing responsibility weighs on us -- what if we are making a mistake?"[27] Yet he assured himself that, "there is no other course than to place ourselves at the head of a movement that is clearly irresistible. We will lose some parliamentary deputies-- would it be better to lose the masses?"[28]

The hope that the telegram would also serve to preserve good relations with the bolsheviks was put into doubt by the speeches made by Lenin and Zinoviev at the opening of the Congress. Worry was furthered by the arrival of the French delegation of the Committee for the Comintern to Petrograd on July 18, who were upset with the progress of Frossard and Cachin and complained to the Comintern

27. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lenine*, 110.
28. *Ibid.*, 112.

about it.[29]

On July 24 Frossard and Cachin made arrangements for a special meeting with Zinoviev and Kamenev, where they expressed their indignation at the proclamations made by the Committee for the Comintern delegates. Zinoviev and Kamenev responded by assuring Frossard and Cachin that the ECCI did not have the intention of demanding excommunications. They only wanted the SFIO to adopt a new policy and forsake old ways.[30]

Two days later, on July 26, Frossard and Cachin were given a reply to their questions concerning the terms of admission to the Third International, which, Frossard remarked, "had the tone of a legal indictment."[31] The reply stated nine conditions of admission, two of which upset Frossard. These had to do with the excommunication of centrists in the socialist parties, and were of particular concern to Frossard because the name Jean Longuet was on the list of those to be expelled. The second contended condition held that each party wishing to join the Comintern must reserve in its executive committee places for two communists who had declared themselves as such before the Second Congress. Frossard angrily left the Congress, ostensibly to write a response to the reply. The bolsheviks were apparently alarmed at Frossard's departure, and on July 27 Zinoviev met again with Frossard. With a "conciliatory frame of mind,"[32] Zinoviev told Frossard that the declaration by the congress did not intend to exclude anyone. It was the "general sense" of the document that was important, not the specifics. Zinoviev said it was not Longuet, but the reformist tendency which Longuet represented, that needed to be expelled.

Frossard met again with Zinoviev on July 28, and they reached a new

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29. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 194.
30. *Ibid.*, 194.
31. Frossard, *De Juarès à Lenine,* 132.
32. *Ibid.*, 133.

agreement. Apparently Zinoviev yielded to Frossard's objections on a number of points, because the declaration he consented to have Cachin read to the congress the next day was more reserved than the declarations the SFIO delegates had made earlier.[33] The declaration stated that they were in full agreement with the Comintern, and that they were ready to "revise the program of our party, to put it in harmony with the spirit of the Third International."[34] Cachin added that, "if our friend Longuet were here, he would not think differently than us."[35]

Cachin and Frossard had also prepared another short declaration, which they did not read to the congress but only handed over to its Presidium; it was even more negative and reticent than the declaration Cachin did read, and was a mild rebuttal to the open letter of the ECCI that was to be printed in France.[36] The ECCI letter was addressed "To All Members of the French Socialist Party, to All Class Conscious Proletarians" and was no doubt a modified form of the "Answer" of the ECCI which had previously angered Frossard.[37] The Answer included hard criticisms of the French socialists for "poisoning the soul of soldiers and the working masses by voting for war credits and giving to the bourgeoisie the socialist press and apparatus."[38] The declaration contained nine conditions necessary for admission to the Third International, which included changing the party name and party propaganda, fighting against colonialism, denouncing the "hypocrisy of social pacifism," subordinating the parliamentary faction in the party, denouncing reformism, realizing the "necessity of combining legal action with illegal action" against the bourgeoisie, and "considering as strictly obligatory all the decisions of the Communist International." Cachin and Frossard, while

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33. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 207.
34. *Le Congrès de Tours*, 111.
35. *Ibid.*, 111.
36. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 207.
37. *Ibid.*, 208.
38. *Le Congrès de Tours*, 114.

promising to give the letter full publicity, added "as far as we are concerned, we cannot avoid stating our reservations concerning the form and content of several of the judgments which it contains."[39]

The two delegates prepared to return to France. On July 29 Frossard and Cachin went for a final meeting with Lenin. His tone was cordial, and he described to Frossard and Cachin the recent successes of the Red Army in Poland, and the chances of revolution breaking in Poland, which would infect Germany, Hungary, the Balkans, and Italy. Frossard and Cachin promised to send a larger French delegation to Russia. Lenin wanted to make sure it included workers. Frossard inserted the name Jean Longuet. According to Frossard, Lenin smiled skeptically and said, "I doubt it. But personalities have no importance."[40] Frossard and Cachin left Moscow on the night of the twenty-ninth, eight days before the congress ended.

