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## The French Left and the New Deal (1932-1936)

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John BARZMAN

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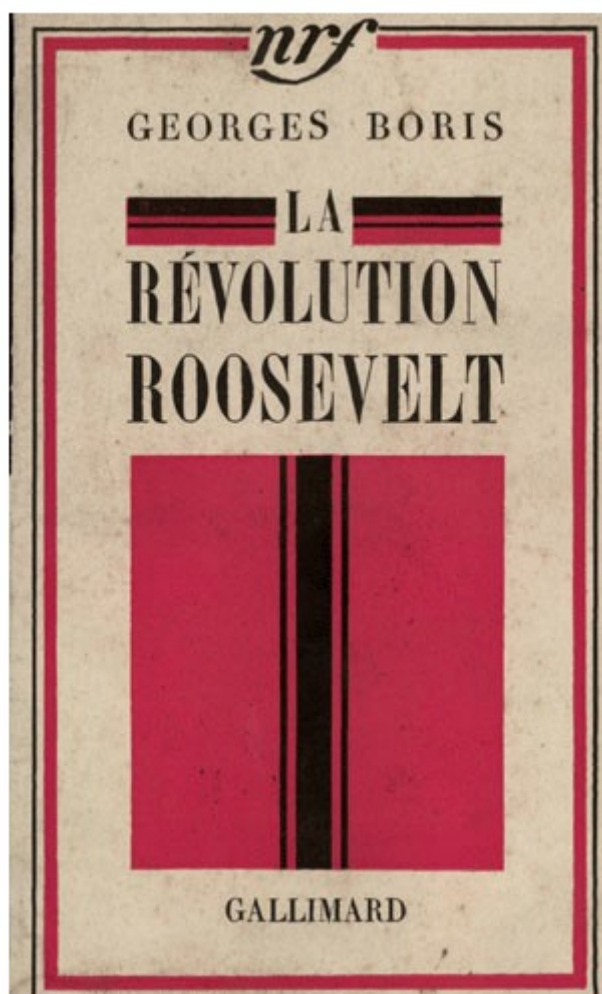
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THE FRENCH LEFT AND THE NEW DEAL (1932-1936)

BY

JOHN BARZMAN

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## INTRODUCTION

When the Great Depression struck Europe in the early 1930's, economic policy, fascism and war naturally became the central preoccupations of the French Left. By 1936 its major organizations, the Parti Socialiste, Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO), the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), and the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) had devised common proposals to meet these challenges. The tentative solution was the Popular Front. Heated discussions had divided the three groups before unity around a common program could be achieved.

One of the issues which frequently had set them apart was the policy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States. In the course of his first term, the concept of an "American Experiment" in dealing with the crisis and its manifold effects, developed in the thinking and writing of French publicists.

At the outset of the 1930's the United States was almost universally looked upon by the Left as the epitome of capitalism and its ills. The exceptions to this rule, such as the CGT leadership, were timid and on the defensive. By 1936 though, as the Popular Front assumed the reins of power in France and as Roosevelt campaigned for a second term in the United States, the "American

model" had become almost entirely positive. The Left recognized in the New Deal's domestic and international policies the basis for a closer identification with the United States.

This closeness was expressed by Léon Blum, upon his being designated to head the new government in May, 1936. His first public address as the prime minister designate was granted to the American Club in Paris, and dealt with the kinship between France and the United States:

It is natural, he said, for a nation to be inclined to particular friendship towards those nations which like itself, are passionately attached to all their liberties and are determined to defend them on their soil. . . . It is also natural that the same friendship and the same affinity should bind those nations which are dedicated to the same ideal of social justice. . . . (Pe 5-16-36)<sup>1</sup>

A few days later, in an address to the American people broadcast over NBC radio, Blum explained:

The task of the government which is about to be formed will be to carry out the wishes of the majority of the French people.

Are these wishes not closely related to those of the American people? Have the American people not remained passionately attached to the Republic, to democracy, to freedom? Have they not applied the whole power of the democratic state to finding a solution to the crisis? Have they not sought that solution in the direction of increasing the purchasing power of the toiling masses and a more equitable distribution of wealth?

Have they not demonstrated by resplendent examples, even though they do not belong to the League of Nations, their will to create international solidarity, to legalize peace, to put an end to the regime of armaments? (Pe 5-23-36)



On June 7, following the wave of sit-down strikes in France, Léon Jouhaux, the head of the CGT, was asked to explain the meaning of the strikes to the American public through a radio interview. He said:

The strikes are strictly corporative, their demands are the same as those which the American Federation of Labor has put forward and which Roosevelt has granted. (Pe 6-7-36)

Following Roosevelt's reelection in November, 1936, Jouhaux wrote:

Henceforth, the "French Experiment" which is that of the Popular Rally, can expect a more intimate and trusting collaboration with the great American democracy. (Pe 11-5-36)

Even the PCF, despite its exclusive admiration for the Soviet Union, had to concede to the new trend. Paul Nizan could write in L'Humanité of November, 1936:

It is true that, in a sense, the four years of Mr. Roosevelt's mandate have decreased the pressure which big business had been exerting on the Washington government for thirty years. (H 11-4-36)

Gabriel Péri, another prominent Communist spokesperson, wrote after the devaluation of the Franc and its alignment on the Dollar and the Pound:

It would be highly desirable that the contacts which have been established with the United States during the monetary negotiations, find a continuation in other fields, that they be the first act of a Franco-American collaboration which, President Roosevelt's recent speeches demonstrate, would be useful for peace. (H 9-29-36)

The near-unanimous fondness of the French Left for the United States in 1936 embodied the convergence of several distinct ideological paths.<sup>2</sup> The evolution of the three major organizations of the French Left was most striking in their attitude towards the New Deal which, by 1936, was considered by many in France to have been a forerunner of the Popular Front government, at least in the economic and social fields. Jules Moch who, between 1932 and 1936 was a member of the Union des Techniciens Socialistes, an association of socialist specialists, and a counselor of Léon Blum, has noted that resemblance as follows:

The New Deal of Roosevelt in 1929 [sic] and the program of the Popular Front of 1935 present many common features and both proceed from the same principle that it is better to put men back to work, even at the cost of temporarily increasing the budgetary imbalance, than to balance the budget by increasing unemployment, an operation the cost of which is to rapidly once again unbalance the budget.<sup>3</sup>

This study will trace the evolution of the analysis of the New Deal by each one of the three major components of the French workers movement, from Roosevelt's election to the end of his first term. Basing ourselves on the daily press of each organization, we will focus on their perception of the economic policies of the New Deal, and examine how their interpretation was colored by considerations of ideological or diplomatic origins.

CHAPTER I  
ECONOMIC POLICY IN THE UNITED  
STATES AND FRANCE

Before we describe how the organizations of the French Left analyzed the economy of the United States between 1932 and 1936, it is useful to review three elements. First is the actual object of their analysis, the evolution of Roosevelt's economic policy during that period. Second is the campaign which the French Left had launched against the "orthodox economics" which inspired all French governments of those four years. Third is the debate which was raging inside the Left on the means to overcome the crisis.

1. The First and Second New Deals

The time between Roosevelt's first election in November, 1932 and his second in November, 1936 can roughly be divided into four phases.<sup>1</sup>

November, 1932 to May, 1933

Until about May, 1933, that is while Roosevelt was only the president-elect and during his first two months in the White House, both his campaign promises, his statements after being elected, and his first actions as the President in office seemed rather unworthy of

particular notice. They were disparate measures which appeared to many to conform with the pattern of deflation prevalent under the Hoover administration. While on the campaign trail, Roosevelt had pledged forcefully to maintain a balanced budget.

Faced with the banking crash of March, 1933 he adopted actually very modest reorganization proposals which tended to limit the availability of credit. His second message to Congress asked for budget economies to be realized by cutting federal payments to veterans, and by reducing the salaries of federal employees. From the economic point of view even the ending of Prohibition was, at least partially, a measure designed to increase government revenue by taxation of liquor sales, that is an indirect tax which would affect the average consumer most heavily. Even Roosevelt's first inflationary steps--taking the dollar off the gold standard and promising farm interests greater federal use of silver and more dollar bills--did not seem inspired by any new and cohesive theory. After all, Hoover had taken similar steps with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Increasing the purchasing power of the masses, government intervention, deficit spending, and substantially easier credit were not defined as goals of the new administration.

June, 1933 to June, 1934

By June and July, 1933 a whole new impression was emanating from the White House's course of action. The administration was now

operating under a definite set of guidelines: to redress imbalances, to coordinate the different sectors of the economy, and to control production. The laws enacted during the so-called First One Hundred Days of the New Deal--from the March 4 Inauguration to the adoption of the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) on June 16--justifiably puzzled Marxist theoreticians. Taken together they constituted a major effort at restructuring important spheres on the American economy.

It is worth summarizing the legislation adopted at that time. The Emergency Banking Act and the Securities Act imposed specific federal guidelines on the operations of banks and stock exchanges. They were widely heralded as the beginning of Roosevelt's much publicized offensive against the "money changers" and irresponsible manipulators of high finance.<sup>2</sup>

The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) aimed to raise farmers income by reducing the sown acreage of arable land and a government guarantee of "parity" with pre-war prices of agricultural commodities. The price subsidies were to be drawn from a tax on the large processors of agricultural goods. The Home Owners Loan Act eased the pressure of mortgage payments on farmers while guaranteeing to compensate the banks for defaulted mortgage payments with government bonds. Three measures were taken to alleviate immediately the plight of the fifteen million unemployed: the creation of a youthful

army of reforesters, the launching of public works projects, and federal subsidy of state emergency relief programs.

The most spectacular measure was the NIRA. It suspended the Sherman anti-trust laws and summoned all the firms of each industry to conferences where they were asked to pledge to abide by codes of fair competition. These codes regulated the price and quality of products of the industry, the rate of usage of machines, and the standards of labor to be observed. Among the labor standards were: a minimum wage, a maximum length of the work week, and clause 7a which promised workers the right to be represented collectively by bargaining agents of their own choosing. The government was to watch over industry to enforce respect of the codes; compliance was to be rewarded by the granting of the Blue Eagle symbol.

Government supervision of industry gave the first New Deal the aura of an attempt at economic planning by the government. The approval of the plans of the Tennessee Valley Authority for public development of the resources of a whole region of Appalachia reinforced that impression. Finally, Washington's refusal at the London World Economic Conference to join an international agreement for monetary stabilization further bolstered the notion that the United States was heading towards a combination of state planning and autarchy, and away from free enterprise and free trade.

The summer of 1933 witnessed the convening and signing of industrial codes. But in the fall of 1933, the hopes aroused by the initial recovery spurt were dimmed by a new deepening of the crisis. A longer upward surge followed. It lasted until May, 1934, and brought substantial inflation and the break-up of the near-unanimous enthusiasm characteristic of the previous period.

July, 1934, to May, 1935

In July, 1934 the third period opened with three great labor struggles: the Auto-Lite strike in Toledo, Ohio, and the two general strikes called by the Teamsters in Minneapolis, and the Longshoremen in San Francisco. By that time the manufacturing corporations had regained confidence in business prospects, and were chafing under NRA controls. At the other end of society, devaluation of the dollar, destruction of crops, government spending financed by the printing of new currency, and price increases by corporations, had raised the cost of living of workers. Wage increases and relief payments lagged far behind inflation. An official commission of inquiry was appointed by the NRA. Clarence Darrow presided and found that the NRA had protected trusts and favored further concentration. Critics accused Roosevelt of vacillating in his commitment to planning and control of big business and described his actions as ineffective.

As employers who refused to comply with NRA guidelines went unpunished, workers grew distrustful of NRA arbitration. A slight improvement in hiring conditions gave unions some leeway for action. More strikes erupted, including the largest one until that time--900,000 textile workers in over twenty states walked off their jobs on Labor Day 1934.

Inevitably the economic policy of the government was perceived in this new light. From spring 1934 to spring 1935, the economy stagnated and unemployment remained high. The elan of the first series of reforms was wearing thin. The Supreme Court began its long series of rulings invalidating the New Deal legislation. A new impulse was needed.

June, 1935 to November, 1936

The so-called Second New Deal in June, July and August, 1935 was such a new departure and opened the fourth period. The earlier rhetoric of planning and national unity in the emergency gave way to the rhetoric of attacks on the rich. Five important new bills were passed to replace and extend those of the First New Deal. The Wagner Act empowered a National Labor Relations Board to hold secret union elections on job sites at the request of the workers, to restrain management harassment of union activists, and to compel employers to bargain with collective agents of the workers, all with



almost no reciprocal obligations by labor. The Social Security Act created a national system of insurance against unemployment, disability, old age, and for the care of dependent mothers and children.

Along with these "Help the Poor" measures came the "Soak the Rich" measures. The Wealth Tax Act introduced a graduated levy on corporate income, estates, gifts, and capital stocks. The Public Utilities Holding Company Act attempted to break up corporate octopi, especially in the field of public energy. The TVA was now producing power at cheaper rates and its operations were extended. The Banking Act centralized the banking system and placed it under a measure of federal supervision. Other bills dealt with unemployment and industrial standards.

This last period was characterized by an open conflict between the federal administration on the one hand, and Wall Street and the Supreme Court on the other. The president made speeches explaining the cohesiveness of his measures. He talked of the need for redistributing wealth and for upgrading the purchasing power of the masses.<sup>3</sup> He openly justified his growing budget deficits as wise investments which would guarantee future revenue.

## 2. Orthodox Economics in France

The state of the American economy was a matter of sustained interest in France in the first half of the 1930's. It directly affected

France's prospects for recovery because of the enormous objective weight of the United States in the world market. But more importantly it was looked upon as a test of the efficacy of the two schools of economics which were contending for the allegiance of the French voters. A slim majority in Parliament separated the conservative advocates of deflation from the more Left-leaning advocates of reflation.

The elections of 1932 had reflected a swing to the Left. The Radical-Socialists and especially the Socialists had made substantial gains and increased their parliamentary representation. The Radical-Socialists were present in greater or lesser strength in each of the eleven different cabinets which were entrusted with the government of France between 1932 and the new elections in May, 1936.

Yet invariably the economic policy of these governments was conservative. The economic historian, Martin Wolfe, described the situation as follows:

An atmosphere of financial crisis dominated the affairs of the Fifteenth Legislature almost from its inception in 1932. The main problem--continued budgetary deficits--was posed against a background of serious business depression. The solution advanced by almost every French government until the advent of the Popular Front was retrenchment, higher taxes, a budget to be balanced at all costs, lower price and wage levels: briefly, budgetary curtailment and deliberate price deflation became the fiscal and monetary policy of France.<sup>4</sup>

The overriding preoccupation with protecting the patrimony of the thrifty rentiers precluded any form of monetary manipulation: the

franc could not be devalued, the public debt could not be augmented by issuing new government bonds, the gold reserves had to match the amount of money in circulation. Unfair competition from the dollar and sterling zones which had already devalued their currency, would have to be met by lowering the cost of production of French goods, that is by driving down wages and prices in France.

Spokespeople for these policies were mainly politicians of the Right such as André Tardieu, Pierre Laval, Germain-Martin, and Gaston Doumergue. Tardieu singled out the allegedly high salaries of public employees as the cause of France's troubles. In a notorious speech he described civil servants, functionaries, teachers, and pensioned veterans as budgetivores, budget-eating creatures, and blamed them for the deficits. If the deflationary remedy hadn't worked, he claimed, it was because it had not been applied with sufficient energy and authority. In February, 1934 Doumergue formed a cabinet of National Union and ordered a new series of austerity measures be put into practice. In 1935, Laval took over the premiership and asked for special powers to deal with the financial emergency. With these powers he edicted a series of highly unpopular decrees-laws which instituted substantial slashes in the pay of all public employees and negatively affected many other categories of workers.

These conservative economic policies did not seem to correspond to the verdict of the 1932 elections. Rather they reflected the

influence of the so-called "orthodox financial experts" on the Radical-Socialist party.<sup>5</sup> These conservatives worked closely with the Bank of France, controlled the Senate Finance Committee, exercised undue weight in the National Assembly, and had transformed the ministries of Finances and of the Budget into their private preserves. Their policies were known as economic liberalism.

Opposition to this orthodox liberalism was a natural rallying cry for the labor movement and its parties. As the effects of the crisis worsened, the Left repeatedly exposed the inefficacy of deflationary practices. The occasions for this type of propaganda were many. Unemployment extended to more and more industries. A series of scandals--Oustric, Aéropostale, Stavisky affair, Citroën bankruptcy--focused attention on the speculative activities and illegitimate profits of high finance and big business. Wages were cut while employers refused to shorten the work week. Small wheat farmers and wine growers were falling into debt and going bankrupt.

While the politicians of the Right were busy applying deflationary medication in France, its publicists argued that all attempts to follow unorthodox policies abroad had resulted in disaster. They blamed the inflation and bankruptcies in Germany and Austria on the extravagant social expenditures of the Social Democratic governments which had ruled those countries. They claimed that foreign governments which

devalued their currency and abandoned the gold standard, were disrupting trade and guilty of unfair competition.

They saw the depression in the United States as a passing cyclical phenomenon and they concluded from it that the United States needed more deflation. When Roosevelt undertook his more audacious moves, they lambasted his policies as unrealistic, ineffective, and a threat to freedom. Throughout his first term in office they consistently predicted imminent disaster, and assimilated his policies to those of the French Left.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. Nationalizations, Purchasing Power and Revolution

The Left did not only turn to the New Deal for confirmation of its arguments against the deflationary policies of the Right. Each organization also used the "American Experiment," whether favorably or unfavorably, to advertise the superiority of its own proposals over those of its rivals on the Left. Three main theories held sway on the Left: planisme, the theory of the increased purchasing power of the masses, and the theory of the revolutionary solution to the crisis. All three addressed the question of how to definitively overcome the crisis and the question of how to attenuate its deleterious effects on the masses in the interim.

## Planisme

Planisme was elaborated by the Belgian Socialist Hendryk De Man. It became the CGT's official doctrine when the Estates General of Labor summoned by the CGT in April, 1934, adopted the Plan of the CGT as the answer to France's problems. The doctrine was also defended inside the SFIO, first by the "neo-socialist" right wing which was eventually expelled from the party, and later by the caucus of "Révolution Constructive."<sup>7</sup>

The starting point of this theory was that the working class was not numerous and powerful enough to triumph alone. An alliance with the middle classes was necessary. Proletarian struggles for higher wages only resulted in a redistribution of wealth at the expense of the middle classes. They did not affect the profits of high finance which was designated as the real enemy. This economic mechanism was accentuated in stagnant or shrinking economies such as those affected by the depression. Reforms of redistribution--as the planistes called wage demands--had become counterproductive.

Only structural reforms which created a large public sector of the economy under the democratic control of the whole people, could curb the anarchy of production and augment the share of wealth which accrued to the proletariat and middle classes. Nationalization of those sectors of the economy which determined the direction of

investments, in particular the central banks that set the credit rate, and the transportation and energy industries, was the touchstone of these reforms. Socialism would come through the extension of the public sector.

In the meantime the government could use its newly acquired economic machinery to curb the most harmful activities of private trusts, to employ the jobless on public projects, to impose labor standards such as the forty hour week, and to provide insurance against unemployment and old age. While some of these reforms had been attempted by the fascist and Nazi states, the New Deal showed they were not incompatible with democracy.

Planisme also provided a solution to two other problems faced by the CGT. At the factory level, CGT union activists were experiencing the rebuttal of their demands for better wages and labor standards on the grounds that the demands were unfeasible. The CGT felt that the existence of widespread unemployment precluded any successful strike action by its members and advised them to rely instead on legislative activity in the French National Council of the Economy (Conseil National de l'Economie--CNE), a government advisory body in which the CGT represented labor, and in the International Labor Office (ILO) in Geneva. However, in the CNE, CGT leaders faced big business and government spokespeople who objected to higher wages

and a shorter work week on the grounds that they would undermine the competitiveness of the French economy. To counter these contentions, the CGT resorted to the planiste concept of technological progress benefitting business and labor at one and the same time. The New Deal was to supply the planistes with a perfect illustration of their concept.

### The Purchasing Power Theory

The second major school of thought was the theory of increasing the purchasing power of the masses. Its main proponent was Léon Blum and it became identified as the official economic doctrine of the SFIO.<sup>8</sup> It insisted on a strict distinction between socialism, which was the final solution to the crisis but could only be achieved by a socialist government democratically elected by the majority of the population, and the emergency measures which socialists urged the government to implement in the here and now.

Both Blum and the néo-Guesdiste wing of the party were eager to disassociate socialism from intermediate societies between pure capitalism and socialism. They stressed in particular that socialists should not take responsibility for any regime which sacrificed democracy for the sake of state intervention in the economy. They believed the planistes' talk of structural reform threatened to embroil the



socialists in attempts to save capitalism which would weaken democracy and the appeal of the socialist movement.

For temporary relief from the worst consequences of the crisis, the socialists proposed to reactivate the economy by a redistribution of income. At the Paris Congress of the SFIO, held at the Salle Huyghens in 1933, their proposals were codified into a platform known as the Cahiers de Huyghens. Implementation of the reforms included in the Cahiers was to be the condition for socialist support of Radical-Socialist cabinets. The Cahiers argued that with greater purchasing power, workers and peasants would buy more consumer goods. Consumer industries which were central to the French economy would buy more machines and raw materials. Production would increase and economies of scale would reduce the cost-per-unit, allowing prices to remain stable and exports to expand.

To create this purchasing power, available work should be spread around among more workers, wages should be raised, public works projects should hire the jobless, various forms of social insurances should be paid out by the state, and the decree-laws of Laval should be rescinded. The peasants should be guaranteed fair prices for their products and loans at low interest rates to protect them from extortion by the banks. These agricultural reforms would be administered by democratically designated National Offices of

Cereals and of Wine. State revenues from taxes would then increase simultaneously with the resumption of business.

While advocating these immediate remedies, the socialists would educate the voters that the cause of the crisis remained intact and that the threat of new crises could only be removed by abolishing the capitalist system which had nurtured the crises.

### The Revolutionary Solution to the Crisis

The Communist Party was most closely associated with the theory of the revolutionary solution to the crisis.<sup>9</sup> The theory combined an extreme version of Guesdiste catastrophism with the activist inclinations of the Communist International. More strongly even than the mainstream of the SFIO, the Communists rejected any responsibility for reforming the capitalist system. The economy could not be transformed gradually towards socialism. Socialism could only be introduced by a workers government. They disagreed with the SFIO's insistence that such a government be elected through the institutions of bourgeois democracy and only then defended against capitalist reaction by the people in arms. Rather the workers should be prepared for the variant of a mass insurrection for socialism.

In the interim, only the class struggle could bring the laboring masses any amelioration in their conditions of existence. The Communists considered the SFIO's reflationary proposals to be no

better than the CGT's Plan. The SFIO's focus on governmental action, like the CGT's focus on structural reform of the economy were diversions from the struggle for immediate demands which had to be waged in the factories and in the streets. To talk of nationalizations under capitalism was the worst kind of class collaborationism and reformism. For the PCF until 1935, the United States like Germany and Italy illustrated the misery of the workers under managed capitalist economies.

When the PCF adopted the Popular Front strategy and reversed its stand on national defense and support for bourgeois governments, it nonetheless retained its theoretical opposition to structural reforms. The drafting of the economic platform of the People's Front involved negotiations between representatives of the Radical-Socialists, the Union Socialiste Républicaine (USR), the CGT, the SFIO, and the PCF. In these negotiations the PCF blocked with the Radicals in opposing the inclusion in the platform of any nationalization other than that of the armaments industry.<sup>10</sup>

The PCF had found a way to simultaneously conciliate the Radicals and outflank the SFIO and CGT with revolutionary rhetoric against attempts to reform capitalism. To finance the reforms of the Peoples' Front, the CGT and SFIO had proposed deficit spending and state direction of investment and credit, at that time audacious

measures which worried the financially conservative Radicals. By contrast, the PCF proposed a tax levy on the super-rich which sounded radical but remained juridically within the confines of orthodox capitalist business law.

Innovation across the Atlantic, orthodoxy in France, and internecine quarrels over rival economic schemas, these were the circumstances which shaped the French Left's opinion of the New Deal. We may now consider how each of its main organizations reacted to the different phases of the "American Experiment."

## CHAPTER II

## THE CGT AND THE NEW DEAL

Of all the organizations of the French workers movement, the CGT was the most favorable to the United States. During the first half of the 1930's its admiration focused in turn on American technological progress, on the economic policies of the New Deal, and on America's role in the world.

1. The CGT's Pro-American Stance

When Roosevelt assumed the responsibilities of the presidency, the CGT already had championed one aspect or another of the American mystique for over fifteen years. During the course of World War One the CGT leadership had substituted fraternal ties with the pro-war American Federation of Labor to its old sympathies for the syndicalist and anti-war International Workers of the World. In the flurry of international conferences at the end of the war and following the armistice, the CGT had aligned itself closely with Woodrow Wilson's diplomatic initiatives.<sup>1</sup>

After the war America became a model for the CGT not only in the field of international relations, but also in the field of labor relations.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, "Americanism"--the exaltation of the American

way--emerged as a major topic of controversy among the whole Left. The CGT believed that the evolution of American society demonstrated that it was possible to reconcile technological advance with improvement of the workers lot, and this within the framework of capitalism and democracy.<sup>3</sup>

The French labor organization had evolved a sort of cult of scientific and technological progress as an extension of the old craftsman's interest in his job and in his tools. The United States was the major object of this fervor. The typical issue of the CGT newspaper would carry photos of giant dams and steel furnaces in construction in the United States. The economic crisis slightly altered this conception. But as late as 1934, Le Peuple featured Albert Einstein visiting a new linotype installation that was to revolutionize the American printing industry. (Pe 1-26-34)

The CGT leadership believed that rationalization of the production process in the United States had allowed for higher wages and a shortening of the work week. It widely advertised the implementation of the forty hour week by a number of large American corporations, and contended that this amelioration of the workers standard of living had been achieved without any weakening of America's strong commercial position in the world market.<sup>4</sup> Jouhaux's hope was that Washington would enter the ILO and pressure other countries to reduce the

length of the work week and thereby equalize the commercial advantages of all nations. In 1932 this pressure from Washington had yet to become a reality.

On the economic front, the CGT did not view Hoover entirely negatively. But it had to recognize he had adopted many deflationary measures which contradicted the CGT's program. Moreover the depression severely weakened the impact of America as an economic model.

The CGT fervently urged the State Department to resume its once more forceful pursuit of peace among European nations. Disarmament was one of the CGT's major concerns. Jouhaux was quite disappointed when the American envoys at the Geneva disarmament conference rejected his proposal to ban the private manufacture of arms. But that rejection had been a mere episode and the CGT continued to anticipate a less "selfish" stand of American diplomacy.<sup>5</sup> It applauded Hoover's proposal to ban so-called "offensive" weapons and entertained even higher expectations from the return of the Democrats to the White House.

The non-payment of the December 15, 1932 installment of the French war debts to the United States stirred up a furor in both countries. The CGT was faced with a dilemma. It desired at one and the same time to appear as a responsible, national-minded, force

in French politics, and to work for a rapprochement between Washington and Paris. While supporting the French demand for a continued moratorium on payments of the war debts, it proposed to placate the United States with trade concessions and disarmament agreements. Here also it hoped that the new Democratic administration would facilitate an improvement in relations between the two states.

Thus at the outset of Roosevelt's first term, the CGT already had a strong favorable prejudice towards America. But it could not yet fully identify with the American model. The economic depression and Hoover's lingering commitment to deflation at home and political uninvolvedness in Europe stood in the way.

## 2. "Bravo Mr. Roosevelt!"

Roosevelt almost immediately won the praises of the confederates. His domestic measures seemed to correspond to the policies the CGT had advocated for France. In the international arena he had spoken out against the upholders of the gold standard and for disarmament.

### "An Economic '89"

The CGT's new infatuation with Roosevelt was forcefully expounded in the summer and fall of 1933. The congress of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) took place in Brussels right at the height of the controversy over Roosevelt's program, in



August, 1933. A thorough discussion of the world economic crisis was the main point on the agenda. Léon Jouhaux representing the French affiliate intervened:

There is not a single country in the world where the conservative and reactionary press is not attacking Roosevelt and his experiment. . . . I believe the working class which claims as its own the solutions put into practice by Roosevelt, must support the experiment of the president of the United States. (Po 8-4-33)

The Twenty Second Congress of the CGT, in September, 1933, invited a spokesperson for the International Labor Organization to speak to the assembled delegates. The ILO representative, Staal, dwelt on the achievements of the New Deal and concluded that "the experiment which is under way in America will be a great lesson to us." (Po 9-29-33) Jouhaux depicted the New Deal as a product of the activity of the American trade unions and something which the CGT should look upon as its own: "It is the influence of our American comrades which has forced the government of Mr. Roosevelt to enter on the road of reducing the duration of work and increasing wages." (Po 9-28-33) The delegate of the accountants of the Gironde, René Ménard, announced what would become the CGT's major campaign in France in the following year: "Our labor organization must show itself capable of creating in the country a wave of enthusiasm around

a vast program, in a fashion analogous to that set off in America by the Roosevelt plan, the NRA." (Po 9-28-33)

Politically, the CGT considered the New Deal as an extension of democracy onto the economic plane. The American Republic was a democratic institution. In augmenting the powers of the government over the economy, Roosevelt had increased the democratic control of the people over forces which, until then, had escaped their reach. Roosevelt's actions were directed against the "financial oligarchy." (Pe 3-7-34)

The editorial on the first anniversary of Roosevelt's inauguration explained that his rule could not be termed a dictatorship in any sense of the word because the opposition had not been suppressed. The American people were witnessing the progress not only of a real revolution, but still better of a bloodless one. Roosevelt was acting for the good of the collectivity, against the plutocrats. His was an attempt to liberate the oppressed and the humble. (Pe 3-7-34)

The same theme was sounded in the articles of Georges Boris in the weekly La Lumière. Boris was one of the Leftist observers who contributed most to creating the "Roosevelt mystique" which so deeply impregnated the CGT leadership, and would later resurface in the Popular Front's rhetoric against France's sixty families. Speaking of the New Deal, Boris wrote:

Actually it is the right to live, the right to work that for the first time would be recognized in a capitalist state.

To use the felicitous expression of Albert Bayet, the New World is today accomplishing an economic '89. And the acceptance of the labor "codes" by the American bosses is a sort of Night of August 4. No wonder that people on the other side of the Atlantic believe that they have entered a new era.<sup>6</sup>

In June, 1934 Georges Boris published a book which developed the same type of analogies with the French Revolution. It was entitled "The Roosevelt Revolution" and received a very favorable review in *Le Peuple*. (Pe 6-30-34)

"The CGT's Own Solutions Put Into Practice by Roosevelt"

The CGT saluted the first measures of the New Deal as the confirmation of the realism of its own proposals. Naturally the promise that there would be a rational direction of the American economy by the federal government was one of the features which most attracted the leaders of the confederation. Frequent editorials endorsed the concept of a "managed economy" and cited the New Deal as a positive example of its application:

Mr. Roosevelt is pursuing energetically his reform which is tending, little by little, to place the essential forms of the economic activity of the United States under state control. . . . Federal control of trade in securities and of commodity exchanges is preparation for a nationalization of the banks. . . . Cooperation between business and state is being replaced by state control and even initiative. . . .  
(Pe 2-13-34)

In its eagerness to find arguments against "orthodox economics," Le Peuple often exaggerated the impact of New Deal measures or referred to mere draft projects as if they already were being implemented. The above quotation displays this tendency in relation to nationalization of the banks. Another example is an article of February, 1934 which prematurely anticipated the application of planning for reconstruction needs:

Mr. Roosevelt Looks Far Ahead

A commission is due to elaborate a plan of industrial and agricultural development and reconstruction to be implemented over a period of half a century. (Pe 2-17-34)

The second major attraction of the New Deal was the promulgation of the forty hour week. Several major studies of Le Peuple detailed the implementation of the forty hour week in the different branches of American industry. They listed the particularities of each industry and described how the shorter work week had been adapted to continuous shifts, piecework, labor-intensive plants, and other special cases. An editorial of Le Peuple answered the Bulletin du Comité des Forges which had criticized the CGT's call for a forty hour week in France, on the grounds that it was unrealistic:

A Choice of Demagogies

And we are compelled to recognize, even though we are not particularly flattered by this admission, that this sense of human solidarity which goes against the

grain of your intelligence of nationalist French bosses, seems better understood by others who are of another race.

Even though, through diligent efforts, a conspiracy of silence has been established around these tangible and measurable realities, allow us to stress that the industrial chiefs of America have given their adherence to the limitation of the work week to thirty six hours. Are these Yankee bosses all imbeciles? Or are they simply traitors to the capitalist cause? (Pe 1-29-34)

In February, 1934, Le Peuple gave the impression that a further shortening of the work week to thirty two hours was in preparation--"Towards a Thirty Two Hour Week?" (Pe 2-17-34)

The French trade union paper distinguished what it called technological unemployment--the result of the implementation of "Taylorism" without regard for workers' rights--from cyclical unemployment--the result of a temporary dip in the business cycle. The forty hour week was conceived as a remedy to the first problem. To deal with the mass of workers laid off because of the business cycle, the CGT had proposed the launching of public works projects. In this regard also the American experiment seemed to be complying with confederate prescriptions. For further confirmation, Le Peuple cited an article written by Lord Keynes for The Times, on "the role of public works as a factor of 'take off'." Keynes also based himself on the American experience. (Pe 1-6-34) Le Peuple regularly informed

its readers of the progress of the Civil Works Administration and of the congressional battles for funding of CWA projects. (Pe 2-3-34)

An article in February, 1934 asked "What Have American Workers Gained Last Year?" The answer was that 1.8 million had been rehired, 4 million given temporary jobs, the average amount of hours worked per worker per week was smaller than the 1932 average of four and a half hours, there were stronger workers organizations, and the global purchasing power of the workers was 26% higher than it had been the previous year. (Pe 2-3-34)

"Mr. Roosevelt, Modern Thaumaturgus"

The CGT also appreciated the New Deal as a rebuttal of the financial policies of the French bourgeoisie, particularly the French government's defense of the gold standard and the unchecked power of the great financial institutions. It echoed the opinions of Georges Boris who had been among the first economists in France to study the writings of John Maynard Keynes on monetary problems. Boris utilized LaLumière as a forum for alternatives to the liberal policies of the French governments. He welcomed the scuttling of the gold standard by Washington with a true explosion of joy:

Bravo Roosevelt!

The United States Opts for a Managed Currency

"This people hath perpetrated a great sin in giving itself gods of gold" (Exodus, XXXII-31)

When a man suddenly shouts the truth in the face of the partisans of prejudice and error, of the high priests of stupid religions, of the false wisemen and false prophets, it ill behooves one to impeach his previous hesitations, the contradictions between his new attitude and his old, or the brutality of his words. . . .

On the contrary, let us rejoice at the rout of hypocrisy. And above all, let us salute the day when the head of a great state pronounced these liberating words that may signal a decisive turn in the social history of humanity . . . "The equilibrium of the internal economic system of a country is a greater factor of well-being than the value of its currency, or reciprocally than the value of the currency of other countries. "

The CGT likewise was elated by the basic thrust of Roosevelt's message to the World Economic Conference in London. But it initially feared that America might turn inwards, injuring world trade, French interests, and the viability of all democratic states. At the IFTU conference in August, 1933 Jouhaux cautioned that hostile reactions by other countries might push the Americans towards autarchy: "We must prevent the managed economy from ending up in economic nationalism." (Po 8-4-33) These fears were dispelled rapidly. Barely six months later, Maurice Harmel, one of Le Peuple's chief staff writers, explained how the devaluation of the dollar eventually would lead it to a level that could be maintained permanently. This would benefit world trade far more effectively than an artificially high dollar, constantly threatened with collapse. Harmel urged France to follow suit and abandon the gold standard. (Pe 1-17-34)

The CGT also found Roosevelt's financial measures useful as an illustration of the realism of its own proposals to reform the Bank of France. Nationalization of credit institutions was the central plank of the Plan of the Parti Ouvrier Belge (POB) which had inspired the Plan of the CGT, and it was a key element of the CGT Plan itself. In January, 1934 a front page editorial entitled "Nationalization of Credit" proclaimed that the Stavisky affair did not signal the bankruptcy of parliamentary democracy but the need to replace private control over high finance and the banks, with state control. It cited the United States as an example of the effectiveness of this action. (Pe 1-28-34) A month later another article reiterated the same point: "The United States has entered the road of controlling credit. Why is silence being maintained on this matter in France? . . . The American experiment shows us the way." (Pe 2-24-34)

The French press had warned that Roosevelt's monetary manipulations would undermine public confidence in the soundness of the United States' finances, and make any further public loans impossible. The 1934 New Year editorial of Le Peuple proclaimed "Mr. Roosevelt, Modern Thaumaturgus"--i. e. miracle worker--and explained that despite his inflationary policies Roosevelt had been able to secure new loans. (Pe 1-1-34) By contrast, the French government with its deflationary policies had been incapable of obtaining a similar show of confidence from French bankers.



## Reinforcements for Democratic Trade Unionism

Finally, the Roosevelt era opened the way for a new alignment of forces in the international trade union movement. The IFTU had just suffered the loss of one of its main national sections, the German Federation of Free Trade Unions, which had capitulated to Hitler and been disavowed by its foreign co-thinkers. The IFTU's credibility in the face of Communist criticisms had been weakened seriously. Moreover the CGT longed for allies against the French government and other supporters of deflation within the framework of the ILO.

The CGT therefore welcomed the recent evolution of the AFL away from the purest form of Compersite individualism towards a more favorable view of social security insurance and unemployment relief. It identified the unions of the needle trades--the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILG) of David Dubinsky, and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACW) of Sidney Hillman--as the American unions closest to the European model. Both Dubinsky and Hillman were socialists by conviction, but maintained their distance from what they considered to be the sectarian antics of the Socialist Party in the United States--an outlook very similar to Jouhaux's. Le People was proud to report the increased influence of these responsible labor statesmen on the course of Washington's social policies and it frequently cited the magazine of the ILG, Justice, in its reports on the

United States. At the international level, the CGT wholeheartedly backed the efforts of the British Trade Unions Congress to secure the affiliation of the AFL to the IFTU.

Roosevelt's more favorable attitude towards international consultation, the League of Nations, and the ILO, led the AFL to become more involved in these bodies.<sup>8</sup> When a Pan-American Labor Office strongly influenced by the United States was established in Montevideo the ILO expressed a desire for closer ties with the Americas. The CGT also approved such ties. (Pe 1-25-34) It welcomed the seating of American experts on the subcommittees of the ILO (Pe 1-25-34 and 2-1-34), and the official adherence of the United States to the ILO. (Pe 6-24-34)

When the United States tri-partite government-labor-business delegation arrived at the International Labor Conference, Jouhaux editorialized "We must institute the forty hour week. Are we incapable of doing what others have done?" (Pe 2-27-35) He gleefully reported that David Dubinsky, the American labor delegate, had stated at the conference that he was surprised to see that the International Labor Office was still discussing the value of the forty hour week when in the United States the only concern was with how to enforce it. (Pe 4-13-35) A line drawing underscored the importance of the event. Under the heading "U. S. workers in Geneva," David Dubinsky was pictured crossing a resplendent bridge over the Atlantic. (Pe 5-5-35)

### 3. Constructive Criticisms and Others

Like its American counterpart, the AFL, the CGT voiced some criticisms of the New Deal. But these took the form either of factual reports on specific events, or of very moderate statements of disapproval of particular individuals or policies.

#### "The New Deal Is a Raw Deal"

A certain dichotomy developed between the demagogic uses of the New Deal by Jouhaux and other top leaders of the CGT and the more in-depth articles which appeared in Le Peuple. In January, 1934 the paper began to run a series of eyewitness reports by Robert Marjolin. They were entitled "In Search of Lost Prosperity--In the Country of Mr. Roosevelt," and consisted mainly of vignettes of American life in depression times as well as interviews with working people. Although generally supportive of the New Deal and Roosevelt, Marjolin disclosed that all was not going smoothly. The Ford Motor Company and the mineowners were resisting the trade unions and there was a lack of government enforcement of the NRA. He concluded with a description of a group of young socialists arguing in the yard of Yale College: "I draw away from the group which goes on debating with more or less fervor. Fascism? Stage on the road to socialism? The next months will decide. End." (Pe 1-29-34)

Cartoons and photographs in Le Peuple often seemed to be controlled less closely than other items. After the wages of Post Office workers were cut, a photo showed postmen on strike in Washington carrying a banner that read "The New Deal Is a Raw Deal." (Pe 2-7-34) As the naval armaments race in the Pacific resumed, a front-page cartoon depicted Uncle Sam in front of a row of giant battleships, saying "These European nephews positively never will understand anything about disarmament." (Pe 2-5-34)

While Jouhaux had claimed at the CGT congress that the New Deal was conceived under the impulse of the American trade unions, the inside pages of Le Peuple told a different story. The rubric entitled "Economic Affairs" reprinted a study based on a report by Harold Butler, the secretary of the ILO. Butler explained that the impulse for the NRA codes came not from the workers organizations, but from businessmen through the United States Chamber of Commerce. (Pe 2-3-34)

#### A Chronic Deficiency

The staff writers painstakingly reproduced the statistics of the International Labor Office and the American Federation of Labor. They objectively reported the ups and downs of the economy and adopted generally positive conclusions. But all the way until the fall of 1936 they warned that even when industrial production was on the

rise, jobless workers were not being rehired and the wages of employed workers were not keeping up with the rise in prices and capitalist profits. The theme was recurrent:

#### First Anniversary of the NRA

The future of the American experiment is subordinated to the development of the capacity to consume, a fact which the authors of the New Deal, despite their first declarations, have too often forgotten. (Pe 7-21-34)

We would not dream any more than in the past of hiding the considerable difficulties encountered by the New Deal, and also the inadequacy of its results in relation to unemployment. (Pe 1-12-35)

#### Another Aspect of the American Experiment

The bad distribution of incomes, by diminishing the share of wages in the value of production and increasing capitalist profits is the fundamental cause of the present disorders and poverty. Yet this cause far from being alleviated, is being worsened. (Pe 8-17-35)

#### The Distribution of National Income in the United States Since the Crisis

A statistic from the Department of Commerce could lead us to believe in an increase of "labor's share" in a substantially reduced national income, but this is not the case. . . . It is a false statistic since unemployment remains at eleven million. . . . A new economic catastrophe is certain unless a change is implemented. (Pe 8-23-36)

In November, 1936 the economic writers of Le Peuple challenged the contention of Georges Boris that unemployment had been substantially reduced and adopted instead a wait-and-see attitude:

#### After Mr. Roosevelt's Reelection

To attribute to Mr. Roosevelt revolutionary intentions would be nonsense. . . . The recovery

can only be stabilized by a new distribution of national income. . . . A revision is necessary. Will Mr. Roosevelt be willing to undertake it? (Pe 11-8-36)

### Leadership Reservations

Even the leadership of the CGT expressed reservations about the New Deal on the occasions when the recovery seemed to be encountering grave difficulties. The main such instance occurred shortly after the well-publicized Estates General of Labor had adopted the Plan of the CGT in April, 1934. A campaign to popularize the concept of a managed economy had been prepared. Unfortunately for the planistes the strike wave in the United States hit the front pages of the press around that time. Le Peuple carried whole pages of photographs of American textile workers battling the police and National Guard. The CGT was compelled to draw away from Roosevelt.

Already in April, 1934 René Belin had specified in a page One editorial: "It is false to assimilate the Roosevelt plan to the Plan of the CGT." (Pe 4-23-34) He pointed out that although both France and the United States had experienced a banking crisis, a farming crisis, and unemployment, there were substantial differences between the two economies. It was too early to make a final judgment on the New Deal, but in any case the CGT Plan was not conceived along the same lines as the New Deal. The same theme was expounded again in a February, 1935 editorial:

### Inadequacies of the Capitalist Plans

After trying deflation, foreign countries have taken the road of the organized economy while maintaining all the fundamental principles of capitalism. One can no longer keep track of the countries where state intervention has taken place to impose an industrial and commercial discipline.

What has been the result of these experiments?

It may be too early to judge them decisively. The American experiment in particular, the broadest and the clearest of those we have come to know, can only be examined with caution at this stage of its development. With these reservations we must note that the efforts of the various industrial countries towards a disciplined organization of their economy have not reversed the situation of crisis. (Pe 2-21-35)

After the strike wave of summer, 1934 came the elections of November, 1934 which returned a large contingent of radical Democrats to Congress. The CGT began to view Roosevelt as somewhat less than the prime moving force of the reforms. But it did not attack him directly. It echoed the criticisms of the AFL which were aimed at the new director of the NRA, Donald Richberg. It reproached Richberg with denying workers of the Public Works Administration union-scale wages. It also accused him of complicity with the automobile companies in the drafting of the automobile code and arbitration of subsequent conflicts. (Pe 3-2-35 and 3-9-35)

#### 4. Against The Reactionary Offensive

The CGT's reservations about the New Deal were most often confined to the small print of its newspaper. Outside of a few

instances, they were reduced to the status of passing acknowledgments, or altogether forgotten in the public speeches, editorials, and polemics of CGT leaders who preferred to glorify the New Deal's achievements.

#### "A Superb Recovery"

When dealing with statistics, the CGT leadership used two methods. On some occasions it compared current indexes for wage and unemployment levels with the indexes for the same categories during the winter 1932-33. It did not compare the indexes of these categories with the indexes of industrial output and capitalist profits since 1932-33. This allowed the CGT leadership to show more progress and to de-emphasize the problem of unemployment and the continuing threat of a new depression.

But most often the CGT leadership simply took the figures for industrial output--rather than decrease of unemployment--as the chief index of recovery. The CGT leadership thus obtained the picture of an almost unmitigated success in the United States. This could be contrasted to flagging French production, and used as an indictment of the Right wing government of France.