The Return to France and the Crusade for Communism

Frossard and Cachin arrived in Paris on August 12, after an uneventful trip by way of Reval and Stockholm. The next night they reported on their trip at a mass meeting held in the Cirque de Paris, where a standing-room crowd of 10,000 greeted them with shouts of "Vive Frossard! Vive Cachin! Vive Jaurès! Vive Lénine!". It had been decided in advance that they would not touch on the question of adherence to the Third International, and merely recount what they had seen, but the enthusiasm of the crowd swayed them to make emotional appeals for the Comintern.[41]

Frossard and Cachin followed the Cirque de Paris with and exhaustive tour of France from August 15 to September 25, explaining their Russian trip and

39. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years,'* 208. Lindemann is cititing the*Parti Socialiste Rapport*, 29.
40. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lenine*, 140.
41. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 185.

advocating adherence to the Third International. At the same time, they published a series of articles in *L'Humanité* describing different facets of Soviet society. Throughout their travels and articles, they defended the undemocratic nature of the Soviet regime, and scolded the French Socialists for the criticism of the Bolsheviks. Frossard and Cachin focused intently on the strength and influence of the Soviet regime -- and the very fact of its existence -- as well as the connection between the Russian Revolution to the French revolutionary tradition and the need for the French proletariat to make a gesture of solidarity with their Russian brothers.[42]

Even though Frossard and Cachin appeared openly in support of joining the Comintern, they were careful to not admit the entire truth about their journey in Russia. In the pamphlet that was printed for distribution, entitled, "The Socialist Party and the International: Report on the negotiations carried out in Moscow," Frossard and Cachin stressed their "perfect agreement" at all times, glossing over the fact that they had often been at odds with each other, and skipping completely the hostile treatment given to them at times by the Bolsheviks.[43]

The Debate Before Tours

The telegram Frossard and Cachin had sent from Moscow and their statements on their return opened a debate within the party that lasted until the Congress of Tours. The debates were not similar to those that had plagued the SFIO previously, between the *majoritaires*, *minoritaires*, and Zimmerwaldians. The Right had been effectively weakened and beaten, and had announced from the beginning that to go to Moscow would mean a split. The Left, meanwhile, had been effectively outmaneuvered by Cachin and Frossard and would affiliate with

42. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 187.
43. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'*, 224.

the Third International. The question at hand involved the Center, which had been in favor of reconstructing the old International, and which was now forced into deciding whether or not to join the Comintern. The leadership of the Center splintered into three parts. The Left Center followed Frossard and Cachin, while the Middle Center followed Jean Longuet, who tried to maintain uncommitted, and the Right Center rejoined the *majoritaires.*

The issue dividing the Center was the conditions of admission to the Comintern that Frossard and Cachin returned with from Russia. Frossard and Cachin returned from Russia with a list of nine conditions. They had left Moscow before the Second Congress had ended, and were led to believe that they understood the nine conditions and that they would be acceptable in France. Frossard was aware that adherence to the Third International would mean a split in the party, but his intention was to include as much of the Right possible, in particular his friend Longuet. But Frossard and Cachin soon found that the nine conditions they had agreed upon in Moscow were not a completed list.

On August 30 *Le Populaire* published the Eighteen Theses that Lenin had prepared before the Second Congress, and on September 2 it published the text of the Twenty-One Conditions that had been approved at the Second Congress after Frossard's and Cachin's departure. The first reaction of Frossard and Cachin was to deny that the Twenty-One Conditions applied to France. But a letter from Lenin to Serrati, the Italian Socialist, published by *Le Populaire* on October 2, made it clear that the conditions were applicable everywhere, with no exceptions.

On October 8 the conditions were published in *L'Humanité*, and on October 13 Frossard publicly acknowledged them.[44] Frossard and Cachin had been outmaneuvered by the Comintern, but had no other choice than to continue advocating adherence. Frossard later wrote:

44. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making,* 187.

> The Nine Conditions we were acquainted with at Moscow had become Twenty-One by the time we arrived in Paris. But what could we do? We had begun our campaign. They knew that we were in too deep to turn back. Even if we had wanted to, the defeat of the Red Army after its march on Warsaw would have prevented us from doing so. It was thus with halting steps and a far from easy mind that we laid the groundwork for the Congress of Tours.[45]

For Longuet and the Middle Center, the Twenty-One Conditions were "completely unacceptable." The three conditions of contention were the seventh, twentieth, and twenty-first. Condition seven dealt with the necessity of breaking with the "reformists" and "opportunists," and specifically named Longuet as one of those that the Comintern would not allow in its ranks.[46] Number twenty made it obligatory that two-thirds of the executive committees of new member parties be composed of those who had openly declared themselves in favor of affiliation with the Communist International before the Second Congress[47]. And number twenty-one demanded that all those who "in principle" refused the conditions and theses of the Communist International were to be automatically excluded from the party.[48]

The Split at Tours

The three divisions in the Center came to Tours prepared and aware that a split would take place. The *majoritaires* and Right Center would not opt for the Third International, while the Left and Left Center would definitely adhere. The open question was the Middle Center. In the final days before the congress Longuet and his followers announced that they still hoped to join the Comintern and save the

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45. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lénine*, 152.
46. Le Congrès de Tours, 210.
47. *Ibid.*, 210.
48. *Ibid.*, 210.

unity of the SFIO.[49] Longuet drafted a resolution that came to be known as "affiliation with reservations." The resolution objected to the bolshevik structured party. It criticized the dictatorship of the proletariat, implying that it should be short lived so that it not "degenerate into tyranny,"[50] and held that a constructive opposition in parliament should be carried out. Despite the fact that the reservations were completely unacceptable to the ECCI, Frossard and Cachin insisted that the ECCI would not exclude Longuet if he and his followers submitted to the majority of the party in the future.[51]

The Congress of Tours met from December 25-29 in the Salle du Manège, a small, run-down and dark hall, bolstered with red tapestries and crowded with iron folding-chairs hastily borrowed from a cafekeeper.[52] Behind the speakers' stand there were two large calico banners which proclaimed in bold characters: "The emancipation of the workers will be the work of the workers themselves," and "Workingmen of all countries, unite!"

The congress began in an atmosphere of high excitement and taut nerves. Each side suspected the other of wanting a split-- and it was true that such preparations were in the making. The first conflict came when the Left attempted, successfully, to set aside the order of the day established by the CAP and pass directly to the question of the Third International. The Right immediately accused Frossard of a "coup de force."[53] Another debate was occasioned by Frossard's suggestion that each of the federations briefly outline its position before the main discussion was opened. This procedure was not customary, but from Frossard's point of view it had the great advantage of showing the mood in which the party was going to

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49. Lindemann, *The 'Red Years'*, 260.
50. *Ibid.*, 258.
51. *Ibid.*, 258.
52. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 197.
53. Le Congrès de Tours, 457.

Moscow.[54]

Cachin and Frossard bore the brunt of defending the position of the Left against that of the Right. The major part of their argument was devoted to de-emphasizing the importance of adherence, in an effort to bring Longuet's division with them. Cachin invoked the stability of the Russian Republic and denied that there was anything in Bolshevik methods that ran counter to the French tradition. Bolshevism, in his interpretation, was merely Guesdism warmed over.[55] Frossard insisted once more that he and Cachin had never agreed to the exclusion of Longuet and the Center. When they had gone to Moscow, he pointed out, Reconstruction had already failed.[56] They cleared the way for a last-minute reconciliation between the Left and Center in the name of the party's revolutionary unity.

But on the fourth day of the Congress, Zinoviev sent a telegram to the congress in the name of the ECCI. The effect of the Zinoviev "knife" was to end any chances there might have been for a compromise between the Longuet and his followers and the Frossard-Cachin Left. The telegram made clear that the Third International did not want Longuet and his friends as members. Zinoviev's message read, "The Communist International can have nothing in common with [Longuet]. In the present circumstances, the worst disservice one can do the French proletariat is to think up some mixed-up compromise that will later be a veritable ball and chain for your party."[57]

Frossard and Cachin's attempts to make the split as far to the right as possible were flustered, but this did not mean that they had lost at the congress. When the vote was finally taken around midnight of the twenty-ninth, the Frossard-Cachin

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54. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 198.
55. Congrès de Tours, 458.
56. *Ibid.*, 476.
57. Le Congrès de Tours, 539.

motion for adherence to the International received 3,208 votes, and the Longuet motion 1,022. The Right had withdrawn from the congress. The French Communist Party was born.