An editorial of May 9, 1935 attacked the cabinet of Flandin and counterposed the progress realized under the NRA to the decline



experienced under French "capitalism," a system which the editorial implied was no longer fully in effect in the United States:

#### French Stagnation

Where is that serene objectivity with which we were promised the economic experiments presently under way would be observed? . . . The American experiment is in its third year. The catastrophes which were so bombastically announced have not occurred. Roosevelt is still at his post and his popularity is undiminished. And it even appears as if the N. R. A. is regaining steadily the terrain lost by American capitalism. (Pe 5-9-35)

The Thirteenth and last congress of the CGT before its reunification with the CGTU was held in September, 1935. Léon Jouhaux took the opportunity to consolidate support for the Plan of the CGT and the New Deal before the delegates would have to face Communist criticisms. He selected increase of production rather than relief of unemployment as the criterion of success:

If one will consider the foreign examples, if one will recall that President Roosevelt himself entered the road of deflation at the beginning of his term, that three months later, observing the disastrous results of his policy, he reversed steam and entered the road that we ourselves have advocated and that today most industries of the United States have recovered sixty percent of their activity, while ours is the only country whose activity is still decreasing when everywhere else production is stabilizing or increasing. (Pe 9-27-35)

In May, 1936 an article which noted there were still twelve million jobless workers was nonetheless entitled "Superb Recovery

in the United States." After the triumphal reelection of Roosevelt in November, 1936 an editorial by Duret dropped any reference to unemployment problems:

As for us, we wish to seek a solution to the crisis in broadening the purchasing power and the consumption of the masses. The experiment has been attempted in a somewhat peculiar form by Roosevelt. His results have been challenged from several quarters. But the inhabitants of the great democratic country beyond the Atlantic have just rendered their verdict.  
(Pe 11-9-36)

The CGT sought to bolster its position with testimonies from a wide range of authoritative figures. To impress the French socialists, it reprinted an article by Léon Delsinne, of the Belgian POB, in defense of the New Deal--"Let Us Beware of Facts and Figures." (Pe 2-23-34) It also published a global balance-sheet by Wladimir Woytinsky, the former economic expert of the German Social Democratic Party, now a refugee in Sweden--"The World Economy at the Beginning of 1935." (Pe 1-5-35)

More scholarly witnesses included the radical intellectual Francis Delaisi--"The Battle of Gold" (Pe 1-20-34); professor Bertrand de Jouvenel (Pe 4-21-34); the secretary of the International Labor Office, Harold Butler--"The Economic Recovery in the United States" (Pe 2-10-34); and John Maynard Keynes who was quoted from a contribution he had written for the New Republic. (Pe 4-27-35)

The educational department of the CGT, the Institut Supérieur Ouvrier (I. S. O.) later renamed the Centre Confédéral d'Education Ouvrière (C. C. E. O.), published pamphlets and conducted seminars by Georges Lefranc, André Phillip, Lucien Laurat, Jean Duret, and others, which explained the lessons of the Roosevelt experience to the militants of the CGT.<sup>9</sup>

During the month of January, 1936, Le Peuple featured a series of popularly written columns authored by Lucien Laurat and entitled "The Perplexities of Citizen Everybody." The main purpose of the column was to explain the Plan of the CGT and defend it against its detractors. The January 27 column replied to these "who believe the American experiment has gone down the drain":

The struggle between Roosevelt and the Supreme Court is not a struggle between liberalism and managed economy, but between two types of managed economies. The Supreme Court defends the managed economy of the plutocrats, of Hoover, the one which has already been proven bankrupt. . . . My criticisms of Roosevelt remain: he is not attacking the very structure of the economy. But we must approve his guiding principle: to upgrade the purchasing power of the popular masses.  
(Pe 1-127136)

#### Roosevelt Against Wall Street

After the spring of 1935, agreement with Roosevelt's economic policies was not the only cause for CGT sympathy towards the American

president. In the eyes of the Left, his posture in the American political scene also made him deserving of support. When the Supreme Court declared the N. I. R. A. unconstitutional, Maurice Harmel surmised that the president would be compelled to move closer to his more radical supporters in Congress. (Pe 5-29-35) The following day Harmel could report that the AFL was threatening a general strike if any gains made by the workers under NRA rules were nullified. Thus a new coalition of labor, the liberals, and Roosevelt was emerging. The reactionary offensive against the NRA, he wrote, might well backfire against Wall Street:

The left-wing congressional elements, let us remember, had reproached the NRA, and not without good reason, with having ended up bestowing more favors on the large capitalist interest than on the masses. The capitalists now risk finding themselves on the short end of the operation. (Pe 5-30-35)

In the following months the CGT more and more identified itself with the new progressive bloc in the United States and with the struggle to defend the NRA. In August, William Green was quoted as stating that the AFL would not accept a skeleton New Deal. (Pe 8-17-35) The AFL's Labor Day statement praising Roosevelt was reprinted in Le People. (Pe 9-4-35)

Feeling that events had vindicated its early support of Roosevelt, the CGT reminded its followers of the old argument over possible

elements of fascism in the New Deal. "In other countries, similar reforms were undertaken under the name of corporatism." But, the CGT explained, Roosevelt is not a dictator; he has proceeded empirically and without compulsion, and therefore cannot be considered fascist. (Pe 10-12-35)

Sympathy with Roosevelt even became a standard by which other political figures could be measured. When the Van Zeeland government devalued the Belgian Franc, causing a panic among French bourgeois circles, Le Peuple wrote:

#### The Belgian Experiment

Has it not been said that Mr. Van Zeeland professed a certain sympathy towards the ideas of Mr. Roosevelt? In truth that is enough to set off a formidable artillery barrage against Van Zeeland. If only because of that explosion of ostracism, we would already have found a reason for sympathy towards what is already referred to as the Belgian experiment. (Pe 4-6-35)

#### The elections of 1936

By the time the presidential elections of 1936 were held, Roosevelt had become the CGT's hero. Like the CGT in France, Roosevelt had to answer criticisms of his program emanating from both the Left and the Right. Le Peuple reported that the President had opened his campaign by answering both his Communist critics and the right-wing Hearst press. (Pe 10-1-35) The socialist candidate

Norman Thomas, the Communist candidate Earl Browder, and the Unionist candidate Lemke, were dismissed as negligible quantities. (Pe 11-3-36)

Roosevelt was also the candidate who would defend peace. A front page article featured his statement that his support came from those who would not profit from war. He stood for peace both domestically and abroad. (Pe 11-2-36) The CGT organ commented: "In Geneva people have not forgotten that it was under Roosevelt that the United States collaboration with the League of Nations . . . and support for the line of the ILO became more active." (Pe 11-5-36)

But above all the elections were presented as a class choice. Roosevelt was the candidate of the working class. He was supported by the AFL and his votes would come from workers. The Republican Landon was the candidate of big business and reaction. After Roosevelt's election triumph, the CGT emphasized that it was due to the workers votes that he had carried the Republican Northeastern industrial states. (Pe 11-5-36) The following day large headlines proclaimed "The Triumphant Election of Roosevelt Is Unprecedented." (Pe 11-6-36)

## INTRODUCTION

When the Great Depression struck Europe in the early 1930's, economic policy, fascism and war naturally became the central preoccupations of the French Left. By 1936 its major organizations, the Parti Socialiste, Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière (SFIO), the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), and the Parti Communiste Français (PCF) had devised common proposals to meet these challenges. The tentative solution was the Popular Front. Heated discussions had divided the three groups before unity around a common program could be achieved.

One of the issues which frequently had set them apart was the policy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the United States. In the course of his first term, the concept of an "American Experiment" in dealing with the crisis and its manifold effects, developed in the thinking and writing of French publicists.

At the outset of the 1930's the United States was almost universally looked upon by the Left as the epitome of capitalism and its ills. The exceptions to this rule, such as the CGT leadership, were timid and on the defensive. By 1936 though, as the Popular Front assumed the reins of power in France and as Roosevelt campaigned for a second term in the United States, the "American

model" had become almost entirely positive. The Left recognized in the New Deal's domestic and international policies the basis for a closer identification with the United States.

This closeness was expressed by Léon Blum, upon his being designated to head the new government in May, 1936. His first public address as the prime minister designate was granted to the American Club in Paris, and dealt with the kinship between France and the United States:

It is natural, he said, for a nation to be inclined to particular friendship towards those nations which like itself, are passionately attached to all their liberties and are determined to defend them on their soil. . . . It is also natural that the same friendship and the same affinity should bind those nations which are dedicated to the same ideal of social justice. . . . (Pe 5-16-36)<sup>1</sup>

A few days later, in an address to the American people broadcast over NBC radio, Blum explained:

The task of the government which is about to be formed will be to carry out the wishes of the majority of the French people.

Are these wishes not closely related to those of the American people? Have the American people not remained passionately attached to the Republic, to democracy, to freedom? Have they not applied the whole power of the democratic state to finding a solution to the crisis? Have they not sought that solution in the direction of increasing the purchasing power of the toiling masses and a more equitable distribution of wealth?

Have they not demonstrated by resplendent examples, even though they do not belong to the League of Nations, their will to create international solidarity, to legalize peace, to put an end to the regime of armaments? (Pe 5-23-36)



## 5. The CGT and American Capitalism

The New Deal's experimentation with unorthodox economics was not the only aspect of American capitalism which aroused controversy in the 1932-1936 period. Indeed, our study would not be complete if we did not also mention the CGT's attitude towards American society. Yet another aspect came to the fore in 1936. By that year the CGT obviously had come to place more importance on America's role in international relations than on the disappointing economic achievements of the New Deal.

### American Society

In general, because of its commitment to extensive coverage of the United States, the CGT could not entirely avoid mentioning a number of social realities which did not conform with the image of the New Deal which the French trade union had sought to convey.

First and foremost among these cumbersome facts was the vigorous thrust of the American working class against the attempt to confine it in the framework of the New Deal. Le Peuple did report the growing conflicts over the application of industrial codes, the strike wave, the movement towards third parties, the discussion of the need for a labor party inside the AFL, and the split of the industrial unions

from the AFL. (Pe 8-8-36) But it interpreted all these events as minor adjustments necessitated by the unwillingness of various backward forces to abide by the full implications of the New Deal. Its faith in the New Deal could thus remain intact.

Le Peuple was even less thorough in its coverage of the situation of minorities in the United States. It inherited certain themes from the traditional propaganda of the Left in France.<sup>10</sup> But these themes were never cultivated to the extent of becoming campaigns such as the PCF's campaign for the Scottsboro boys. Le Peuple reported a few major lynchings (Pe 9-2-34 and 12-29-34), and in 1935 and 1936, demonstrations of the Black population against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia. It also reported without commentary that 200,000 Mexican workers would be deported from California. (Pe 5-6-34) But the CGT never integrated its data on minority populations of the United States into its analysis of the mechanisms of American capitalism.

Le Peuple published a variety of other news which could best be described as American folklore. It featured the assassinations of Chicago mayor Cermak and Louisiana Senator Huey Long, and the congressional investigations of J. P. Morgan and other arms manufacturers. The trial and execution of Hauptmann in the Lindbergh kidnapping case was the occasion for a series of articles against the

death penalty which referred to the United States as the "country of the electric chair." Photos of women in high public offices--such as Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins--advertised the fact that the United States had traveled further along the road to women's emancipation. Finally Le Peuple continued to praise the technological progress of American industry.

### Roosevelt Diplomacy

On the diplomatic field, the CGT was most interested in Washington's potential role in Europe. It had little to say about the other arenas of American diplomacy. The Cuban revolution of 1933-1934 placed the CGT in a dilemma. The radical nationalist government of Grau San Martin had proclaimed the eight-hour day and adopted measures similar to those of the New Deal in the United States. On the other hand the government of Mendieta and Batista which overthrew Grau San Martin with American support, set out to repress the main Cuban trade unions. The CGT avoided the issue as long as possible and then confined itself to detached reportage.

Le Peuple briefly mentioned the suppression of the 1935 revolt in the Philippines. In 1934 an article by A. Zischka on oil politics in Latin America sought to expose the Monroe Doctrine as a cover for American

domination of the Hemisphere. (Pe 8-17-34 and 8-18-34) Moreover in 1935 an article blamed the Chaco War between Bolivia and Paraguay on American munition makers. (Pe 3-9-35) But these were the exception. In general the CGT was favorable to Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy and approved his efforts to organize Pan-American trade, neutrality, and peace conferences.

In the Sino-Japanese conflict, the CGT supported the Chinese government and pressed the League of Nations to act against Japanese aggression. It regretted the lack of a more energetic response by Washington to Japanese advances in North China. While Le Peuple regularly informed its readers of the American naval build-up and arms race in the Pacific, it did not question seriously American diplomatic aims in the Pacific.

Le Peuple occasionally published cartoons mocking Uncle Sam's pleas for disarmament. But the basic CGT orientation was to rely on America to revitalize the Geneva disarmament conference. The CGT had been encouraged in this direction by Roosevelt's pronouncements in favor of disarmament in the spring of 1933. On several occasions subsequently the American delegate in Geneva, Norman Davis, made every effort to keep such expectations alive.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, Roosevelt's message to the London World Economic Conference on monetary problems and international trade found a

favorable reception among CGT commentators who also opposed the gold standard. The CGT rapidly realized that the policy of reciprocal trade agreements opened the way for a resumption of international trade. In 1935 it reported with satisfaction that "the Americans are ready to accept international stabilization." (Pe 7-8-35) In January, 1936, it announced on its front page that "President Roosevelt has denounced the perils for peace created by autarchic regimes." (Pe 1-5-36) The CGT's policy in this area reached fruition when the Blum government signed the October, 1936, agreement aligning the Franc, the Sterling, and the Dollar.

#### "J'accuse"

On May 2, 1935, Le Peuple gave front page status to a news story covering the commemoration of France's gift of the Statue of Liberty to the United States. A large photograph bore the caption "Miss Liberty Is Fifty Years Old." The article on the ceremony reminded readers that the two Atlantic nations were born in the same struggle for freedom and democracy. (Pe 5-2-35) Le Peuple's emphasis on this theme was not accidental.

The rise of a strong isolationist movement in the United States, and the passage of the Neutrality Act disturbed the CGT. But the French labor union refused to believe the United States would concede to that

trend. As Italy pressed its claim against Ethiopia, Maurice Harmel polemicized against the AFL's opposition to American involvement. He called the AFL's opinion "selfish" and urged American labor to assume its political responsibilities. Harmel concluded by reassuring his readers that despite such "selfish attitudes," the United States could be counted on to intervene when it would become necessary to do so. (Pe 8-17-35)

In France, the CGT took its place in the campaign to bring about a Franco-Anglo-American alliance against the Axis powers. It joined a vigorous and united effort by the Left to condemn Laval's attempt to conciliate Italian appetites in Africa. Laval had used British and American unwillingness to take action against Italy through the League of Nations as the excuse to seek an arrangement directly with Mussolini. When the Laval-Hoare agreement with Mussolini came to light the whole French Left denounced the betrayal of Ethiopia by France and Britain.

In January, 1936, Roosevelt delivered his State of the Union message. A large part of the speech was dedicated to denouncing the aggressions perpetrated by totalitarian regimes. The speech made a deep impression in France. It rekindled the CGT's hope that a grand coalition of French defenders of the Republic--the Popular Front--could ally with the United States against Germanophile domestic reaction and external fascist regimes. A front page drawing on the January 7,

1936, Le Peuple symbolized that perspective. Entitled "J'accuse" like Zola's article of L'Aurore which had turned the campaign in defense of Captain Dreyfus into an onslaught against the French Right, it featured Roosevelt as a righteous Zola, designating Hitler and Mussolini to the opprobrium of international public opinion.

As the atrocities committed by Italy in Ethiopia became better known, the CGT's campaign intensified. The CGT attempted to reverse Laval's argument. It claimed that the United States, and particularly its president, Roosevelt, were entirely willing to act against aggression. But American public opinion had grown wary of involvement in inter-European rivalries. Laval's sordid deals with fascist Italy had influenced American opinion even further toward political disengagement. Maurice Harmel explained that the United States could still be swayed, and the economic sanctions against Italy--the embargo on oil deliveries--could still be effective, if the European democracies showed the way:

Should the United States so desire, the fascist adventure could be stopped; should it opt for profits over the defense of peace, we will still have to admire the sincerity of the peaceful sentiments displayed by the Americans, but also to appreciate the horse-tradings--read Laval-Hoare--which broke the impetus of solidarity to which Mr. Roosevelt had given such a striking expression. (Pe 2-17-36)

By 1936 the desire for the consolidation of the Franco-Anglo-American alliance had clearly become the major concern of the CGT and colored all its judgments on other aspects of the United States.



CHAPTER III  
THE SFIO AND THE NEW DEAL

The SFIO was the most diverse of the three major organizations of the French workers movement. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint its official line. We have based this study mainly on the articles about the United States which appeared in the party daily, Le Populaire. Staff writers Oreste Rosenfeld, and later André Leroux and Marc Joubert supplied most of the coverage. Both Léon Blum, the editor of the party organ and leader of the parliamentary caucus, and Paul Faure, the national secretary of the party, had been assigned a daily column on the front page of the paper. Whenever necessary they used their editorial space to enunciate the party line on events in the United States. In addition a variety of other party leaders could present their position through book reviews (Jean-Baptiste Séverac, André Philip), the party forum (Jean Zyromski), or the trade union forum (Georges Dumoulin, L. Digat). Jean Longuet specialized in more analytical articles on the Anglo-Saxon countries, and Jean Lebas occasionally contributed pointed news commentary.

1. "Barbaric Deflation"

Roosevelt's economic proposals as the Democratic candidate and later as the president-elect did not particularly impress the socialists. During the campaign they pictured him as just another colorful American politician.

Governor Roosevelt is an American bourgeois politician of the common kind, wrote Jean Longuet, and the courageous editors of The Nation of New York, in the latest issue of this excellent vanguard--but not specifically socialist--periodical, noted with lucidity the contradictions contained in his last election speeches. . . . Roosevelt is the candidate of Rascob, the great potentate of General Motors, while Ford supports Hoover. (Po 11-8-32)

After the Democratic governor's election Rosenfeld wrote:

The economic crisis has caused the collapse of the Republican party. But the election of a Democrat to the presidency and the Democratic take-over of the totality of the country's administration will not change much. . . . Roosevelt and the Democratic Party's coming to power will not change a thing in the very structure of the country of "modern capitalism." (Po 11-9-32)

Roosevelt's first two months in office did not dispel that impression since as late as May, 1933 Rosenfeld wrote that Roosevelt had better intentions than Hoover but nothing new to offer. (Po 5-6-33)

Correspondingly the socialist organ continued to picture the United States as the example of capitalism par excellence, besieged by its traditional ills. Under the expressive title "From Paradise to Garbage Heap," Paul Faure gloated that European observers who, a

few years earlier had discovered a perfect example of capitalism in America, now had to reckon with its collapse. (Po 9-2-32) A flow of articles depicted the steady rise of unemployment, the widespread misery, the sight of prostitution and hunger, and the discontent of the farmers unable to sell their crops. The bank collapse furnished another major occasion for exposing the true nature of this "most advanced, most rationalized of capitalisms."

Roosevelt's first measures in office were interpreted as deflationary and anti-working class. Léon Blum wrote:

Today the banks have just reopened--at least the favored category of banks, those which the Secretary of the Treasury deemed worthy to receive his certificate of good health. What will become of the others? What will become of the unhappy thousands who had been depositors in the others? No one knows. The American government, faithful to the "biological laws" of liberal economics, has announced it intends to abandon without help, to let disappear those banks that the government review will have judged insufficiently healthy. And the American people, bewildered and stunned by the disaster, may yet suffer this barbaric form of deflation without rebelling. (Po 3-15-33)

The refusal to issue veterans a bonus, the setting of new taxes to finance public works, the drafting of youth into military-run reforestation camps where they were paid one dollar per day, were all perceived as components of the same reactionary policy. Even the devaluation of the dollar was initially considered to be a blow against the people: Blum warned that after the barbaric extremities of

budgetary and credit deflation, the devaluation of the dollar threatened to hurt the American people severely unless it rapidly was coupled with a wage increase. (Po 4-22-33 and 423-33)

During this period the old discussion on the merits of United States-style capitalism continued. Most of the contributions to this discussion exposed the catastrophic results of rationalization and concentration. Only the already existing experiments with a shorter work week elicited favorable articles by Jean Lebas.

## 2. The Great Debate

On June 14, 1933 Paul Faure jubilantly announced:

The wind that is blowing over the Atlantic, coming from America, is not likely to reassure the social conservatives. Quite the contrary.

There is very little socialism in America, but the air people breathe there is making even the tamest minds revolutionary and socialistic. This is so true that the current president of the great Republic is speaking words that would make the habitual guests of the Elysée Palace recoil in horror. (Po 6-14-33)

That observation marked the beginning of a new attitude toward the Roosevelt experiment.

The summer of 1933 witnessed a flurry of theoretical discussions on the correct Marxist characterization of the New Deal. Two key features clearly indicated that the Washington administration had embarked on a radically new course and thereby justified this theoretical speculation: the commitment to state supervision and

direction of the economy, and the open advocacy of an increase in the purchasing power of the masses.

#### A Democratic Road to Economic Recovery

The "neo-socialist" faction of the SFIO and a handful of SFIO members in the "Révolution Constructive" caucus shared the CGT's favorable estimate of the newly reinforced authority of the American state.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, insofar as the socialists gave any importance to the state's attempt to manage the economy, they were indifferent or hostile. For them increased state intervention and collectivization were inevitable and natural results of the workings of social evolution. They looked upon the unfolding of these inexorable laws with satisfaction:

Capitalism, threatened and undermined from all sides, is also being most rudely shaken by the present leaders of the United States--the country of the oil, iron, and rubber kings, the paradise of the great trusts.

"The capitalist system must be transformed into a system of socialized industry," says one of Roosevelt's advisers, Rexford Tugwell, while a law has just created in the Tennessee valleys a giant industrial system analogous to certain Soviet experiments--Paul Faure. (Po 7-9-33)

The socialists believed the socialization of the means of production validated Marx's predictions. But their main concern was that this process be democratic and benefit the working class. Most of the socialists who supported the New Deal did so not because of,

but rather despite, its identification with state interventionism and managed economy. The feature which potentially could attract these mainstream socialists was the policy of raising consumer demand by an assortment of helpful social measures. On this basis a favorable current of opinion appeared beyond the devotees of the "Révolution Constructive" tendency.

Insofar as it could be convinced that the accusation of New Deal authoritarianism was false, this broader socialist current was decisively swayed toward a favorable assessment. The most friendly observers like Longuet explained that Roosevelt's powers were actually constitutional and democratic, and that government intervention was aimed at strengthening, not weakening, the trade unions of the American Federation of Labor. Both Roosevelt and the old Gompersite AFL were now adopting parts of the socialists' own program. This he argued, was grounds for rejoicing. He concluded optimistically:

Despite its age-old prejudices and conservative traditions, the AFL will certainly be more and more pushed along the new path. The toilers of Europe will excitedly keep up with its actions as well as with the magnificent effort of the president of the United States to increase the purchasing power of the masses, an effort which closely conforms with the program of the European toilers. (Po 9-28-33)

Another favorable commentator, Marc Joubert, also emphasized the distinctly democratic character of state intervention in the United States:

Let us note the essential role of the labor clause in all of the Roosevelt experiments. It gives them a totally different character from the attempts to manage the economy tried elsewhere, in Italy and Germany in particular. In the latter cases trade unionism has lost all autonomous status and activity. It has become a simple cog of the state machine, whether it be fascist or national-socialist. The suppression of workers rights and of the freedom of association is the essence of fascism, that which sets it apart from all other attempts to organize the economy.

Nothing like this is present in the new American social policy. Neither the employers' groupings nor the workers' unions are integrated in the state. The state encourages the formation of both in the belief it can deal more easily with large corporations than with isolated individuals. (Po 7-22-34)

Such analyses removed the main objection raised by the democratic socialists against supporting the New Deal. A great fervor resulted, manifested, for example, in an unsigned article of August 1, 1933, acclaiming the beginning implementation of the NRA in the following terms.

As of today, all the economic forces of the United States are mobilized to reconquer prosperity. On this occasion, the American people are displaying their habitual qualities of optimism and enthusiasm. They are convinced, if one overlooks a few isolated critics, that the true road to economic recovery has been discovered. (Po 8-1-33)

#### "Intermediate Societies"

As on most issues, Blum occupied a center position between outright support and rejection of the New Deal. His analysis of the

social and economic phenomena involved in the New Deal drew mainly from the writings of those like the CGT who emphasized the decisiveness of state intervention. But he stopped short of their political conclusions. Thus on the first analytical question posed by the New Deal--whether state intervention was changing the basic character of the economy by introducing a collectivist dimension, or whether it was not changing much and still could be described as state capitalism--he leaned toward the answer of the most fervent New Deal supporters:

Should the American experiment be pursued, the original forms of state intervention which it has evolved could lead to a social species of an original type. (Po 7-24-33)

and:

Should the Roosevelt experiment achieve its goal, it will probably have set up an intermediate social type between capitalism in its pure form and socialism. (Po 7-26-33)

Similarly on the second analytical question--whether the New Deal was ameliorating the conditions of the masses, or whether it represented a further swindle of the people--Blum leaned towards the answer given by pro-New Deal leaders like Longuet. He stressed that the shortening of the work week, the raising of workers' wages and farmers' income, and the increase in relief funds doled out by the federal government were measures that were present also in the socialists' program and therefore should be supported. He even wrote that:



The propaganda of the American socialists in the last presidential campaign has reached both intellectual circles and working class circles, and it is not difficult to find its imprint in some of the measures taken by Roosevelt at the instigation of his occult cabinet of professors. (Po 7-27-33)

But when it came to practical political conclusions, Blum conceded to the majority opinion of the SFIO which was hostile to the New Deal. He actually shared their fear that, along with a collectivist dimension, state intervention also was giving the regime an authoritarian character. Indeed, in July, 1933, after Roosevelt nearly put an end to the London Economic Conference with a sudden bombshell message, Blum repeatedly referred to the new occupant of the White House as the "president-dictator of America." (Po 7-4-33) Blum believed that even the measures which he urged the socialists to support were not guaranteed to succeed. Caution was therefore necessary. Speaking of the intermediate societies and hybrid combinations which had arisen since the World War--Bolshevism, fascism, Nazism, New Deal--Blum wrote:

I believe that our socialist parties must repudiate responsibility for these intermediate forms, and even in most cases, that they will have to struggle against them or rather against the political forms that derive from them. (Po 7-24-33)

In August, 1933 the Socialist and Labor International held a congress in Paris. Blum, speaking as a delegate of the SFIO, acknowledged his party's official position: "Had my speaking time

allowed, I would have shown how the policy of socialism is different from that of the Roosevelt experiment. " His motivation appears more clearly in a series of articles written on the occasion of the opening of the AFL convention in October:

All in all, the European proletariat has ambivalent feelings towards the American experiment; it balances between hope and apprehension. . . . American workers too feel this hesitation and division. . . . It is obvious that American trade unionism and American socialism both already feel disturbed and bothered in the face of this "intermediate formula." (Po 10-15-33)

Blum's solution to this problem was simple:

The most effective remedy is to show the workers the causes of the temporary successes and possible failures, to make them understand that the capitalist innovators succeeded or failed insofar as they were inspired or not by the critical analysis and constructive method of socialism. The demonstration seems to me easy as far as the Roosevelt experiment is concerned. (Po 10-16-33)

After criticizing Roosevelt for eclecticism and empiricism, Blum summarized the socialist position. In a capitalist regime crises cannot be eliminated, they only can be attenuated. The remedy is an increase in the capacity to consume, but "Roosevelt only adopts our prescription as a last resort, and sometimes with contradictory measures; we therefore cannot take responsibility for the experiment." (Po 10-8-33)

"State Capitalism"

Paul Faure and the majority of the party were far more critical. They sought to reduce all the new aspects of the New Deal to well-known phenomena already analyzed and rejected by the classic writings of the socialist movement: "boulangisme," state capitalism, trustification, etc. To an article of Le Temps which described Roosevelt's junking of liberal economics and sought to equate socialism and fascism, Oreste Rosenfeld answered: "Let us reassure the journalist of Le Temps. It is not yet socialism. It is state capitalism." (Po 7-14-33) A little later he elaborated his argument:

The effects of Roosevelt's progressive policy are canceled by the consequences of his retrograde policy. The latter is characterized by two phenomena: inflation on the one hand and autarchy on the other. . . . It is thus false to judge the Roosevelt experiment in isolation from the economic policy of the United States as a whole. But it would be equally false to claim that America, having abandoned the fundamental capitalist principles, is undergoing a "socialist experiment." This experiment is socialist neither in the sense of liberating socialism, nor even in the sense of state socialism. At the most, one can speak of state capitalism. But even then! If one compares the United States to Russia where state capitalism has found its most complete expression, to Italy where state capitalism has taken the form of a corporative state, to Hitlerite Germany where one can perceive tendencies towards state capitalism . . . we must concede that America is still a long way from entering that road. (Po 7-24-33)

American socialist were called upon to testify. Le Populaire reported the opinion of the delegates of the American Socialist Party at the international socialist conference in Paris:

Some say that with his Recovery Act, President Roosevelt is creating socialism without the socialists.

This is erroneous, exclaimed the Yankee delegate.

Pauken hopes the law will fail. . . . But some social progress has been achieved in the United States nonetheless. . . (Po 8-23-33)<sup>2</sup>

Turning to the analysis of the regime, Pauken concluded:

Some fears have been raised about the development of fascism. The speaker does not share these fears. We are simply witnessing in the United States the beginning of a period of state capitalism. (Po 8-23-33)

In an article entitled "Let Us Be Clear," Paul Faure inveighed, possibly in the direction of Blum:

Let us not dream of an intermediate state that would mete out its favors and even its justice equally to Labor and to Capital, a strange conception in which the questionable methods of democracy intermingle with the disturbing methods of fascism without our being able to tell where the first stop and the other begin . . .

The American socialists who are witnessing the current experiment of the president of the United States from up close are not duped. "In any case," they state, "in the coming years it will be the state that will direct and manage the economy; the real problem is to know in whose interest; in the interest of Capital, so as to stabilize profits, like in the Roosevelt system; or in the interest of the workers and without capitalist profits as would be the case if the Socialist Party took power." (Po 1-19-34)

Thereafter the term "managed economy" acquired a pejorative meaning. Eyewitness reports would reveal the harmful effects upon the masses of the attempts by a variety of capitalist governments to manage their economies (Van Zeeland in Belgium, Vargas in Brazil, etc. . . .) Even articles which reported favorably specific aspects of

the New Deal were forced to appear under the heading of "The Economy Managed by the Capitalists For the Capitalists." (See for example Po 7-22-34)

Whereas Longuet had insisted that American unions were not being destroyed but rather encouraged, and Blum had even spoken of socialist influences on the government, the left wing of the party emphasized that the government and its policies were fundamentally bourgeois and exclusive of any working class representation. Jean Zyromski in particular reminded the party that:

The principle "there is no socialism without a workers movement" warns us against half-baked efforts to transform the capitalist economy in a "socialist" direction by means of volleys of decrees and without foundations in the workers movement. [Alongside the fatalistic deviation of economic determinism which sees socialism arising gradually out of the inexorable evolution of productive processes] there also exists a "jacobin" deviation. . . . Socialism must be carried and transmitted by the workers movement. (Po 8-3-33)

#### Nonetheless a Friendly Interest

Despite this theoretical rejection of the New Deal, in the summer and fall of 1933 Le Populaire covered the American situation in great detail and even with a favorable tone. Regular updates on the state of the American economy featured the reduced number of unemployed, the convening of industrial conferences and signing of NRA codes, the implementation of the regulations of these codes on hours and wages, and the progress of the fight for trade union rights.

As the winter, 1933 approached Le Populaire took note of the difficulties encountered by the NRA. It attributed them to non-cooperation by a minority of hard-line employers. Later it warned that prices were rising faster than wages, a trend which, if allowed to continue unchecked, could lead to a new economic catastrophe. And by March, 1934 André Leroux was prefacing his article on trade union rights in the United States with the remark that "we are rather skeptical about the results of the Roosevelt experiment." (Po 3-23-34)

### 3. "No Half-Way Solutions"

The strike wave of summer, 1934 shifted the attention of French socialist observers away from the action of the government and towards the American labor movement. The upsurge also affected their appreciation of Roosevelt's economic policies: their criticisms became sharper. If so many workers still felt dissatisfied, then the NRA must have failed to realize at least some of the objectives which the socialists believed it was meant to achieve.

### A Vacillating Administration

Le Populaire began to portray the Democratic administration as caught in a crossfire between the resistance of big business and

the demands of labor. The president was vacillating and ineffective. As the San Francisco general strike reached its climax, a reporter asked:

What are the causes?

They are mainly to be found in the social policy of the Washington government. . . . The time has come for Roosevelt to choose. Ever since he has taken office, he has constantly maneuvered between the social forces at hand, refusing to take sides so as not to jeopardize a parcel of his popularity. (Po 7-18-34)

Paul Faure felt his stand had been vindicated by events: "The error of Mr. Roosevelt is probably his belief that capitalism can receive its due share. But there are no half-way solutions, no intermediate regimes." (Po 7-22-34)

The dilemma of the Washington administration could be defined easily enough; but it remained insoluble within the boundaries of the capitalist system. General Hugh Johnson, the head of the National Recovery Administration, had tried to take sides decisively against the trade unions during the massive textile workers strike in September. Le Populaire surmised that his partiality had alienated too many of Roosevelt's labor supports, and he had to be replaced by a new figure, Donald Richberg, who probably would pursue the same policy as his predecessor. André Leroux commented:

The NRA is in crisis or, if one prefers, has arrived at a turning point. It seems destined to be subjected to a series of re-shuffling actions which will have to resolve two problems in particular: that of the

actual realization of trade union rights which the employers are still resisting, and that of the implementation of the codes of "fair competition" towards which the small businesses remain hostile since they are placed in a situation of inferiority in relation to the big trusts being reborn under the protection of the New Deal. (Po 9-27-34)

In November Marc Joubert set out to make a balance sheet on the situation in North America:

Despite undeniable achievements, President Roosevelt and his collaborators have succeeded only in consolidating the crisis and unemployment. Would it be foolhardy to state that where the Washington government with the immense means at its disposal has failed, all capitalist governments will fail? (Po 11-4-34)

Even Blum had to concede that the vacillations of the administration had not helped the economy. In an article entitled "Cabinet Crises and the Economic Crisis," he complained:

Mr. Roosevelt has been in power for almost two years now. His personal hold on the American people has grown uninterruptedly. But how many successive and contradictory experiments has he attempted? Knowing his resolutions of yesterday, who could claim to predict those he will adopt tomorrow? (Po 11-19-34)

By February, 1935 Marc Joubert was already speaking of the "end of the Roosevelt experiments:"

Born with the acute crisis the powers of the president and even his desire for in-depth remedies were to disappear with the acute crisis. . . . A radical transformation was possible in the United States only if the state based itself on those forces which have a permanent, historical so to speak, stake in that transformation. Instead of taking sides and basing himself on the workers, Roosevelt sought and still seeks to maneuver between antagonistic blocs. (Po 2-24-35)



## Unemployment and Concentration

As they lost whatever faith they had in the viability of Roosevelt's recovery plan, the socialists spoke more often of the continuing high levels of unemployment and of the relentless progress of capitalist concentration. "It is enough that unemployment cease to increase, wrote Joubert, for people to be satisfied." (Po 11-4-34)

The AFL's warnings that American workers faced the harshest winter of unemployment yet, were reproduced.

As for concentration of ownership, the socialists freely explored the statistics. Paul Faure found the data exhibited two tendencies resulting from the crisis: 1. the elimination of the enterprises using inferior equipment, and 2. an increase in the per capita productivity of workers visible in Sweden (+11%), in Germany (+16%), and especially in the United States (+24%). (Po 11-14-34) Marc Joubert discovered that General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler's share of the automobile market had jumped from 77% in 1929 to 88% in 1934, and commented:

Thus we can say that in most branches of industry there was a progression under the protection of the Roosevelt legislation and against its intentions, of the movement towards concentration of property and authority which gives its true unity to the contemporary economic history of the United States . . . we will no longer be able to rely on the President to implement the deep-going reforms that he had led us to expect. (Po 2-24-35)

### Some Positive Reforms

Despite the dominant theme of skepticism of this period, the socialists continued to support a number of specific measures of the New Deal. On each occasion where they mentioned these measures though, they added the qualification that in order to be truly effective they had to be combined with a real increase in the income of the masses. They quoted approvingly the answer of the United States government representatives to a questionnaire on the forty hour week sent out by the International Labor Office:

The experience of the United States is conclusive: the economic recovery of the world cannot be achieved by workers sacrificing but, quite the opposite, by the general and progressive raising of the standard of living of all peoples which requires a reduction of the length of the work week. (Po 6-7-34)

But even in relation to the shorter work week, some socialists warned that workers should fight vigilantly to preserve the forty eight hour weekly wage and beware of reforms enacted from above. Georges Dumoulin, the most prominent member of the SFIO in the CGT and one of the socialists more enclined to anti-American statements,<sup>3</sup> inserted in *Le Populaire's* trade union column an article entitled "Trade Union Independence and the Shortening of the Work Week:"

When the destruction of war still prevailed . . . the formula was "maximum production in the minimum time with the maximum consumption." . . . Today the formula is as follows "maximum production (when there are orders) in the minimum time, paying the least possible wages to the smallest possible number of workers." Today we find

that by applying this formula the employer class is able to substantially reduce the work week to its advantage. In Roosevelt's country, the United States, a plan which reduces the work week to thirty five hours with guaranteed and improved wages is being tried out . . . for the needs of the economic recovery which is the American masters' last hope. . . . A reform which is passively received is not a reform. . . . It is crucial to defend the wage of the forty eight hour week . . . (Po 1-17-35)

About once a week the socialist daily featured a full-page rubric dedicated to farmers' problems. Entitled "For Those on the Land," it regularly carried positive accounts of the progress of the Agricultural Adjustment Act programs. Occasionally it insisted on the need to guarantee farmers' income to secure a sound recovery of the economy. (Po 5-13-35)

4. "The Happiest Success, The Deepest And Most Resplendent Economic Change"

The summer of 1935 was overshadowed by the Ethiopian crisis and the external threat of fascism. In France the negotiations between the SFIO and the PCF for the formation of the Pact of Unity of Action were in progress. Roosevelt's second major legislative drive was greeted far more favorably than the first had been in 1933. The socialists were now quite sensitive to the president's appeals to curb the power of big money. They now openly sided with Roosevelt and with the NRA, against the Supreme Court and Republicans.

"The General Principle Which Gives the Roosevelt Experiments  
Their Profound Unity"

In May, 1935 few realized that the reforms just enacted were part of a legislative package which would earn the label of "Second New Deal." Marc Joubert took note of the motion but sounded a note of caution. His earlier expectations had certainly not been fulfilled:

New Offensive Against the Crisis in America  
The Impact of the Public Works Projects.

In my opinion the most revolutionary experiment was the NRA. . . . The NRA posed in all its nudity the problem of raising the workers purchasing power, because it required in order for this raise not to remain only nominal, a more and more severe control of the state over private business, because it pushed the government towards fixing prices, and locked it into a blind alley from which the only exit was a leap out of the capitalist system. . . . Without the NRA what feasible economic policy remains. None save for correcting the faulty distribution of goods by borrowing from the rich and paying wages to the poor. Such is the true impact of the public works projects. . . . They are mere nudges on the capitalist machine . . . their effect is rapidly exhausted. (Po 5-5-35)

As the full extent of the proposed legislation was revealed, the socialists' support became less cautious. The establishment of social security, the institution of federal control over banking, the dismantling of public utilities holding companies, the prolongation of public works and relief emergency programs, and especially the taxation of great fortunes drew their applause. Marc Joubert even thought the trend towards capitalist concentration might yet be

reversed, and retroactively revised his analysis of the eclecticism of Roosevelt's many programs. Speaking of the Wealth Tax Act, he commented:

Turn to the Left in the United States

. . . it is one of the most radical measures which the President has taken since his inauguration. It must be linked to the totality of the policy pursued by Washington since March, 1933, and its source must be sought in the general principle which gives the Roosevelt experiments their profound unity. . . . This general principle is the need to reverse the movement which for more than a century has been leading to an increased concentration of the wealth and income of the Nation. . . . It is this aspiration towards an egalitarian democracy. . . . (Po 6-30-35)

In August, after the Supreme Court had invalidated the NRA, Le Populaire proudly and approvingly printed Roosevelt's message entitled "Let Us Replace the NRA." (Po 8-26-35) After the Supreme Court declared the AAA's tax on large food processors unconstitutional, Georges Monnet, the SFIO's expert on agricultural policies and a rising star in the party, wrote:

We strongly hope that in spite of all, President Roosevelt will end up on top. The drama which is being acted out in the United States between the advocates of a managed economy and the guardians of the liberal tradition can leave no one indifferent. (Po 1-11-36)

Purchasing Power and Deficit Spending

In December, 1935 and January, 1936 a long series of essays by Marc Joubert attempted to draw a rounded balance sheet of

"America After Three Years of the Roosevelt Presidency." In this series Joubert contended that after many ups and downs, the ascending phase begun in summer, 1935 and still in effect at the time he was writing, seemed destined to last. "The purchasing power of the population, he reported, continues to increase." But he added that "nonetheless one cannot consider an economy in which eight to nine million are unemployed to be in equilibrium." (Po 12-15-35) The second installment of his series investigated the various causes of the recovery. Some, admittedly, were unrelated to Roosevelt's actions: the smaller harvests, the rise of the price of raw materials. Yet one had to recognize that the essential factor had been Roosevelt's policy of increasing the purchasing capacity of consumers. (Po 12-22-35)

Here we must note a new emphasis in Joubert's arguments. He used increased retail, mail order, and chain store sales as one of the key pieces of evidence for the increased purchasing power of the farmers and workers. His emphasis was probably linked to a desire to justify the contention of the SFIO's economic program that a general wage increase would cause an upward chain reaction of the French economy. Greater sales of consumer goods to the masses would lead to renewed orders for raw materials, semi-finished goods,

and machines. More workers would be hired, more revenue collected by the state and business confidence would be restored.<sup>4</sup>

A similarly new element was Joubert's interest in the American government's straightforward advocacy of deficit spending and its ability to mobilize unused capital through public loans. The socialists were always keenly aware of--and deplored--the tendency of the French middle classes to buy gold for savings--the famous thésaurisation--and hoped to convince them to entrust their capital to the reconstruction projects of a Leftist government. Here is how Joubert's final article of the series dealt with the lessons of the American experience:

Roosevelt plans to struggle against the crisis by mobilizing unused capital--we would say thesaurized capital--through loans. Accordingly the federal debt went from 21 to 29.5 billion dollars. . . . The banks subscribe to the public loan. The government hands over to the workers the product of these loans. The workers spend it on merchandise. The manufacturers' volume of business increases. Their deposits in the banks swell, which in turn allows the credit institutions to subscribe to new state loans. Thus the American money market can bear several issues of Treasury bonds in succession without provoking an increase in the rent of money. . . . It is not even necessary that taxes be increased in the end to insure the servicing and repayment of the augmented public debt, for the business recovery leads to expanded fiscal revenues which will allow the budget to be balanced in the relatively close future. . . .

Far from me is the thought of transposing the issues and methods of the United States to France, word for word. The situations are not comparable: amount of

disposable money supply, past debt and therefore ability of the state to borrow further, national psychology, these are a few of the points, among many others, on which we must note crucial differences. (Po 1-4-36)

In the spring of 1936 as the Popular Front prepared to win a majority in the elections, fewer actual analyses of the American experiment appeared in the socialist press. Instead brief notes on the United States were used to score points against opponents of the Popular Front. The United States was exhibited as the model of a recovered economy and President Roosevelt was transformed into a hero of the people. In September, 1936 Joubert categorically affirmed: "The Roosevelt experiment allows us to state that it is by means of the budget deficit that one can effectively struggle against the crisis." (Po 9-1-36) Under the title "What a Democracy Is Capable of-The Economic Revcovery in the United States," he wrote:

For the last three years, while the standard of living of the population in Italy and Germany stagnated or declined, it rose appreciably and continuously in the United States and Great Britain. (Po 9-23-36)

Blum, as the new French prime minister, no longer expressed reservations. On September 25, as he defended his economic proposals before the Chamber of Deputies, he exclaimed:

In the country where one can now observe the happiest success, the deepest and most resplendent economic change, in the United States of America . . . what has been most remarkable about the Roosevelt experiment has been the courage of President Roosevelt to try one method after another, to refuse to take



a stubborn stand against experience, to try something else until at last he found the method that succeeded.  
(Po 9-26-36)

##### 5. The SFIO and American Imperialism

The SFIO's interest in the "young Republic beyond the Atlantic" was not confined to economic matters. It encompassed various aspects of American society and diplomacy. On these matters also the SFIO was criss-crossed by divergent opinions. Despite this diversity, in 1934 the social aspects dominated the thinking of all currents and engendered a manner of consensus opinion in the SFIO. In 1936 the diplomatic aspects played the same role. The general evolution of the SFIO towards more favorable appreciations of the New Deal, as well as its occasional moments of hostility, are not intelligible without reference to these aspects of American reality.

##### Social Aspects

Like the press of the CGT, that of the SFIO produced a steady flow of articles about American society. It shared the CGT's fascination with the modernism of America and the general concern in France that America incarnated France's future. However Le Populaire carried less strictly-labor and economic items, and more politically oriented news.

The socialist daily gave greater attention to the problem of racism in the United States than did its trade union counterpart. It featured progress reports on the campaign to free the Scottsboro Boys, including prominent summons to defense rallies in Paris. Other news stories dealt with lynchings, black and white solidarity among the Southern tenant farmers, and unemployment in Harlem. The typical analysis of these articles is reflected in a May, 1935 column heading: "The great misery of American Negroes-From nationalist revolt to class struggle." (Po 5-5-35)

Throughout 1933, 34, and 35 the socialist organ reported many instances of brutal repression of strikes and demonstrations by police or the national guard.

On a number of occasions, Le Populaire complained about the rigidity of the American constitution. The interim period between Roosevelt's election and his actual assumption of office was criticized as a paralyzing anachronism. In 1933 most articles on the American political system emphasized the powers of the executive office, often with the implication that Roosevelt's use of these powers was dictatorial. In 1935 it was the prerogatives of the judicial branch which were attacked as excessive and undemocratic. By 1936 though, the United States was once again listed by the socialists as a great Western democracy. The SFIO even referred to the allocation of

radio time to both Roosevelt and Hoover in 1932 as a model to be emulated in France. It demanded that the Sarraut government likewise grant broadcasting time on the French radio network to all parties. (Po 2-5-36)

The SFIO also was quite impressed with the number of American women who had been allowed to occupy positions of responsibility. The interest was not unrelated to the debate inside the SFIO and in the French body politic in general over whether or not to institute women's suffrage.

#### America on the Road to Socialism

Most indicative of the SFIO's general trend was Le Populaire's treatment of the development of socialism in America. In the initial period of this study, the SFIO placed high hopes in the potential growth of the Socialist Party of the United States. At the end of the period, the SFIO had accepted the claim that the bourgeois politician Roosevelt embodied the hopes and aspirations of American labor.