Conclusion

The history of the French Communist Party in the years following the split at Tours is a story of misunderstanding. Frossard and Cachin had led the SFIO left toward affiliation with Moscow without having had a full understanding or comprehension of the engagements they had undertaken. Loriot himself could not have known what to expect. Frossard said that he hoped it was possible "to associate in a harmonious synthesis the revolutionary audacity of Lenin and the vast humanity of Jaurès."[1] In other words, he hoped to reestablish the prestige of French Socialism, which had been disgraced because of its participation in the Sacred Union, with the fame of the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik regime. The conception was broad enough to attract both Loriot's group and the Centrists.

In leading the SFIO toward accepting communism, Frossard assumed that the Bolsheviks would accept the adherence of the French in all of its idiosyncrasies and then leave them alone to apply the strategy of the International as they could. This was unacceptable to the Bolsheviks. Leninism, although it had loosened its rigidity in manipulating Frossard and Cachin to join the Comintern, returned to the demand for iron discipline and ideology. The revolutionary elite corps, meaning the party, had to be tightly organized and centralized. This issue of obedience versus dissidence was central to the party debates through 1923.[2] In the end, the Bolsheviks won.

With the realization that the French Communist Party had become nothing more than a puppet of the Bolsheviks, Frossard left the party ranks in 1923. He rejoined the SFIO in 1928, later became a minister in Pétain's Vichy regime, and passed away in obscurity in 1948. Loriot, too, by 1926, became disgusted with the

1. Frossard, *De Jaurès à Lénine*, 145.
2. Wohl, *French Communism in the Making*, 203.

development of the party, and did not renew his membership. His story is interesting, for in the years before the split it had been Loriot and the Committee for the Comintern that had so actively authorized joining the Leninist left. With the submission of the party to Moscow, however, Loriot found the Leninist concept of party organization unappealing. Of the most abhorrent profession to a communist, Loriot became a shopkeeper in 1926, and died four years later.

Cachin remained in the party until his death in 1958. His story is perhaps the easiest to understand of the three because he was driven by emotion rather than intellect. He was a leader who followed the masses rather than guided them. Cachin did not find the intellectual inconsistencies in Leninism that led to Loriot's disgust with the Bolsheviks, nor did he intend to reinstall the Jauressian Socialism of Frossard in the French Communist Party. The emotional attraction to the first proletarian state was enough to keep him in the party.

There is one final question to be addressed: what caused the attraction of these three men, and the masses of the SFIO, to Bolshevism, a doctrine that could not contrast more sharply with the Jauressian Socialism of the prewar SFIO? The answer lies in the failure of the SFIO during the war to act as a socialist party, and the development of the Bolshevik Revolution in the violent and troubled years at the war's end.

Three short weeks after Germany invaded Belgium, the SFIO violated its two most important precepts of non-governmental participation and commitment to the International. The paradox of the SFIO position was not initially realized until the patriotic élan that gripped nearly all Frenchmen began to fade. Loriot led the group that tried to exploit the inconsistencies of the SFIO leaders and fight for socialist "purity." The failures of the SFIO to change its war-time policies led

Loriot to support of the Bolsheviks after the revolution had taken place.

The actions of Frossard and Cachin were also responses to the SFIO crisis. Their party had not succeeded in moderating French war aims, it had not won a voice for the working class in national affairs, and it had failed in preventing the French government from engaging in a reactionary Russian intervention. Attempts to reconstruct the old International had unexpectedly collapsed, and the prestige of the Socialist International was decimated. The Bolshevik regime had begun to stand for the revolution in France, and Bolshevik Russia had become the common homeland of all socialists. For leaders such as Cachin and Frossard, the mystique of the Bolshevik Revolution became so great that to deny it would discredit the traditions of French socialism.

It is important to remember that in 1920 Bolshevism was little more than a mystique. The Congress of Tours took place before the main outlines of Bolshevik ideology had clearly emerged. For most French Socialists, Bolshevism simply meant "the revolution." Frossard and Cachin's journey to Moscow showed seminal signs of what would develop to be Bolshevik doctrine, signs that became clearer in the following months with the decision not to allow Longuet into the party. If the Bolsheviks had sacrificed doctrine to allow Frossard and Cachin in the party, why not Longuet? It was a political question, and revealed that at the heart of Bolshevik thinking was political power, not an obligation to socialist goals.

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