In the years immediately following the onset of the great depression, the socialists expected a rapid and massive radicalization of the American working class. They believed the extraordinary lag of American socialism finally would be overcome. Though the Democrats might initially benefit from disillusionment with the capitalist system, they could not fulfill the working people's

aspirations and they rapidly would be bypassed by the awakened millions. Thus on the day of the 1932 elections Longuet wrote that "for millions of voters, the ballot they will cast today for Roosevelt is but a first step in their march towards socialism. . . . But Mr. Roosevelt is not responsible for that . . ."

As Norman Thomas' electoral score was gradually released--numbering in the hundreds of thousands--the socialists became convinced their sister party in North America would finally experience a breakthrough. Longuet commented: "How far removed we are from the days--only four years ago--when Mr. Stéphane Lauzanne . . . ironically mused over the 'American socialist Waterloo'." (Po 11-12-32)

By summer, 1933 the hopes of the SFIO were higher than ever. Blum expected the questioning of traditional ideologies which was unleashed by the New Deal to directly strengthen the American section of the Second International. In the following passage, it is clear that his hopes mingled with a desire to see a great Franco-Anglo-American socialist community replace the shattered alliance of the SFIO with the German SPD:

#### The Future of the International

Our friend and master Emile Vandervelde has been announcing for several years already the rapid, rocket-like, rise of international socialism in the United States. He is deeply convinced that the development of the American Party will follow a curve analogous

to that of English Labour, and that curve in the first years was singularly close to the vertical. . . . The American Party, section of the socialist International, exists; it even enjoys the leadership of men of top quality. During the last election campaign, despite extremely unfavorable circumstances, the increase of its votes was significant, but what is more important, the impact of its propaganda was felt deeply. . . . From the present American experiment, whatever its immediate resolution, a sudden and powerful blossoming of American socialism can burst forth. Let us imagine for a moment: the socialist party conquering in American public life a place comparable to that of the great European parties; the socialist arch thrown across the Atlantic; the International resting on both continents on two pillars of equal strength. . . . It is not a dream; it may be only a brief anticipation." (Po 8-7-33)

In October, 1933 on the occasion of the convention of the AFL, Blum pointed to the "appearance within the corporative organization of a movement analogous to that which transformed the character and action of the English trade unions." (Po 10-6-33) That movement, he said, proposed to form a labor party and reflected distrust and disenchantment with Roosevelt. During 1934 the socialist daily published frequent statements of American socialist leaders and featured the great battles of the American workers in full-page photographic displays.

By 1935 a shift had taken place. The French socialists no longer considered the American Socialist Party as the clearly designated expression of the progressive trends in American society. The bulk of the American socialists--affiliated and non-affiliated--had

joined forces with the AFL leadership which itself backed Roosevelt and the New Deal. To complicate matters, the CIO left the AFL and the small Socialist Party split. In the polarization of American political life which ensued, labor and socialism allowed themselves to become completely identified with Roosevelt and the Democratic Party. The French socialists who were themselves in the Popular Front could only approve of the basic trend, and when the November, 1936 presidential elections came around, they were supporting Roosevelt more vigorously than the candidate of their American comrades. (Po 11-3-36)

By that time the socialists' preoccupation with enlisting American public opinion in a bloc against the Axis overshadowed everything else. In June, 1936 Longuet had interviewed the veteran British Labour Party leader, George Lansbury, who had just returned from a tour of the United States. The British socialist and pacifist had reported that "from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Canadian to the Mexican borders, one slogan prevails: 'Keep America Out of the War'." Longuet cautioned his readers not to lose faith:

Nonetheless there are many well-advised Americans who understand that they cannot shut themselves up in selfish isolation, and who realize that should Europe be annihilated in the terrible catastrophe, America would be ruined as a direct consequence.  
(Po 6-17-36)

## America and the World

Pleas against isolationism such as Longuet's in June, 1936 were not entirely new for the SFIO. However, from 1932 onwards, and especially in 1934, the SFIO also had denounced quite explicitly the imperialist character of American foreign policy. By 1936 these denunciations had disappeared for all practical purposes. Let us review the record for it provides one of the keys to understanding the evolution of the SFIO's attitude towards the New Deal.

In 1932 the SFIO's concern with world affairs centered on the stabilization of the post-war European order badly shaken by the impact of the depression. The socialists still exerted every effort to bring the United States into the international conferences being held at the time. In each of the three main areas of negotiation--disarmament, settlement of war debts, and tariff and monetary policies--international cooperation was suffering one blow after another as different countries resorted to unilateral action.

The SFIO felt that more active United States participation was necessary to reverse the tide of economic nationalism and rearmament, Léon Blum had praised Hoover's plan to ban offensive weapons. (Po 4-13-32) When the American proposal to the Geneva peace conference became more precise, Blum wrote: 'The voice of the French people

has been heard . . . in America. . . . And we add despite ourselves 'If only France had been the nation to do that'. " (Po 6-23-32)

In 1933 and 34 the SFIO was put in somewhat of a quandary. On the one hand, Roosevelt adopted just as intransigent a position on payment of French war debts as Hoover had. In addition he seemed, at least temporarily, to be orienting the United States economy towards greater self-containment. On the other hand Washington continued to support disarmament negotiations and the socialists remained convinced that peace could be preserved only with American help.

On several occasions Blum exploded with indignation against the new American president. When Roosevelt claimed he could not take any position on the French war debt until he was actually in the White House, Blum replied:

Mr. Roosevelt wishes to make no decision on the revision of the debts before his assumption of power. Fine! We are not in a hurry either! We can wait until March. (Po 12-22-32)

As late as June, 1943 André Leroux complained that Roosevelt's refusal to review the problem of war debts was disappointing. (Po 6-3-34) Blum's first reaction to Roosevelt's message to the London Economic Conference was equally violent: "Successive rebuffs from the President-Dictator are becoming habitual in America . . ." (Po 7-4-33) Later, while endorsing the abandonment of the gold



standard, he criticized the American position for having been developed without international consultation and for being implemented without common safeguards against speculation on the other currencies. (Po 7-5-33)

At the same time the socialists were quite pleased with American initiatives in favor of disarmament. In May, 1933 Blum explained that Roosevelt had accepted the idea that the United States should enter into a "Consultative Pact" which would designate the aggressor and organize sanctions against the country thus designated:

America would enter fully into the interplay, the circuit, the cycle of concerted action and joint responsibilities. Henceforth, it would be present fully, and its very presence is one of the effective guarantees of peace. (Po 5-8-33)

In December, 1933 Blum described Roosevelt's plea against aggression as displaying a "Wilsonian inspiration." (Po 12-31-33)

The SFIO perceived American foreign policy as a contradictory entity and analyzed each of its aspects more or less independently of the others. This approach allowed the SFIO organ to publish a number of incisive criticisms of American imperialism during 1933, 1934 and 1935 while retaining its basic view that the United States could be a decisive factor in the defense of world peace.

During the Cuban events, Le Populaire initially reported that both Roosevelt and his special envoy, Sumner Welles, were quite

popular in Cuba for their role in helping to remove the discredited dictator Machado. (Po 8-15-33) But as the more radical Grau San Martin replaced Welles' protege, Cespedes, Le Populaire finally denounced the presence of American warships around the island and explained that "the Cuban revolution is in large part directed against American imperialism." (Po 9-8-33) When the Platt amendment was abrogated, Andre Leroux explained that the constitutional change was the result of the distrust of Latin American nations towards their Northern neighbor, but that American imperialism would retain its military and economic advantages on the island. (Po 6-3-34)

André Leroux was not overly impressed by Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy. He explained that the war of the Gran Chaco was really the result of the conflict of American interests in Bolivia with British interests in Paraguay. (Po 7-25-34) Leroux asked:

After the abrogation of the Platt amendment and United States withdrawal from Haiti, are we really faced with a deep change of North American policy?

and answered:

It would really be naive to believe so. The marines leave, the bankers remain. . . . The United States takes off the policeman's uniform to put on the bourgeois vest of the good family father. . . . And Panama and Nicaragua can't even obtain these same concessions despite their complaints. (Po 7-25-34)

In the Far-Eastern conflict, the SFIO decried the lack of energy with which the League of Nations had acted against Japanese

aggression. It felt that as a result of this inactivity the United States justifiably was worried about Japan and entitled to establish defensive positions. Thus the SFIO applauded the recognition of the Soviet Union by Washington and attributed the step to the growing threat from Japanese militarism rather than to any major success of Stalin. In 1934 and 1935 the socialist newspaper regularly reported on the American naval build-up in the Pacific. Occasionally it would expose the true meaning of the American position on limitation of naval armaments:

America on the other hand, favors greater size ships capable of insuring the longest range of its fleet; it bears in mind the possibility of a conflict with Japan on the other extremity of the Pacific. (Po 12-15-35)

But the SFIO did not question the legitimacy of America's interest in the Far-East. With the breakdown of the naval talks between Washington, London, and Tokyo, the socialists became more convinced than ever that strengthening the League of Nations was the only hope to avert war.

"We Must Reconquer American Public Opinion"

This conviction led them to an ever-closer alignment with Roosevelt in the hope that he could reverse the tide of isolationist and neutralist sentiment in the United States. Roosevelt was described as well-intentioned but hand-bound by public opinion. In dealing with

the situation the socialists strove to avoid two pitfalls: giving the impression to the French people that the United States was firmly and definitively committed to absolute neutrality, and arousing a wave of anti-American resentment in France which would backfire in the United States. Commenting on Roosevelt's 1936 State of the Union address, Blum wrote:

As a general rule, while Roosevelt's speech contains the most devastating indictment against the fascist and imperialist aggressor powers, the draft of the law (on Neutrality) refuses to translate this attitude into action. Far from doing so it equates, and submits to the same veto the designated aggressor and the power which has invoked international solidarity against aggression. . . . (Roosevelt) must have been subjected to a braking action by public opinion. . . . Europe has discouraged and disappointed American good will. (Po 1-5-36)

But the following day Blum hurried to clarify that a safety valve existed in the neutrality law which could be turned against the powers of aggression. He added however that "America will not renounce the principle of neutrality . . . if Europe does not give the example of an energetic fidelity to the Pact. We must reconquer American public opinion." (Po 1-6-36)

This was the purpose of Blum's speech to the American Club in Paris, his first public address as the new prime minister of the Popular Front government. In the aftermath of the speech *Le Populaire* strove to show that Blum's appeal had had a positive impact in North America. Cordell Hull was quoted as saying that Blum had

made very interesting statements. (Po 5-17-36) In July right-wing demonstrators assaulted some American tourists on the Champs Elysees, shouting "France to the French." Le Populaire commented that these right-wing nationalists should have shouted their slogan in 1917, when American intervention helped the French army win the war. (Po 7-7-36) Thus for the socialists the United States had once again become the "arsenal of democracy."

In September, 1936 the arrival of the new American ambassador, William Bullitt, in Paris elicited the highest praise from socialist leaders. Longuet recalled how Bullitt had been one of President Wilson's young aides in Paris. At the time the socialists had been in touch with him to coordinate their respective efforts towards a just peace. Bullitt had led the mission sent to Moscow to negotiate with the Soviets. His nomination to the Paris post was a good omen. Longuet concluded with the hope that "in a few weeks, the American electorate will return to the White House the eminent statesman, the Pacifist, and the sincere Democrat who presently stands at the head of the American state." (Po 9-1-36) Shortly thereafter the Blum government negotiated the international treaty aligning the Franc, Dollar and Sterling. Roosevelt's triumph in November was described as a "new rebuff to Mussolini," and Le

Populaire proudly announced that "once again American democracy had broken the onslaught of the powers of Money." (Po 11-15-36)

## 6. The Polemics

We have traced the SFIO's analysis of the New Deal. We must now examine how it made use of this analysis to argue against its opponents of the Right and of the Left.

### Polemics With the Right

As the main opposition party in the National Assembly the SFIO bore the brunt of the attacks by spokespeople for the Right against the economic conceptions of the Left.

Before Roosevelt appeared on the political scene, the socialists had argued with the Right about the causes of the crisis. Paul Faure wrote that Mr. de Kérillis, the notorious editor of Le Temps, had gone to the United States in search of arguments against socialism. But he had been disappointed. The depression in the United States showed that capitalism, and not socialists in the government--as in Germany, Austria, and Great Britain--had brought about the collapse. (Po 10-30-32) The Right retorted that socialists may not have been in the government, but American workers had been paid too high wages. The socialists then tried to show American wages were actually quite low, and blamed the depression on Hoover's deflationary policies

which they equated with Tardieu's proposals for France. Both had promised prosperity, but to no avail. (Po 11-13-32)

When the New Deal began in earnest, the socialists proclaimed that the bankruptcy of the type of deflation still pursued in France should now be obvious to all. Referring to Washington's abandonment of the gold standard, Leon Blum concluded:

First of all I want to note the devastating contradiction which this measure inflicts upon the partisans and apologists of so-called deflation. . . . (Roosevelt and his counselors) are now intent on the only efficient course which they have themselves just made infinitely more difficult: to re-animate, to resuscitate the general consumers' capacity. May their example serve as a lesson. (Po 4-22-33)

In October the socialist leader complained of a conspiracy of silence of the French press against the measures of Roosevelt because "it fears their emulation and awaits their demise." (Po 10-5-33)

During the International Labor Conference sessions in Geneva, the socialists constantly upheld the United States as proof that it was feasible to institute the forty hour week. (Po 6-11-34)

The strike wave of the summer of 1934 brought back the theme that the United States embodied the ills of capitalism despite its highly advanced methods. Paul Faure wrote: "The United States was the blessed land of the well-behaved workers who supported 'social peace' and were immune to socialism and the 'mystique of the class

struggle.' That time is gone." (Po 8-21-34) Roosevelt's failure showed the powerlessness of all capitalist remedies--inflation, deflation, fascism--before the crisis:

Nothing Escapes the Tempest

The miracles of Mr. Moncelle (a French right-wing journalist) haven't arrived any more than the miracles of Mr. Doumergue, Mr. Hitler, Mr. Mussolini, or Mr. Roosevelt. There is nothing to be gained from capitalism, its methods and its laws. (Po 8-29-34)

But the socialist parliamentarians had discovered an incisive angle of attack--drawing the lessons of the American experience--and they weren't about to give it up. When devaluation of the French Franc was being discussed Blum warned that measures similar to those enacted in the United States would have to be taken in France if the workers and farmers were not to be the victims of the devaluation:

In England the devaluation of the pound was simultaneous with the rise of gold, and prices remained stable. In the United States the rise of gold had already occurred and the devaluation led to a price increase. The same will occur in France. Any tampering with the currency must be part of an overall plan if one does not want to injure wages and fixed incomes. (These measures include): . . . reducing production costs (motor forces, financial charges, cost of credit) . . . public offices for agricultural production . . . a fiscal relaxation to reduce the difference between wholesale and retail prices . . . a living wage and collective contracts . . . public works projects . . . the international organization of credit and exchange . . . (Po 9-24-34)

When the law on industrial consortiums came up for debate in the Chamber, the socialist deputy, Paul Rives, explained:



The labor groups are asking that work be re-distributed among a greater number of men, and that those men who were already earning a wage should retain it. This is the essential clause of the labor agreements concluded in the United States under the impulsion of President Roosevelt. Without it the measure would be nothing other than managed unemployment and perhaps managed bankruptcy. (Applause on the far left) (Po 2-15-35)

Favorable references to the New Deal in speeches, articles, and written propaganda, became standard practice after the summer of 1935. Even the orthodox Paul Faure recognized that the measures taken in the United States could be contrasted to the immobility of the present French government and could illustrate the direction that a Popular Front government would follow in France. For example he showed how the AAA had set the example of a helpful policy of credit to farmers, and contended that French reformers were lagging far behind the United States. (Po 8-23-35)

When Mr. Tannery, the governor of the Bank of France, one of the bastions of free enterprise and conservatism, attempted to explain the economic recovery by referring indiscriminately to the strictures adopted in all countries, Marc Joubert protested:

When the governor of the Bank of France . . . declares that "the labor of adaptation which all countries have been compelled to undertake is beginning to show its beneficial effects," can one refrain from answering that, on the contrary, it is in those countries like America and England which have rejected this labor of adaptation--adaptation for Mr. Tannery signifies deflation--that the crisis has lessened, while it remains as acute as ever in the others. (Po 2-9-36)

In January, 1936 Léon Blum reiterated a point that was to become a theme of the SFIO's electoral campaign

In the United States and in France  
The Press and Roosevelt

For three years it has been lying in wait for him. It avidly collected all that revealed a difficulty, all that could be interpreted as a failure. It vigilantly and methodically smothered all favorable data and indications . . .

That socialists should follow the course of the New Deal with a certain critical circumspection, that they should be alarmed by the slowness of the decrease of unemployment, that they should remain skeptical about the results of the industrial "codes" in relation to the power of the great trusts and in relation to the real purchasing power of the wage earners, nothing could be more natural. (Po 1-9-36)

But, Blum continued, the large right-wing newspapers could not display the same candor concerning the obvious lessons of the New Deal.

There were good reasons for their hypocrisy:

Roosevelt said "Today's deficit is tomorrow's surplus." If one were to recognize that the facts have verified the words of Mr. Roosevelt, one would have to admit by the same token that the government's policy, inspired or imposed by the Bank of France, has been misguided. One would have to confess to an even more painful fact . . . that is that the Socialist Party was right! (Po 1-9-36)

#### Polemics With the Left

While the socialists were quite keen on citing the United States to confute the Right, they kept such polemics with other members of the Left to a minimum. Faithful to the old non-aggression

pact between the leadership of the CGT and that of the SFIO, they seldom tackled the CGT's conceptions about Roosevelt directly. Instead they attacked the positions of the "neo-socialist" faction of their own party, or those of the International Labor Office. Both the "neos" and the ILO shared the CGT's outlook on the New Deal. An article by L. Digat addressed the issue in the trade union forum of the SFIO organ. Digat complained that a report by the International Federation of Trade Unions supported the concept of a managed economy and the New Deal. He criticized the report as class-collaborationist and pointedly surmised that it read as if it had been written in Geneva. At that time the CGT and in particular Jouhaux's participation in the organisms of the League of Nations in Geneva, including the ILO, was a subject of irritation for many old syndicalists of the CGT, as well as for the left-wing socialists.

After the expulsion of the "neo-socialists" from the SFIO in November, 1933, the SFIO leadership concentrated its efforts on isolating the new revisionist party. It feared the "neo-socialists" might develop alliances with the CGT leadership and with the highly pragmatic and successful Belgian social-democracy. The misunderstanding with the CGT was dispelled in May, 1934.<sup>5</sup> But Jean-Baptiste Séverac, one of the key party intellectuals, still took on the views of the CGT in a review of Georges Boris' book on Roosevelt. Boris

has "congratulated Roosevelt for having known how to pursue his enterprise with the greatest respect for democratic forms." Now, after the strikes of summer, 1934, Severac wrote:

. . . wouldn't his optimistic conclusions have to be modified today . . . especially after the movements for workers demands which we have just witnessed and which caused surprise both by their magnitude and by the brutality with which they were repressed. (Po 7-26-34)

In January, 1935 the SFIO obtained a disassociation of the Belgians from Roosevelt, the "neo-socialists," and the remaining planiste tendency inside the SFIO. Emile Vandervelde, the leader of the Belgian POB and chairman of the Second International, executed the repudiation. In a document written for Le Populaire and entitled "Planisme, 'Neo-Socialism,' or Neo-Reformism," he reasserted the fundamental distinction between the POB's Plan and the American experiment:

The New Deal has the characteristic of not being one single Plan emanating from one and the same guiding principle, but a mixture of Plans emanating from various members of the Brains' Trust, and which adapts as well as it can to the moving requirements of the conjuncture. (Po 1-7-35)

He then proceeded to reject by name the support of both Deat, for the "neo-socialists," and Lefranc, for the planiste current inside the SFIO.

Whenever possible the SFIO preferred to ignore the PCF's diatribes. Jean-Baptiste Séverac questioned the Comintern's analysis that the crisis gripping the world was indeed the final crisis of capitalism.<sup>6</sup> Paul Faure, although he shared with many older leaders of the Communist Party an inclination towards catastrophic economic analyses inherited from the Guesdiste tradition, was content with repeating that whatever remedies American capitalism might resort to, it would continue its anti-working class policies. There was little discussion of the PCF's contention that the world crisis had begun in 1928. (Po 9-26-32) Later in a veiled polemic against L'Humanité which had used a speech by Mussolini as evidence of the correctness of the Communist analysis of the New Deal, Jean Longuet ridiculed the contention of Mussolini's speech that Roosevelt was moving towards fascism; Roosevelt's great powers were constitutional and there was no destruction of the trade unions in the United States. (Po 8-18-33)

During the strike wave of summer 1934, André Leroux finally decided to grapple with some of the other theories of the Communist Party in that period. In an article entitled "The San Francisco strike: its origins and meaning" (Po 7-19-34) he maintained that contrary to Comintern projections, unemployment had indeed reduced the strike activity and militancy of the American workers up to that time. The real strike movement which was taking place now contrasted with the

imaginary, ever-stronger strike waves and unemployed revolts which the Communist Party had conjured up since 1928. In fact the strikes were made possible by the incipient recovery of spring, 1934, the existence of which was denied by the Communist Party. Moreover Leroux challenged the idea that the strike wave was aimed directly against the NRA itself: "The struggle is not for or against the NRA, but for or against trade union rights." (Po 7-22-34) Finally he denied that Roosevelt had lost control of the situation completely; the Democrat's continued hold on the masses was evidenced by the fact that in the end his arbitration was accepted. (Po 7-22-34)

The New Deal also acted as an inspiration and unifying factor for the French Left. One of the first manifestations of this role appeared in a criticism Léon Blum levelled against the "neo-socialists" in an editorial of September, 1933. Most members of the SFIO had reproached the "neo-socialists" with tarnishing the name of socialism by associating it with the authoritarianism and eclecticism of Roosevelt. But Blum perceived another contradiction in the "neo-socialist" rhetoric. They wished at one and the same time to participate in the French cabinets bent on deflation and to share in the prestige of the New Deal's dynamism. Blum bitterly complained that their parliamentary maneuvers in France had obstructed the ability of the socialist deputies to propagate audacious solutions of the New Deal type. (Po 9-7-33)

The same quest for a dynamic outlook was to underlay the subsequent rapprochement between the SFIO and PCF. As the SFIO came to support the reforming spirit of many New Deal measures while still warning of the ultimate limitations of the capitalist regime, the Comintern was moving away from its sharp criticisms of the United States. The socialist leader Zyromski who, since February, 1934, had been exerting all his efforts towards uniting the SFIO and PCF, was quick to notice that the analysis of the New Deal was no longer a difference, but quite the contrary had become a point of agreement between the two parties:

#### Unity with Stalin

There is no profound difference between the socialist movement and the communist movement that could prevent total unification. H. G. Wells speaks with Stalin about the Roosevelt experiment. Stalin does not in the least ignore its value, but right away he indicates its limits: "The Americans wish to overcome the crisis on the basis of private capitalist activity, without changing the economic base." This is the principal shortcoming of the experiment which certainly will yield some results, and alleviate and relieve the plight of some victims of the crisis but, and Stalin is speaking here, "even if the Americans you speak of partially achieve their goal, that is to say reduce the losses to a minimum, even in that case, they will not be able to eliminate the roots of the anarchy characteristic of the existing capitalist system" . . . We entirely agree with . . . For Wells who remains impregnated with the "technocratic" mystique of American neo-capitalism, organizer and rationalizer of production, Stalin clarifies that the transformation of the world requires the conquest of power by the working class. (Po 1-8-35)

The operative words are underlined: they signify that the Comintern has moved away from the period of complete hostility to the New Deal when they characterized it as fascist. Thus for a time the SFIO and PCF's analyses converged.

Ultimately the SFIO was to move even closer to the New Deal and to the CGT's advocacy of structural reforms. The PCF on the other hand finally settled on a theoretical position which rejected structural reforms. It supported only the partial reforms of the New Deal to which its Radical allies were far more amenable. Thus, Zyromski's hope was not to be realized fully. Each party preserved its own opinion on structural reforms and the New Deal as a whole, but joined with the others to support the specific measures taken in the United States and to proclaim the ultimate superiority of socialism.

By the time of Blum's first ministry, the SFIO had arrived at a positive estimation of both the New Deal and the role of the United States in the world. The combination of these two factors led the SFIO to place greater hopes in the United States than it had for a long time before. These hopes even may have surpassed those which were aroused by the announcement of President Wilson's peace proposals in 1917. The new faith had arisen through a complex interplay of factors. Its rise was slowed down by the radicalization of American workers which exploded for all to see in summer 1934, as well as by



the radicalization of the French masses in the face of the depression and fascist threat. On the other hand, the new wave of pro-Americanism drew on the precedent of Wilsonianism and on the desire for a modernization of French structures on the American pattern. The main obstacle to its rapid progress disappeared when the Soviet Union opted for the creation of a collective security agreement between Washington, Paris, London and Moscow, a choice which the PCF reflected by toning down its criticisms of the New Deal, and of the SFIO and CGT.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PCF AND THE NEW DEAL

The four years under consideration in this study span two distinct phases of the PCF's history: the last years of the so-called "third period" and the beginning of the Popular Front period. The PCF's analysis of the New Deal reflected that dichotomy. The PCF retained some theoretical precepts such as the rejection of structural reform and capitalist plans in both phases. But its conception of class alignments in the United States was considerably modified after the Seventh Congress of the Comintern codified the new people's front line. The following pages will delineate the evolution of the PCF's analysis, explain its relation to the PCF's changing perception of international affairs, and examine its reflection in Communist polemics with the SFIO and CGT.

A number of different writers assumed responsibility for the PCF's coverage of the New Deal. Editorials on the Roosevelt experiment were signed by the well-known party leader Marcel Cachin, and the prominent Communist spokesperson Gabriel Péri. When they dealt with CGTU criticism of the CGT they were signed by Julien Racamond and Benoît Frachon, both top leaders of the Communist-influenced union confederation. For a time in 1934, André Ferrat,

a younger leader known as a hard-liner, also authored some editorials. Day to day coverage was the task of M. M. (possibly Michel Magnien), L. M. (possibly the intellectual Léon Moussinac or Léon Mabille), P. L. Darnar, D. R. (probably Daniel Renoult), and later M. Gautier and especially Paul Nizan. Periodically economic rubrics by Jean Dupuy and J. Berlioz were published along with some doctrinal reminders by Lucien Constant and some references to Eugene Varga's works.<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Crisis and Fascism

#### Depression and Five-Year Plan

Between Roosevelt's election in November, 1932 and July, 1933 when the New Deal began to be generally viewed as an attempt to manage a capitalist economy, L'Humanité's coverage of the American economy was similar to that of previous years. The main theme of this coverage was a counterposition of the economies of the United States and Soviet Union. Under the heading "Two Systems, Two Results" a typical article would contrast the ills of the depression in America with the healthy progression of the first Five-Year Plan in the USSR. (H 4-24-32)

The PCF usually faithfully reproduced Comintern analyses and the Comintern dated the beginning of the crisis from 1928, the

onset of the famous "third period of capitalist collapse." This surprising chronology of the crisis was upheld in the French Communists' public propoaganda. In October, 1932 an article on the Roosevelt and Hoover campaigns still claimed that "America was already affected by the crisis at the time of the 1928 elections." (H 9-23-32)

Nonetheless some journalists such as Jean Dupuy, attempted to describe the specificity of the immediate crisis when compared to that of previous years:

Another radical method of cleansing the economy used to consist in the elimination of firms with low efficiency. Today the preservation of monopoly prices allows the trusts to retain their deficient factories with a low level of output or even at a complete standstill. Thus economically parasitic firms are maintained. Factories which are not part of the trusts are the main ones which are disappearing. (H 9-23-32)

The collapse of "Yankee capitalism" was presented as the definitive conclusion of the debate over "Americanism" which had taken place in the 1920's. In that debate the PCF and the CGTU had emphasized the negative results of capitalist rationalization in the land of "King Dollar": accelerated pace of production lines, daily exhaustion and early aging of the workers, reduced size of the labor force. They had challenged the figures showing that American workers enjoyed high wages and short hours. Now the Communists felt their predictions had been confirmed by the depression and they constantly sought to remind their socialist and CGT rivals of this verdict of

reality. They focused their fire on Charles Spinasse, the socialist leader who had been most vocal in advertising the progress of American industry:

The Class struggle in Spinasse's Paradise  
Spinasse and his consorts have often counterposed  
Fordism to the socialist system before the workers.  
According to them, the American workers had their car  
and their house and lived as petty-bourgeois. . . . Today  
the unemployed of Detroit are erecting barricades in the  
courtyard of Ford's factories. (H 3-13-32)

The point was considered deserving of repeated public exposure and it was included as one of the main planks of the PCF's 1932 election platform--a vote in which the PCF suffered grievous losses.

L'Humanité of 3-3-32 reproduced an election poster of the PCF. On a background showing an electric chair, a lynching, and symbols of a trust, it featured the words: "1928: Blum and Spinasse were singing the praise of rationalization and Fordism."

As the depression worsened, L'Humanité multiplied its news items on the "Yankee Paradise." They described the catastrophic rise of unemployment and the collapse of the great financial institutions. On March 1, 1932 the Communist daily reported that there were eight million jobless in the United States; on April 24, 1933, twelve million; and on July 7, 1933, eighteen million. (H 3-31-32, 4-24-33, 7-7-33). The staggering chain of bankruptcies and especially the banking crash of March, 1933 were also the target of much sarcasm.

When the presidential candidates for the 1932 elections were nominated by their party conventions, Péri ironically described the ridiculous behavior of the delegates, and the identical programs adopted by both parties. The candidates merely represented rival trusts. (H 7-7-32) Péri portrayed Roosevelt as the candidate of the Western farming states, New York petty-bourgeoisie, and of Hearst. (H 11-4-32) Later Roosevelt was also pegged as the candidate of the Southern "slave" states. (H 8-3-33) Quoting André Siegfried's analysis of American politics, Péri showed that the election of a Democrat to the White House was another sign that things were not going well in the land of the dollar.

Roosevelt's budgetary measures after he took office in March, 1933 were perceived as essentially a continuation of Hoover's. Both presidents had pursued deflation as well as inflation. Hoover had made deflationary budget cuts but he had also provided easy investment credit through the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. Likewise Roosevelt had practised deflation when he decided to cut veterans' pensions and federal employees' salaries, but his manipulation of the value of the dollar and of the gold supply were inflationary measures. What characterized all the actions of both presidents was a desperate desire to solve the crisis on the back of the workers.

Unlike the SFIO, the PCF did not consider inflationary policies to be any more progressive than deflationary ones. It viewed all such remedies as attempts to save capitalism. The fact that the socialist and trade union leaders supported such remedies confirmed the collusion of these misleaders with the capitalist rulers. The correct position was to reject the false dilemma of "inflation or deflation":

Hoover, Roosevelt, Thomas (Norman, the leaders of the Socialist Party), Green (William, the head of the AFL), understand the gravity of the crisis, but all seek to come out of it on the back of the workers. . . . The proletariat struggles for the revolutionary solution to the crisis.  
(H 5-25-32)

#### Incipient Fascism

By July, 1933 after the first One Hundred Days of the New Deal, the French right-wing press had begun to denounce Roosevelt's actions as socialistic, the CGT to characterize them as an attempt to manage the economy, and the SFIO to speculate on their relation to socialism. The PCF joined the debate on the overall intentions and nature of the New Deal. From that time until the end of 1934 the PCF maintained that the New Deal had a lot to do with fascism and nothing with socialism.

Initially the PCF even denied the existence of any real intention to direct the economy on the part of the White House. The fuss over the NRA was a lot of "blustering American-style" and it would "not

change the laws of capitalist economics." (H 8-4-33) Later Gabriel Péri recognized that the capitalists were actually attempting to control the American economy through their government, but he denied that such an effort could meet any success under capitalism; an economic plan could only work after the workers had seized power, as in the Soviet Union. ("The American Congress, Rooseveltism, and Bolshevism," H 1-5-34) Péri likened Roosevelt's manipulations to those of a sorcerer's apprentice: their results could not be predicted.

While claiming the New Deal was doomed to failure, the PCF nevertheless sought to characterize the intentions of its capitalist creators. The purpose of the New Deal was to accelerate trustification and prepare the economy for war along fascist lines, not to improve the workers' lot. Its policies simply perfected the already existing crisis measures of the American bourgeoisie. The new twist included a further attack on the standard of living of the working class with the aid of the trade union bureaucracy.

In the keynote article for future mention of the United States, Péri contended that Roosevelt's reforms sharpened the trend towards concentration of capital:

The American state is controlled by finance capital. Those who adhere to the plan do so to attempt to extract from the state whose interference they accept, subsidies and cheap credit. The plan is meant to precipitate the concentration of industry in the face of



foreign competitors. It aggravates the suffocating weight of the trusts which are henceforth freed from any shackles. It seeks to put an end to the radicalization of the masses of jobless by transforming the unemployed into semi-employed workers. ("La SFIO Americanisée." H 7-28-33)

In "Blue Eagle or Red Flag" André Ferrat explained that the suspension of the Sherman anti-trust laws was the very essence of the New Deal. (H 10-9-33) To bolster his contention he quoted the report of the Darrow Commission which had reached the same conclusion. (H 7-3-34)

The PCF did not believe the New Deal represented an effort at self-containment. After Roosevelt's monetary manipulations, it predicted a rise of domestic prices and a trade war. Péri accused the American position at the London Economic Conference of hypocrisy:

America whose representative is sanctimoniously denouncing economic nationalism, practises a policy which monopolizes its domestic market to the maximum extent while making sure it achieves primacy on the greatest number of foreign markets. (H 6-25-33)

A cartoon suggested that the apparent retreat of the United States from maximum involvement in international trade was merely a breathing spell before a new commercial offensive. Roosevelt was pictured in front of a row of battleships saying: "We're going to build another thirty-two. Then all we'll have to do is find outlets for our production." (H 7-16-33)

Alongside trustification and stepped-up international competition, the New Deal was designed to prepare the United States for war. "Roosevelt, like Wilson, will be a pacifist war president," reported one correspondent from New York. (H 7-15-33) New naval bases were being constructed in the Pacific; the army was being motorized and the air force expanded severalfold. The PCF listed a variety of economic measures as regimentative and war-like. The recovery in steel production was attributed to the needs of naval construction for the Great White Fleet. It was assimilated to analogous policies in Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. ("Preparation for War, Principal Element of Roosevelt's Recovery Plan," H 7-20-33) the allocation of funds earmarked for public works projects to the manufacturing of battleships was part of the same design. The army had recruited 250,000 youth for the Civilian Conservation Corps reforestation projects under the threat of dropping their families from relief rolls. This move, like Hitler's forced labor drafts for unemployed youth, was meant to accustom youth to military service.

Like his predecessors in Italy and Germany, Roosevelt was forced to abandon the pretense of democracy. The state was becoming more authoritarian. When Roosevelt asked for full powers to deal with the banking emergency, L'Humanité spoke of the establishment of a dictatorship. (H 3-6-33) The accusation was amplified in May

as the Communist daily reported that several newspapers were already referring to the New Deal as American fascism, and to Roosevelt as Hitler's imitator in the United States. (H 5-5-33) The army was being fused with state militias, the national guard and police forces doubled. (H 7-15-33)

To carry through his plan Roosevelt had to reduce the working class to subservience. His intentions were characterized as fascist: "Roosevelt and his Democratic administration seek a gradual fasci-  
zation." (H 7-16-33) Repression was escalating: "Under the sign of the Blue Eagle, the workers blood is flowing in Pennsylvania." (H 8-2-33) L'Humanité interpreted the codes and all compulsory arbitration as a definitive ban on all strikes. The trade unions were to provide the mass base for Roosevelt: "He seeks a social base for his fascism and woos the AFL." (H 7-20-33) After the AFL agreed to a truce in the auto industry, Daniel Renault wrote: "The trade unions of Mr. Green have become official appendages of the capitalist state under the NRA." (H 3-22-34) Racamond explained to the CGTU congress that the AFL was already a yellow union collaborating with Roosevelt, but even the AFL was being replaced by company unions with no connections outside the work place. (H 10-6-33)

The PCF staunchly denied that the New Deal had any philanthropic intentions whatsoever. The NRA was not meant to solve unemployment but rather to lower the standard of living of the workers. The Communist press drew its readers' attention to Roosevelt's denial of the veterans' demand for a bonus payment, to his cut in the pay of federal employees, and to his decision upholding a ten percent reduction of railroad workers' wages. Other articles denounced the escalating inflation and blamed it on Roosevelt's monetary manipulations, the establishment of industrial codes with hidden price-fixing agreements, and on the government-induced rise of agricultural commodity and food prices. As for the much-publicized federal minimum wage law, in real life it had not upped anyone's wages but legitimized low pay, and set the maximum wage most workers had to settle for. On the whole real wages had declined. (H 7-30-33 and 2-17-34)

L'Humanité also argued that the slight improvements displayed in the jobless figures were factitious. The improvement would disappear when the public works projects ended and workers found their old jobs eliminated by the rationalization of production. The Communist daily also criticized the meagre amount of the dole and prominently featured protests and marches of the unemployed.

Throughout 1933 and 1934 the PCF repeatedly announced the final collapse of the NRA and similar efforts of the Washington

administration. Every drop in production or increase in unemployment was heralded as a new confirmation of the predictions of Marxism. Every change in personnel of the NRA, every court ruling against New Deal legislation was further proof that planning was impossible and could not be made to work under capitalism. Upward fluctuations of the economy were described as speculative, the result of one-shot remedies, and temporary. Following are some of

L'Humanité's headlines:

The Blue Eagle Tumbles Down-Failure of Recovery  
(H 8-26-33)

- That Famous Plan. What a Failure! It's Bankruptcy!
- That's Right, Sir, Down with the Soviets!
- But I am Speaking of the Capitalist U. S. A. !

(H 10-1-33)

Mr. Roosevelt Gives Up (H 12-22-33)

Anniversary of the NRA-One Year of Bluffs and Failures (H 3-6-34)

The Failure of Roosevelt's Plan Imposes a Re-Shuffle Inside the NRA (H 4-11-34)

The Roosevelt Solution Before the Crisis-Failure of the New Deal-by Marcel Cachin (H 11-25-34)

Strikes were considered to be evidence of the worsening situation and of the failure of the much-heralded recovery.

2. Roosevelt Against Wall Street

By the middle of 1935 the PCF's coverage of the United States was becoming more nuanced. The shift was most visible in what it

said about American foreign policy and domestic politics. But it also could be seen in the economic sphere.

### The New Deal, Arena for Class Struggle

The PCF had originally denied that the New Deal represented a genuine effort to control the American economy and described the controversy over state intervention as a bogus issue. Rapidly however, it had come to characterize the New Deal as an effort by the largest trusts to organize the economy to their advantage. Roosevelt was the conscious and willing instrument of this fascist project. Some time in the course of 1935 a new analysis of the New Deal evolved. The PCF had to explain the apparent conflict between Roosevelt and the New Deal on the one hand, and the Supreme Court and a section of big business on the other.

The new interpretation of the New Deal nowhere was spelled out in precise terms. One of the results of the change in line of the Comintern was a discontinuity between various aspects of its theoretical analyses as all aspects of its world view could not be revised at once. The previously evolved conception of American capitalism had achieved a near perfect coherence in which the economic, political, social, racial, military and diplomatic facets were nicely integrated. In the new period there was no such all-encompassing approach and we find a number of contradictory statements.

In the new analysis Roosevelt was no longer leading a fascist offensive. The PCF adjusted its fire on a new target: the coalition of Wall Street bankers, the Supreme Court, and the Hearst press. The PCF now situated Roosevelt in the middle of the political spectrum. Paul Nizan warned of a "major capitalist offensive against Roosevelt and deplored Roosevelt's "concessions" to capital. (H 1-9-36) His formula indicated the existence of two separate entities, one conceding to the other, though not identical to it.

Two hypotheses seemed to underlay the revised line on Roosevelt and the New Deal. The first held that the New Deal had indeed been a tool of the trusts' fascist project. However, having achieved their goals, the trusts wished to recover their freedom of action and had turned against Roosevelt. An article by Jean Dupuy entitled "Twilight of the Roosevelt Era" seems to have been based on that assumption. (H 1-24-36) The author focuses on the AAA and shows how it particularly benefitted the large farmers and manufacturers of agricultural machinery. But these same forces now wished to eliminate the restraints on agricultural production associated with the AAA, as well as the guarantees to labor associated with the NRA. They wanted a more aggressive export policy.

The second variant on the above explanation cast Roosevelt as the arbitrator between the trusts and the working class. In this

theory the New Deal had been a compromise subject to alteration according to the shifting relationship of class forces in the country, rather than an outright fascist offensive. This view began to appear as early as September, 1934 following the summer of civil strife:

The Mass Struggle in the United States and the Results of the NRA

First of all each step in the implementation of the NRA, the elaboration and activation of the codes, shows how on the one hand the American employer class weighed with all its might to impose its will on the workers, and on the other hand how all institutions, laws, public regulations, whatever their formula, could be turned against the workers in a capitalist regime. Wages, work hours, trade union freedoms--not a single clause of the codes around which American workers were not compelled to wage extremely harsh battles. (H 9-6-34) (My emphasis-J. B.)

In a further evolution, the PCF analyzed the invalidation of the NRA by the Supreme Court as the logical outcome of Roosevelt's "capitulation before the bankers." The New Deal now was portrayed as more favorable to the workers than to capital, and as being deserted temporarily by the president for that very reason:

In truth, the ruling of May 28 is the end result of the evolution which has occurred in the course of the last few months in the policy of the New Deal. General Johnson's dismissal had been a step along the way. Roosevelt has conceded to the blackmail of the capitalist forces. (H 5-30-35)

Péri then reported the threats of a general strike in defense of the labor provisions of the NRA, emanating from Green, the textile workers, miners, and farmers, but abstained from the usual



indictment of the sincerity of these forces. The social laws of the New Deal were characterized as a definite gain, however small and insecure: "the workers want to maintain the meagre gains which the New Deal has given them." (H 7-1-35)

As Roosevelt launched his second legislative drive to supplement and replace the laws invalidated by the Court, the PCF ceased to attack him as capitulating to the reactionary offensive. However it maintained that his concessions to labor were ineffective and his economic recovery plan doomed to failure despite the best of intentions. Jean Dupuy wrote: "Whether the system of 'managed economy' survives a little longer or not, its failure nonetheless is resounding after three years of testing." (H 1-24-36) Péri was still scoring factional points against early admirers of the New Deal. But his tone was no longer sarcastic. He regretted that the real advances of the New Deal had been curtailed:

What is left of the New Deal? The whole social part of the Rooseveltian opus has been pushed back or plainly eliminated. The president had garnished his monetary reform with measures of a social character dealing with wages, prices, aid to agriculture. Some naive people chose to notice only this aspect of things and they thoughtlessly sang the praises of Rooseveltism. (H 1-8-36)

The recognition of actual pro-labor intentions or concessions by Roosevelt was a major shift in the PCF's analysis. But it still saw

Roosevelt as a middle-of-the-road figure who needed to be pressured by a strong left wing. Thus the PCF drew its readers attention to the proposals of the American Communists for unity with the socialists, for the formation of a single party of labor, and in support of the Mid-Western Farmer-Labor Party.

#### The 1936 Elections

A further evolution took place in 1936 as the Popular Front was consolidated in France. The class alignments in the United States increasingly were simplified and Roosevelt became the representative of the progressive forces. When the Supreme Court invalidated the Guffey Law which protected the miners, L'Humanité reduced the struggle to a simple bi-polarity: "the trusts against the New Deal." (H 5-21-36) A small article in total opposition to the previous line even slipped in:

In the United States-A Victory for the NRA  
and President Roosevelt-Panic on Wall Street-  
Tennessee Valley Authority

It is well known that the plan of the Tennessee  
practically institutes state ownership of the waterfalls.  
(H 2-19-36)

In June, 1936 Paul Nizan commented on the program adopted by the convention of the Democratic Party: "It is clear that we are faced with a compromise between the conservative and the 'radical' elements of the party." While maintaining that there were definite

differences between the Republican and the Democratic candidates, he reported that the Communists were placing their hopes in the Farmer-Labor Party and similar formations. (H 6-28-36) But the following day L'Humanité reported that Roosevelt had made a speech in Philadelphia "protesting the capitalist dictatorship," and Nizan became more definitive: "The position of Mr. Roosevelt is more advanced than it was in 1932." (H 6-29-36)

As election day approached the PCF's support for Roosevelt grew firmer. On November 2, L'Humanité reported he had made a speech against the powers of money. (H 11-2-36) On the 3rd, Nizan asked "Roosevelt or Landon?" and added "this time the campaign is pitting the Right against the Left, rather than personalities." (H 11-3-36) The issue of the 5th proudly featured a drawing entitled "Roosevelt Reelected" with the caption "Hitler's Mascot Bites the Dust." (H 11-5-36) But it warned that Roosevelt must not vacillate.

Thus between November, 1932 and November, 1936 the PCF's stand on Roosevelt and the New Deal passed through a series of stages from unmitigated hostility to barely qualified support.

### 3. The PCF and Us Imperialism

In the process the PCF silenced its criticisms of a number of aspects of American society which previously had been central to its

view of the United States. It also completely altered its conception of the role of American imperialism in international affairs.

"The Land of Lynch Law"

In 1933, 34, and 35 L'Humanité portrayed the United States as a land of racism, repression and unemployment. The campaign for the Scottsboro Boys was waged vigorously in the pages of the Communist daily. When Eda Wright, the mother of one of the victims of the frame up, arrived in Paris for a rally, several front page articles were dedicated to the case. (H 6-2-32, 6-3-32, 6-21-32) In addition L'Humanité reported that Blacks were being denied the franchise, and subjected to frequent racist attacks. A photo showed a Negro man being subjected to the whip. (H 1-22-32) This vein of articles often appeared under the heading "In the Land of Lynch Law."

Another aspect of American capitalism emphasized by the Communist daily was the brutality of repression. The electric chair symbolized the concept. Reminders of the defense campaign for Tom Mooney, and of the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti appeared every so often. One item indignantly reported that torture to the third degree had only recently been abolished. (H 3-31-32) There were almost daily reports of police attacks on strike pickets, demonstrations, and marches of the unemployed and veterans.

These articles almost invariably included attacks on the betrayals of the reformists of the AFL and the Socialist Party. On June 30, 1934 L'Humanité denounced the socialist mayor of Milwaukee for the police attack on the striking trolley workers. (H 6-30-34) The textile workers were betrayed by their leader Gorman. (H 9-24-34) The AFL had sold out the auto workers by granting a truce to the bosses. (H 3-22-34) Other targets of the PCF writers were Clarence Darrow and the NAACP for attempting to sell out the Scottsboro Boys, the "renegade" Upton Sinclair, the "petty-bourgeois Black poet" Claude McKay, and many others.

This whole vein of reportage disappeared towards the end of 1935. There was no mention of the Scottsboro Boys in 1935, and thereafter coverage of racism in the United States focused on the "fascists of the Ku Klux Klan" rather than institutionalized oppression. Articles on strikes and other struggles were still quite frequent throughout 1935 and 1936, but sometime after the fall of 1935 the authors dropped the previously mandatory attacks on the reformists.

#### American Imperialism

The PCF's change in line was more overt in the area of foreign relations. At the outset of the period under study Yankee imperialism was considered one of the more aggressive and threatening imperialist

powers. L'Humanité gave detailed coverage to American interventions in Latin America and other semi-colonial territories. In 1932 alone it listed the following crimes of Yankee expansionism: an intervention in Nicaragua, the proclamation of martial law in Hawaii, a conflict with British interests in El Salvador, a report of the League of Nations on American wrongdoings in Liberia, the seizure of Chilean nitrates, an attempt to overthrow Vargas in Brazil, and repression in the Philippines.

In August, 1933 during the height of the controversy over the New Deal, L'Humanité gave prominent place to reports from "Cuba Under the Iron Heel of Yankee Imperialism." The Communist journalists reported that the United States had dismissed its lackey Machado, and it reproached the SFIO with keeping silent about the interference of the United States in Cuban affairs. (H 8-13-33 and 9-12-33) It continued to expose American intervention in the island republic until March, 1935 when Batista and Mendieta repressed one of the last major revolt of that wave of struggles.

L'Humanité demanded independence for the Philippines and reported sympathetically on the insurrection of the Sakdals and communist activity in Manila during May, 1935.

The dispute between Paris and Washington over the payment of war debts was the occasion for a major anti-American campaign by

the Communists. Under the slogan "Not One Pfennig, Not One Sou- No Reparations, No Debts," the Communists tied the issue of French war debts to the elimination of the unjust Versailles Peace settlement. They demanded that funds allocated to repayment of these debts be spent instead on unemployment relief in France. They showed how Washington's demands were related to its drive for commercial and military supremacy. They denounced Hoover's disarmament proposals as hypocritical. Thus a June 21, 1932 headline had the United States saying: "We are in crisis; pay your debts by reducing your armament so that we can control the seas." (H 6-21-32)

Roosevelt's peace proposal was greeted with similar sarcasm. His proposal to ban offensive weapons so as to limit the risks of aggression in Europe was interpreted as a further expression of the crisis of American capitalism. Washington, the PCF claimed, hoped that its naval superiority would be relatively more valuable in the framework of such a ban. At the same time it could avoid a costly arms race. The PCF denied that there existed a category of capitalist nations committed to non-aggression and democracy, and another which was bent on expansion and war. It proclaimed "there is no friendly agreement of the great democracies but only two rival imperialist blocs." (H 5-5-33)

In the Far-East the PCF at first accused Washington of egging on Japan against the Soviet Union, and reprinted some Soviet articles explaining how Japan had nothing to gain from such an orientation. The United States also was arming the Chinese nationalists for an assault on the Chinese Soviet Republic. In February, 1932 the Communist Parties of Europe and America issued a joint appeal to the masses to halt the threat against the Chinese revolution and the Soviet Union.

However L'Humanité already on several occasions had endorsed actions of Soviet diplomacy which contradicted its own propaganda. For example, after denouncing Hoover's disarmament proposal it reprinted an article by Karl Radek explaining why the Soviet Union, acting as a state power, nonetheless would support the proposal in Geneva in the hope of reducing the burden of armament expenditures and of gaining time. (H 7-4-32)

As Washington opted against an equal partnership with Japanese capitalism and made overtures to Moscow, the PCF increased its denunciations of Japan. It did not present American recognition of the Soviet government as a result of shifting alignments in the Far-East, but rather as a further expression of the collapse of the American market. Yankee capital, it claimed, had finally been compelled to make a bid for the growing Soviet market. But



Péri warned that "the capitalists have not lost any of their class hatred for the workers state." (H 10-22-33)

In August, 1935 the State Department's protest against the participation of the Communist Party-USA in the Comintern Congress in Moscow brought back a flurry of the old rhetoric. M. Magnien wrote that the reactionary clique was once again dominating the policies of the White House. He cautioned that a rupture with Moscow would not help Washington in its rivalry with London and Tokyo. Nor would it prevent the American Communist Party from "organizing the toilers against Roosevelt's famine policy, against the all-powerful trusts, and for the victory of the revolution in the New World." (H 8-27-35)

In December Magnien made a similar reminder concerning the American attitude towards Japanese expansion in China. After stating that the main goal of American diplomacy was to stop Japan, he added:

But we must not forget that certain British and Yankee imperialists are not unfavorable to the Japanese preparations for aggression against the USSR, in alliance with Hitlerite Germany, preparations which the anti-Soviet alliance of Nanking and Tokyo is designed to strengthen. (H 12-1-35)

However these outbursts and reminders were episodes in a general drift towards a more favorable Communist view of the United States role in the world.

The PCF had become entirely committed to collective security and the League of Nations. After Washington recognized a state of war in Ethiopia, Péri satisfiedly reported:

Thus the concern of the American administration to not only avoid contradicting the labor of peace of the League of Nations, but even to help it as much as the Constitution and American foreign policy allow, is confirmed once again --because already in previous conflicts the government of the United States had not been disinterested in the action of Geneva. (H 10-7-35)

Like the socialists the PCF analyzed the situation in the United States as one of polarization between isolationists and internationalists. But at the same time as it supported the latter, it still sought to explain the class basis of the division:

In the United States today the so-called "isolationists" are vying vigorously with the the so-called "internationalists." The first represent the industrialists who produce for the domestic market. The Hitlerophile press of Hearst supports their neutralist point of view. The others represent big capital; they know that because of the complicated machinery of world trade, isolation is impossible. They advocate collaboration with all states interested in peace. (H 12-6-35)

After Roosevelt's 1936 State of the Union message, L'Humanité reported that he had denounced war and the fascist dictators who

provoke it, Paul Nizan explained that Roosevelt had become subject to the pressure of the masses and was the spokesperson for their opinions:

We will not be so naive as to believe that the era of American imperialism is over, but we can gauge the power of world public opinion which is forcing governments to speak out against war-mongering fascism. (H 1-5-36)

The following day a front-page editorial by Gabriel Péri proclaimed that Roosevelt's speech was a triple condemnation of the policies of Laval, the Popular Front's main target at the time.

Thereafter L'Humanité presented Roosevelt as a force of peace. The United States had been disappointed by the League of Nations' failure to act against Italy. (H 4-22-36) L'Humanité even approvingly reported the project for a pan-American peace organization. As the Blum government took over in France and as the American elections approached, Roosevelt more and more became the key component of the American progressive forces committed to the struggle against Hitler. His reelection was saluted as a victory for the cause of peace and democracy.

#### 4. Polemics With The Left

The PCF did not use the New Deal as a polemical instrument against the Right until 1936. Before then, most of its polemics were directed at the other organizations of the Left. The Stalinists' arguments with the SFIO and CGT over the proper characterization of the

New Deal paralleled the evolution of the Cominten's own analysis. With the SFIO the polemics were most extensive between July, 1933 and March, 1934. With the CGT they began at the same time but lingered on right into the unification congress of the CGTU and CGT in May, 1936.

"The Christopher Columbuses of Social-Fascism"

We have already mentioned L'Humanité's constant reminders of socialist deputy, Charles Spinasse's favorable views of the United States during the 1920's. In the summer 1933, the polemics against the SFIO's pro-Americanism reached a paroxysm. The Stalinist onslaught was wide-ranging. Under the title "What Have They Come To!" Cachin attacked Paul Faure for discovering elements of socialism in both Roosevelt and Hitler. (H 6-15-33) A month later he addressed the same reproach to Blum for using the word "pre-socialism" in reference to the New Deal. (H 7-7-33) Another three weeks later Péri, in the article "The Americanized SFIO," explained that Blum's formulations had now become "prudent because of the debacle of previous theories on 'prosperity' etc. . . ." (H 7-28-33) but that their essence was no less pernicious than if he had spoken forthrightly.

The next volley concerned Le Populaire's description of General Hugh Johnson as the dictator of industry, and of George Peek

as the dictator of agriculture. In fact, both were "Baruch boys," wrote Lucien Constant, in reference to the pro-Roosevelt Wall Street banker, Bernard Baruch. (H 7-26-33) Other articles poked fun at the socialists for considering the United States to be a managed economy without there having been a socialist evolution.

A book review basing itself on the studies of Eugene Varga took up Emile Vandervelde's recent work "The Alternative: State Capitalism or Socialism" in which the Belgian leader of the Second International made a few references to the Roosevelt experiment. The review accused the "socialist of the King"--a reference to Vandervelde's participation in various Belgian cabinets--of believing that capitalism naturally evolved toward collectivism so that socialists needed only insure a democratic form to that evolution. This theory, the review concluded, amounted to an abandonment of the economic struggle of the workers. (H 7-10-33)

André Ferrat attacked what he called Blum and Roosevelt's panacea, "the increase in the purchasing capacity of the consumers." Blum had written that "Roosevelt had applied our principles, but too late and in an empirical fashion." Blum's panacea was a hoax, even if applied consistently, because it diverted workers from struggling for their demands and the revolutionary solution of the crisis. "

Moreover Marx had long ago demonstrated that wage increases did not forestall capitalist crises. Blum was a worshipper of common sense, not a Marxist. (H 10-9, 10-34)

The heaviest, though somewhat inaccurate, blow was delivered in L'Humanité of August 4, 1933, by Bela Kun, one of the Comintern's big name functionaries. The article was entitled "The Christopher Columbuses of Social Fascism." Written on the occasion of the Paris conference of the Socialist and Labor International, it took the whole social-democratic movement of the world at its target. The argument was simple. The social-democrats believed the Roosevelt experiment was a step towards socialism. Mussolini believed it was a step toward fascism, and Mussolini was the master of fascism. Therefore, it concluded, in supporting Roosevelt, the socialists were supporting fascism. The theme was picked up in an article about the Blue Eagle marches entitled "The Roosevelt Plan and the Socialists." The report warned: "Roosevelt's cohorts are parading in New York like the Nazis in Nuremberg." (H 9-16-33)

Shortly thereafter L'Humanité began reporting that the socialists were "confessing" Roosevelt's difficulties (H 9-17-33) and were "forced to admit" the failure of Roosevelt; wages were not keeping up with prices. (H 9-20-33) Finally, in March, 1934, in drawing up a balance sheet of Roosevelt's first year, L'Humanité noted that the

socialists either published the results of the experiment without commentary or remained entirely silent. Thereafter direct attacks on the socialists for being in favor of Roosevelt's economic policies ceased.

Although one could not lament the end of Bela Kun's stupid diatribes against social-fascism, L'Humanité's subsequent silence at a time when the socialists gradually were becoming less critical of Roosevelt was scarcely an improvement.

"The Ideal of the Reformist Bureaucracy"

The PCF's attacks against the CGT leadership followed much the same pattern as those against the socialists. But they were not discontinued as early as the latter. The PCF could draw on a much more substantial and long-standing identification of the CGT with America. Thus in 1932 L'Humanité attacked the CGT's support for Hoover's disarmament plan as a prolongation of its past subservience to American diplomacy:

Long ago, Jouhaux officiating for the minister of Armaments, Albert Thomas, tried to bind the workers movement to the chariot of the president of the Republic of the United States: Wilson. During the last National Council of the same CGT, Jouhaux, officiating for the minister of War, Paul Boncour, tried to tie the proletariat to the chariot of the president of the United States: Hoover--that is to say to the chariot of imperialism. "  
(H 10-7-32)

The PCF's criticisms of the CGT were thus a continuing affair. But

the barrage of attacks became more dense with the controversy over the New Deal. On June 15, 1933, L'Humanité criticized Le Peuple for announcing that both Hitler and Roosevelt were adopting an orientation hostile to big capital. Thereafter the Communist press usually attacked the CGT along with the socialists. On August 1, the International Federation of Trade Unions which had just held a conference, was taken to task. Walter Citrine, the head of the British Trade Union Congress, had said from the podium of the conference that Roosevelt was applying the program of the IFTU. L'Humanité's front page bellowed "Roosevelt Has Replaced Marx!" On the second day of the conference, Harold Butler, the secretary of the ILO, addressed the delegates and praised Roosevelt. "There can no longer be any doubt, L'Humanité wrote, American capitalism is becoming once again the ideal of the reformist bureaucracy."

In September 1933, both the CGTU and the CGT held their national congress. Cachin commented:

Jouhaux wishes to reduce working hours, raise wages, reduce capitalist profits, and all this in collaboration with bourgeois governments and the capitalists themselves. "You can see for yourselves this program is feasible, writes Jouhaux, since the Democrat Roosevelt is applying it in the U. S. A. with the help of the American trade union reformists!" We answer to these insane declarations of confidence in the representative of American capitalism, that the Roosevelt experiment (as was to be expected) is condemned. The adventure is ending with a rise in the cost of living, with an inflation



which is borne by the proletarians and the middle classes. Next we will see fascism which is already powerfully present in Roosevelt's plan, develop further." (H 9-23-33)

A couple of articles by Racamond, the CGTU leader, added that Roosevelt was imposing workers' delegates paid by the bosses, and forcing a retreat from industrial unions to local unions. (H 9-24-33 and 10-6-33)

In January 1934, the debate rebounded. The CGT leadership had rallied enthusiastically to the plan proposed by the Belgian Hendryk De Man, and adopted by the P. O. B. André Ferrat called it the "Social-Fascist Plan of Henri de Man" and connected it to Roosevelt's plan. (H 1-9-34) While the SFIO had grown cool toward planisme, the CGT became more and more fervent about it, and organized tours for its spokespeople throughout France. A front-page caricature of Jouhaux by L'Humanité of April 2, 1934, bore the caption "Yesterday in Roubaix, he praised president Roosevelt who is trying to save American capitalism." The PCF sought to draw out criticisms against Jouhaux's pro-New Deal stance from within the CGT. The May 11, issue of the Communist daily quoted such criticisms made by Daniel Guérin, in the CGT magazine for public employees Le Fonctionnaire Syndicaliste.

Following the summer 1934 strikes in Toledo, Minneapolis and San Francisco, Communist columnist M. Gautier reported that

Le Peuple was now "forced to admit" the disappointing results of the New Deal, but the CGT only concluded from this that the "social character of the New Deal should be accentuated." He added:

The recent events in San Francisco have also had a major impact. The CGT perceives that the American experiment is not likely to arouse a psychosis leading to a current of the masses in favor of its "Plan." (H 7-28-34)

During those agitated months of 1934, the CGTU went on record as squarely opposed to all "plans" except the five-year plan of the Soviet Union. It sought to disassociate itself from and discredit the label of "planisme."

The CGTU is against all "plans of renovation" which inevitably require, in order to be implemented, collaboration with capitalism, sole cause of the proletariat's misery.

It energetically counterposes to them a program of demands that rallies the working masses to the struggle against the effects of the regime, against the regime itself, and against its exacerbated manifestations, fascism and war. (H 7-28-34)

The New Year 1935 message by Marcel Cachin was "1935! Against the Plans of Roosevelt, De Man, Jouhaux." (H 1-1-35) Theoretical refutations of planisme by Lucien Constant amplified the front page editorial.

Then a shift took place. As the prospects of a fusion between the CGTU and CGT drew nearer, the PCF became concerned that there should be no contradiction between the unified CGT's platform

and that of the newly born Popular Front. The Popular Front's economic planks included no structural reforms which might have alienated the financially conservative Radical Party.<sup>2</sup> By contrast the CGT leadership had identified itself so completely with the concept that a plan of structural reforms was the only solution to the crisis and to the rise of fascism that it could not renounce that stand easily.

At first the CP argued that the unified CGT simply should adopt as its platform the program of the Popular Front. But Jouhaux convincingly replied that whereas a limited program made sense for the Popular Rally because it was an electoral bloc of several classes, the unified CGT would be an organization exclusively composed of wage earners with their own distinct class interests and would need its own class program. Jouhaux proposed that the already existing Plan of the CGT be adopted as the program of the unified CGT.

The PCF then appealed to all sides to sacrifice their own particularities to the common good. But the sacrifice demanded was unequal. The CGT would have to renounce its plan whereas the CGTU had nothing comparable to renounce. The CGTU congress of September, 1935 sought to deal with this problem by adopting its own--and short-lived--"Plan of Economic Salvation and Social Defense."<sup>3</sup> Racamond explained to the delegates:

None of you can believe that the CGTU is anti-planiste. To the contrary, it has supported with all its strength the first plan proposed to the working masses, the only one which was actually realized in practice, the five-year plan of the U. S. S. R. (H 9-28-35)

Finally the unification congress of the CGT and CGTU took place in March, 1936. It adopted a compromise resolution which endorsed both the Popular Front and the Plan of the CGT. From then on, L'Humanité abstained from sharp polemics against the New Deal, but it did continue for a while to reply to those CGT leaders who, in the eyes of the PCF, took the initiative in spreading illusions about the Roosevelt experiment. Thus CGT leaders Delmas and Belin, who had spoken favorably of the New Deal at the CGT unification congress were duly criticized in the pages of L'Humanité.

Following the unification, the PCF sought to defuse the polemic. In the May 23, 1936, issue of L'Humanité, Benoît Frachon, now a secretary of the unified CGT, found a formula which could allow disassociation from Roosevelt when necessary, while avoiding doctrinal squabbles with the PCF's new partners:

Neither Van Zeeland, nor Schacht, nor Roosevelt  
A Policy of Popular Front  
The CGT simply places itself in the framework of  
the French experiment. (H 5-23-36)

In the next few years, Jouhaux's pro-Roosevelt stance was not to be a bone of contention with the PCF, quite the contrary.

CHAPTER V  
CONCLUSION

The balance sheet of the French Left's efforts to analyze the United States under the New Deal and educate the French working class to the lessons of the experience reveals many shortcomings.

In 1932 the CGT, SFIO, and PCF's views of the United States encompassed a wide spectrum of opinion. These views took as their starting point the economic model represented by American capitalism. But even in the case of the CGT, where the most favorable observers were to be found, the depression had limited considerably the appeal of the American model. The SFIO and PCF were quite vociferous in their denunciation of American capitalism. Of the four years under consideration in this study, the United States' standing was lowest, in all three organizations, in 1932.

The subsequent evolution of the CGT, SFIO, and PCF's views followed a generally similar pattern. The enactment of the First New Deal legislation provoked a first motion toward greater sympathy. In the CGT it unleashed real enthusiasm. In the SFIO it affected the right wing of the party more profoundly than the remainder, causing a wide differentiation and a heated debate. Yet in spite of these

differences, all the socialists recognized some improvements. In the PCF, the effect was delayed substantially and only appeared in late 1934 when the PCF recognized that some laws of the New Deal could be used by the workers to their advantage if they waged a militant struggle. In the meantime the PCF remained resolutely anti-American and even redoubled its invectives against the SFIO and CGT as it found itself more isolated.

In 1934 the failure of the New Deal to improve seriously the crisis in the United States, and the strike wave which ensued, caused a movement of recoil among the French Left. The rise of the American workers was paralleled in France by a radicalization reflected in the massive February 12, 1934 anti-fascist demonstration and the campaign against the austerity laws. As a result even the CGT had to insist on the distinctions between its own Plan and the New Deal, and express reservations towards the latter. The SFIO restrained the most friendly speculations by its right wing members and focused the attention of its followers on the upsurge of the American labor movement. The PCF was confirmed in its intransigent hostility to the New Deal. But its diatribes against social-fascism of 1933 had been so virulent that even the intransigent hostility of 1934 seemed to represent a lessening of the Communists' polemic against "Americanism."

1935 was the year of decisive transition. Across the Atlantic the legislation of the Second New Deal and Washington's increasing antagonism towards the Axis powers offered the apparent basis for more open support of the United States by the Left. In France the organizations of the Left were undergoing changes which would make them more receptive to that orientation. The PCF was implementing its turn towards the Popular Front. In the face of increased electoral support and the possibility of acceding to power, the SFIO more and more insisted on the distinction between its ultimate socialist program which it downplayed, and its immediate proposals for a government by the socialist party and its allies. The CGT was angling for a prominent part in this project and drawing closer to the Popular Front. At the same time the external fascist threat acted as a compelling argument for a diplomatic and military alignment of the "democratic" powers.

By the end of 1935 the New Deal had acquired a new image in the French Left. It incarnated the possibility of combining limited economic reform within the framework of capitalism with participation in a multi-class front against fascism on the national and international levels. In this respect all three organizations supported the New Deal with equal fervor.

But within the context of support, a number of analytical differences remained. French capitalism and its representatives in the Radical Party had grown attached to financial, industrial, commercial, and agricultural structures which rapidly were becoming antiquated. In contrast, American capitalism always had been more dynamic and innovative. Thus a program which respected the structures of the French capitalists in order to enlist a section of them in the anti-fascist crusade necessarily would be more timid and conservative than a similar program for the United States.

The CGT sought to convince French capitalism to adopt the more modern and advanced American ways, but to no avail. To the mainstream of the Radicals, the structural reforms proposed by the CGT and later the SFIO seemed too costly and adventuristic. As for the PCF, it maintained a doctrinal stand in opposition to structural reforms aimed at modernizing capitalism. In addition it insisted that substantial economic reforms would undermine efforts to bring the Radicals into the struggle against fascism, and demanded that such reforms be postponed to a later stage. Together the Radicals and the PCF blocked the inclusion in the Popular Front program of several important structural reforms proposed by the CGT and SFIO.

However despite their careful theoretical preparations the apparatuses of the CGT, SFIO, and PCF were not able to force their own interpretation of the New Deal onto the French working class.



Several features of the sit-down strike of June, 1936 are reminiscent of aspects of the American class struggle which had been reported by the French Left press. Most obvious of course was the demand for the forty hour week. This demand had been excluded from the Popular Front program, and French economic experts considered that its introduction into French industry would undermine productivity disastrously. Nevertheless the forty hour week and the "American week-end" were such popular demands that the unified CFT, the Blum government, and the French employers association were forced to include it in the Matignon Accords. Without that clause it is doubtful whether the Accords would have been accepted by the workers and the sit-down strike ended. The forty hour week in France remained tainted by that illegitimate birth and in 1938 the capitalist counter-offensive was initiated with a challenge to that labor reform, first in the defense industries, and later everywhere. Years later French conservatives still blamed the shorter work week for weakening French industrial and military potential in the face of the German menace.

The interplay between the American and French labor upsurges also affected tactics. As American workers had flocked to the AFL and later the CIO, French workers flocked to the unified CGT and demanded the recognition of trade union rights inside the plant. The

French sit-down strikes of June, 1936 drew from the experience of American workers with massive picketing of their workplaces during the strikes of 1934 and 1935. There was only a small step from a massive presence outside the plant to a massive presence within. In turn the American labor movement learned from the much-publicized French sit-down strikes, and applied the tactic in struggles in 1936 and later. It is undeniable that, however involuntarily, the CGT, SFIO, and PCF's coverage of the United States had caused French workers to draw their own lessons from what they read.

On balance though, the effect of the French Left's use of the New Deal as a model for France was to narrow and restrain the aims and scope of the French workers struggles. For many decades the American model had represented in France the alternative to socialism, the successful example of a constitutional bourgeois democracy. Already in 1848 the American constitution had inspired the Second Republic and served to counter the socialistic aspirations of the Paris workers. The New Deal rehabilitated the image of American democracy and admirably suited the needs of the Popular Front's propaganda. It illustrated the possibility of improvement within the confines of capitalism and validated the inclusion of the United States in the roster of peace-loving democracies.

The reforming effort of the New Deal and America's international role as an obstacle to Axis expansion remained the major arguments of the pro-American factions which emerged after 1936. As the debate between "Munichois" and "anti-Munichois" divided the CGT and SFIO, the foes of "apeasement" in both organizations increasingly placed their hopes on Roosevelt and America. During his second government, Blum was in frequent telephone contact with Roosevelt, seeking to consolidate Franco-American ties. In 1938 Jouhaux made a tour of the United States for the same purpose.<sup>1</sup> Blum and Jouhaux's orientation persisted throughout the war years and found its natural continuation in the post-war "Atlantic" policy of the SFIO and the CGT faction that was to form Force Ouvriere. Where democratic America had been the bulwark against fascism, it now was cast in the same role against "totalitarianism."

But the pro-Americanism of the French Left was never to be as near-unanimous as it had been in 1936. In the debate over the Munich agreement, the "apeasers" of the SFIO and CGT grew cooler towards Roosevelt. They tended to see the so-called "internationalist" faction of American politics as a mere reflection of the appetites of Yankee imperialism. Their view gained substantial popular support. However, during the war the "apeasers" of 1938 fell into quasi-universal discredit, thus leaving the post-war reconstructed SFIO and

CGT in the hands of the admirers of the New Deal. It was the PCF which inherited the anti-American mantle.

The PCF's pro-American outlook of 1936 was not to be given the opportunity to consolidate. The Soviet-German non-aggression pact of 1939 was followed by a drastic reorientation of the PCF's propaganda against the Yankee imperialist war-mongers of the Roosevelt clique. During the Resistance the PCF came to accept structural reforms and nationalizations accomplished under conditions of struggle as part of its program for the reconstruction of France. But it remained cautious in its analyses of the class alignments in the United States. It is probably no accident that the French Communist Party was selected by the Cominform in 1945 to castigate the American Communists for their overly optimistic view of post-war Soviet-American relations.<sup>2</sup>

Despite extensive analysis of the New Deal, the French Left did not arrive at a clear synthesis of the changes in the functioning of the capitalist mode of production which underlay the "American experience."

Various observers did produce perceptive analyses of one aspect or another of the transformation of American capitalism underway at that time. The most incisive comments seem to have been made towards the end of 1934. A combination of circumstances freed

the Left from the dogmatic pronouncements and fanciful speculations that characterized the first appraisals of the New Deal in 1933, and the opportunist considerations that colored its later judgments. The most positive evaluations by CGT and SFIO members had to be restrained in the face of continued labor discontent in the United States. On the other hand the PCF was moving away from its sectarian invectives of the third period.

Around that time the Left did stress certain key features of the process at work in the United States: increased concentration of capital, state intervention on behalf of the trusts, continued high levels of unemployment, resumption of the arms race. The mainstream of the SFIO had sought to weave these observations into a more coherent theory of "state capitalism." However this category was so loosely defined--it included the Soviet, German and Italian economies--its opponents easily could dismiss it as simplistic. The PCF had yet to evolve its theory of "state monopoly capitalism."

Moreover when the Second New Deal legislation became known, the PCF and SFIO tended to pull back from the first tentative efforts at synthesis which they had attempted in 1934 and early 1935. Some observers have sought to present the Second New Deal as more oriented towards the breaking up of large trusts than the First New Deal. They see it as the triumph of the "atomizer" faction over the

"planners" faction which had held sway earlier. However various studies have showed that even if there were such intentions at the top levels of policy-making, by the time they were translated into legislation and applied in practice, the trend towards concentration or cartellization still prevailed.<sup>3</sup> Thus the different emphasis and rhetoric of the Second New Deal cannot really explain the failure of the French Left to pursue the investigation begun in 1934. More relevant is the blunting of the criticisms of the economic mechanisms of capitalism which was the corollary of the Popular Front orientation.

The result of this truncated synthetical effort was the lack of understanding of certain key factors and their interrelation. Although the Left did perceive the trend towards concentration and state intervention, it did not associate them with other connected phenomena. There was little discussion of the effects of the introduction of new technological processes--mechanization and automation--beyond the consumer goods sector of the economy. The large capital outlays necessary for such investments in the production goods sector implied lower rates of profit. They required increased stability of the work force, guaranteed markets, and increased state responsibility for infrastructural equipment. Even a non-Marxist historian such as Arthur M. Schlesinger recognizes that the NRA was in part the result of the demands by the business community for a form of guaranteed

prices and profits.<sup>4</sup> Ernest Mandel, in a Marxist framework, has described this aspect of the process as "the reduction of the turnover time of fixed capital and the pressure towards company planning and economic programming."<sup>5</sup> The turn of American capital towards various forms of planning, which was quite evident in the New Deal, nowhere was interpreted in the above context by the French Left.

Several other aspects of the New Deal were not apprehended in full. The high levels of unemployment were not understood as an enduring feature of the reorganized economy destined to prevail in all but war times. Correspondingly the problem of racism in the United States was not linked clearly to the need for a permanent reserve army of labor.

The tighter integration of the trade unions into the state by such laws as the National Labor Relations Act was not understood, except by the PCF in the earlier period, as a means of domesticating the labor movement and binding the workers to their corporate employers. Instead the system of state-supervised contracts between labor and management was extolled as a major advance of the trade union movement.

The Left began its long identification with reflationary policies. It did not detect the implications of this policy which already were apparent in the New Deal. It did not accept that government spending

inevitably would lead to inflation and face the government that practised it with the dilemma of a turn towards massive armaments production and trade war, or a return to austerity. Thus the moves of New Deal diplomacy in the Far-East, Latin America, and Europe were not understood as linked to the long-term needs of American corporations. Neither was the stepped up rearmament program of Roosevelt grasped as a possible line of development of the "American experience."

Finally, in the field of international relations, the French Left had inherited a Euro-centric outlook which placed the inter-imperialist rivalries on the Old Continent at the center of its pre-occupations. The conservative government of Britain was seen as a scheming imperialist force endangering world peace by its flirtations with Germany and Japan. By contrast the United States' international activities seemed disinterested and benevolent. Nowhere did the French Left even hint at the possibility that the New Deal was re-organizing the American economy in such a way that the conquest and policing of a world empire would be the only way forward for American capital.



## FOOTNOTES

To the Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Where quoting from the three left-wing dailies on which this study is based, we have included the reference in parentheses situated in the text itself. The abbreviations for these dailies are: Pe: Le Peuple; Po: Le Populaire; and H: L'Humanité. Other references are numbered and apply to footnotes gathered at the end of the study. The translation is ours.

<sup>2</sup>We have deliberately left out the opinions of unaffiliated intellectual radicals on the fringes of the CGT, SFIO, or PCF, and even of the Radical Party, in order to focus on the views expressed in the labor movement. Similarly we have not discussed the views of the left critics of the Popular Front: revolutionary syndicalists, Trotskyists, anarchists, and Pivertists.

<sup>3</sup>Jules Moch, Le Front Populaire Grande Espérance . . . . (Paris, 1971) p. 265.

To Chapter I

<sup>1</sup>See William E. Leuchtenberg, Franklin Roosevelt and the New Deal (1932-1940) (New York: Harper and Row, 1965); Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Age of Roosevelt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1957-1960). Both works include extensive bibliographies.

<sup>2</sup>Roosevelt had said in his Inaugural Address: "Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure and have abdicated. . . . The money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths." Samuel Rosenman (editor), The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (13 volumes, New York, 1938-1950), II 11-15. Quoted in Leuchtenberg, p. 41.

<sup>3</sup> The similarity with Popular Front rhetoric in France is striking. Leuchtenberg writes: "In his opening fusillade of the campaign, on a sticky June night in Philadelphia before over a hundred thousand at Franklin Field, Roosevelt lashed out at the 'economic royalists' who took 'other people's money' to impose a 'new industrial dictatorship'." Leuchtenberg pp. 183-184.

<sup>4</sup> Martin Wolfe, The French Franc Between the Wars 1919-1939 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1951), p. 105.

<sup>5</sup> For the role of the Senate Finance Committee and the Radical leader, Caillaux, see Peter J. Larmour, The French Radical Party in the 1930's (Stanford, 1964), pp. 119-121.

<sup>6</sup> See Frances Pingeon, "French Opinion of Roosevelt and the New Deal," unpublished M.A. thesis essay, Columbia University, 1962. Quoted in Leuchtenberg p. 201.

<sup>7</sup> For the history of planisme, see Georges Lefranc, Histoire des Doctrines Sociales dans l'Europe Contemporaine, (Paris, 1960); Georges Lefranc, Le Mouvement Socialiste Sous la Troisième République (1875-1940) (Paris; Payot, 1963); Jacques Amoyal, "Les Origines Socialistes et Syndicalistes de la Planification en France." Le Mouvement Socialiste, Avril-Juin 1974, No. 87, p. 137.

<sup>8</sup> For the SFIO's economic platform, see Georges Lefranc, Le Mouvement Socialiste; Léon Blum, Oeuvre, IV, (Paris, 1965); Michel Margairaz, "Les Socialistes Face à l'Economie et à la Société en Juin 1936." Le Mouvement Social, Paris, octobre-décembre 1975, No. 93, p. 87, and "A Propos du Réformisme, le Parti Socialiste SFIO Face à l'Economie et à la Société, 1930-1939," Cahiers d'Histoire de l'Institut Maurice Thorez (C. H. I. M. T.), Paris, No. 11 nouvelle série (No. 39), janvier-février-mars 1975.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the Communist Party's policy on economic matters and its evolution, see Michel Margairaz, "Déflation, Dévaluation, Reflation: La Position de Georges Politzer," C. H. I. M. T., Paris, No. 3 nouvelle série (No. 31), avril-mai-juin 1973, p. 133; Roger Martelli, "La démarche Communiste 1936-1973," C. H. I. M. T., Paris, No. 3 nouvelle série (No. 31) avril-mai-juin, 1973; Serge Wolikow, "Le PCF et les Questions de l'Etat (1928-1938)." C. H. I. M. T., Paris, No. 6 nouvelle série (No 34), janvier-février-mars 1974, p. 47, "Economie et Société: l'Analyse et la Pratique du PCF (1926-1939), C. H. I. M. T.,

Paris, No. 10 nouvelle série (No 38), novembre-décembre 1974, p. 22, "Le PCF devant la Crise (1929-1931)-les Positions sur l'Economie et leur Place dans la Politique du PCF," C. H. I. M. T., Paris, No 11 nouvelle série (No 39), janvier-février-mars 1975.

<sup>10</sup> Nationalization of the defense industries was supported by all parties of the Popular Front. Leftist propaganda had maintained insistently that private arms manufacturing had been a major cause of war. To restore confidence in a national defense policy and rearmament program, the munitions plants had to be converted into non-profit public enterprises. Thus the measure was not considered to be socialistic but merely an extension of the military procurement division.

## To Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of the CGT's ties with Woodrow Wilson's diplomacy through the AFL, see Martin Fine, "Syndicalisme et Réformisme: Samuel Gompers et le Mouvement Ouvrier Français (1918-1919)," Le Mouvement Social, Paris, No 68, juillet-septembre 1969.

<sup>2</sup> Albert Thomas had been one of the chief sources of inspiration for the CGT in the 1920's. See Madeleine Rebérioux and Patrick Fridenson, "Albert Thomas, Pivot du Réformisme Français," Le Mouvement Social, Paris, No. 87, avril-juin 1974, p. 85:

The thought of Albert Thomas had evolved. For one, from the time of the war onwards, it gradually substituted for the English and especially the German models admired before 1914, the American model and contributed to making it a compulsory reference for all thinking French people."

<sup>3</sup> The CGT views were not unanimous and aroused a controversy. An article by Jean-Baptiste Séverac in January, 1932, summarized the literature published on the subject until that time. According to him, the most favorable to America was Hyacinthe Dubreuil's Standards. Luc Durtain's Quelques Notes d'USA, and André Philip's Le Problème

Ouvrier aux Etats Unis (Paris: F. Alcan, 1927) displayed more awareness of the lack of socialist consciousness among American workers. Magdeleine Paz had written some more critical articles. We must also note the publication of William E. Walling's Le Mouvement Ouvrier et la Démocratie aux USA (Paris: Rivière, 1930) with a preface by Albert Thomas. Eugene Varga had also entered the controversy from the Communist side.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Guérin describes the rash of pro-Americanism as follows:

The success was such that it dizzied even Europe. The new religion penetrated all the way into labor. "What the United States have done, why could Europe not do the same?" had naively asked the pope of syndicalism, Jouhaux. This myopic observer had not noticed that Europe was divided and without any point of comparison with the United States, and that it would be pure folly to rationalize its economies without having first rationalized the European economy and made Europe into the Socialist United States of Europe. The former worker Dubreuil, a buffoon who gravely listened to his own words, had gone on a pilgrimage to the Yankee paradise. Even the socialists had tuned in. The poly-technician Jules Moch had rendered his verdict: the saturation of the market was "infinitely distant." His alter ego, the unspeakable Charles Spinasse who was to be the Popular Front's minister of Labor, deaf to the warnings of technological unemployment had celebrated "the progressive disappearance of unemployment which characterized anarchic economies." Daniel Guérin, Front Populaire, Revolution Manquée, second edition. (Paris: Maspéro, 1970), pp. 50-51.

<sup>5</sup> The moderate French Left had presented Washington's withdrawal from treaties and international organizations--the policy of "isolationism"--as a victory of the "selfish" interests in America. It maintained that another, more "generous" current existed in America and would eventually emerge victorious.

<sup>6</sup> Georges Boris, "Bravo Roosevelt!", Servir la République, (Paris: Julliard, 1963), p. 108; and "Enfin la France Brise les Chaînes de la Routine," Servir, pp. 164-166.

<sup>7</sup> Boris, Servir, p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> For the AFL's relation with the ILO and the IFTU, see Philip Taft, The AFL from the Death of Gompers to the Merger (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), pp. 233-256.

<sup>9</sup> See Cahiers de l'Institut Supérieur Ouvrier (Paris, 1932-1936); Roger Stasse, La Politique Ouvrière du Président Roosevelt (Paris: Librairie Economique et Technique); André Philip, La Crise et l'Economie Dirigée, (Paris, 1935); Georges Lefranc, Roosevelt Contre la Crise (Paris: Centre Confédéral d'Education Ouvrière, 1936).

<sup>10</sup> Since the Second Empire when Republicans and Socialists united against Napoleon III's pro-Confederate leanings, and supported Lincoln, opposition to racism in the United States was a recurrent theme of the Left.

<sup>11</sup> See Lloyd Gardner, Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1964); and Ronald Radosh, American Labor and United States Foreign Policy (New York: Random House, 1969).

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting to consider the CGT's hopes in the light of the following statements by Cordell Hull, and one of his aides, quoted by Lloyd Gardner:

. . . as a relief measure, he [Cordell Hull] recalled in his Memoirs, naval construction might have provided employment in coastal cities, but it was necessitated by German and Japanese expansion. "But we had to be careful neither to antagonize the isolationists at home nor to discourage those nations abroad which still strove for disarmament." "The Administration and the country," added one of Hull's aides to the Italian chargé, "now realized that this policy of disarmament was not destined to bear fruit." Hull, Memoirs, I, 288; memorandum of a conversation with Mr. Mignone, 2-5-34, Moffat MSS. From Gardner, Economic Aspects, p. 38.

To Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> For the history of the neo-socialists and of the "Révolution Constructive" caucus, see Lefranc, Le Mouvement, pp. 294-314; and Footnote 7 to Chapter I, above.

<sup>2</sup> A Pauken and Ivar Kreuger were the American delegates. They represented the left wing of the American Socialist Party (ASP). When they reported to the ASP convention the line they had adopted at the Paris international congress, they were challenged by the right wing of the party which preferred more conciliatory statements towards the AFL and NRA. See The New International, New York, July, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> In Front Populaire, Révolution Manquée, Daniel Guérin suggests that Dumoulin was close to the left wing of the party, specifically the group of the "Gauche Révolutionnaire" around that time. Dumoulin had involved himself in the polemic over Americanism. In 1932, he wrote that American capitalism was "made of ferocity, barbarism, primitive cruelty and savage exploitation." (Po 8-26-32, "Staline, Henri Dubreuil et le Capitalisme Américain"). He added: "I resent American capitalism because it is real capitalism, super-capitalism. I resent its crimes which are on the scale of its strength, of its development, and of the extension of its imperialism." (Po 9-7-32, "Les Crimes du Capitalisme Américain").

<sup>4</sup> See Margairaz, "Les Socialistes Français," Le Mouvement Social, Paris, No. 93; and Jean-Marcel Jeanneney, "La Politique Economique de Léon Blum," Léon Blum Chef de Gouvernement (1936-1937), Cahiers de la Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, (Paris: Armand Colin, 1967), p. 212.

<sup>5</sup> See Lefranc, Le Mouvement Socialiste, pp. 310-311:

The planiste current of the SFIO was all the more dangerous in that it could base itself on the planiste current of the CGT and lead to the creation of a French Labour Party which might cut the SFIO off from a section of its troops and take away a few of its elected officials. Léon Blum may have believed that Jouhaux was sympathetic to such a project. How else can one explain Jean Zyromski's thanking in the social page of Le Populaire of May 3, 1934, the secretary of the Paris Region Trade Unions, Gaston

Guiraud, for having dispelled "the chimera of a labourist movement acting on the electoral plane distinctly and even in opposition to, the socialist movement."

#### To Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> Daniel Guérin identifies a few pseudonyms in Front Populaire: "Georges Kagan, dit Constant, Polonais." See also Annie Kriegel, Les Communistes Français, Paris, 1968.

<sup>2</sup> Jules Moch has classified the changes from one program to the other in "Comparaison Sommaire des Divers Plans de 1934 à 1936," Le Front Populaire, Annexe No. 7, p. 387.

<sup>3</sup> L'Humanité of September 18, 1935, published the "Plan of Economic Salvation and Social Defense, Draft Project Submitted to the VIIIth Congress of the CGTU." Beyond immediate demands, the CGTU now supported the following structural-type reforms, most of which were to be present in the Popular Front program since they had already been cleared by the Radicals: a plan; public works; nationalization of key industries (this referred to energy and transport and not to manufacturing) and of war industries (to prevent speculation on war by private munition makers); "dethronement" of the existing Bank of France (and not expropriation of all banks); against the financing of public works by budget cuts or withdrawals from unemployment and health insurance funds.

#### To the Conclusion

<sup>1</sup> See Jacques Chastenet, Histoire de la Troisième République, IV, (Paris; date), p. 285, n. 9; and Lefranc, Le Mouvement Socialiste, p. 390, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>

The letter was signed by Jacques Duclos. See Daniel Bell, Marxian Socialism in the United States, (Princeton: 1967), p. 184.

<sup>3</sup>

See Leuchtenberg, Franklin Roosevelt, p. 163-166; Ernest Mandel supports the same conclusion in Marxist Economic Theory, Volume II, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1968), pp. 496-497; he cites two other studies: Stocking, G. W. and Watkins, M. W., Cartels or Competition. (New York, 1948); and Burns, A. R., The Decline of Competition (New York, 1955).

<sup>4</sup>

See Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal, (Boston: 1959), p. 94.

<sup>5</sup>

See Ernest Mandel, Late Capitalism, (London: New Left Review Books, 1957), pp. 223-247.



APPENDIXSELECTED BACKGROUND WORKS ON THE  
UNITED STATES USED BY THE FRENCH LEFT  
DAILIES BETWEEN 1932 AND 19361. Periodicals

The following reviews carried articles dealing with the United States, either specifically or as part of more general analyses of contemporary trends. These articles more or less directly inspire the interpretation of day to day events in the daily newspapers of the CGT, SFIO, and PCF.

For the CGT and non-Marxist Left:

L'Atelier pour le Plan, Paris

Les Cahiers de l'Institut Supérieur Ouvrier, Paris

Le Fonctionnaire Syndicaliste, Paris

L'Homme Réel, Paris

La Lumière, Paris

L'Oeuvre, Paris

La Voix du Peuple, Paris

For the SFIO:

La Bataille Socialiste, Paris

Les Cahiers de Révolution Constructive, Paris

Les Cahiers du Socialiste, Paris

For the PCF:

Les Cahiers du Bolchévisme, Paris

La Correspondance Internationale, Paris

Regards, Paris

La Vie Ouvrière, Paris

## 2. Books, Pamphlets, Essays

Background information on the United States was drawn from a number of works which reflected the increased interest in American society which developed after the First World War. We have divided these into works published before the New Deal, and works published during the New Deal.

Before 1933

Archimbaud, Léon, "L'Expérience Roosevelt," in Revue du Pacifique, Paris, 1933.

De Man, Hendrik: Au-delà du Marxisme (Paris: F. Alcan, 1929).

Dubreuil, Hyacinthe: Standards (Paris, date unknown).

Duhamel, Georges: Scènes de la Vie Future, 251st edition (Paris, 1932).

Durtain, Luc: Quelques Notes d'USA (Paris, date unknown).

Lapinski, P., Crise, Alcool, et Elections (Paris, 1932).

Philip, André, Le Problème Ouvrier aux Etats-Unis (Paris: F. Alcan, 1932).

Siegfried, André: Les Etats Unis Aujourd'hui, 10th Edition,  
(Paris, A. Colin, 1931).

Varga, Jenö, L'Economie de la Période de Déclin du Capitalism  
après la Stabilisation (Paris, Bureau d'Editions, 1928).

Walling, William English, Le Mouvement Ouvrier et la  
Démocratie aux Etats Unis, préface d'Albert Thomas  
(Paris, M. Rivière 1930).

#### 1933-1936

Boris, Georges, La Révolution Roosevelt, (Paris: 1934).

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1932-1936).

Canu, Jean: "Le Front Populaire et les Etats Unis," in  
L'Europe Nouvelle, Paris, July 19, 1936.

De Saint-Jean, Robert: La Vraie Révolution de Roosevelt  
(Paris, B. Grasset, 1934).

De Tesson, François, Franklin D. Roosevelt (Paris,  
Baudinière, 1933).

Laroque, Pierre, Les Conventions Collectives, Rapport au  
Conseil National Economique (Paris, 1934).

Lefranc, Georges, Roosevelt Contre la Crise (Paris:  
C. C. E. O., 1936).

Maurois, André, Chantiers Américains (Paris, 1934).

Philip, André, *La Crise et l'Economie Dirigée* (Paris: Editions de Cluny, 1935).

Simiand, François, *Inflation et Stabilisation Alternées: Le Développement Economique des Etats Unis (des Origines Coloniales au Temps Présent)* (Paris: F. Levitan, 1934).

Varga, Jenö, *Henri de Man et Son Plan* (Paris, Bureau d'Editions, 1934); *La Crise Economique, Sociale, Politique*, (Paris, Bureau d'Editions, 1935).

Vandervelde, Emile: *L'Alternative, capitalisme d'Etat ou Socialisme Démocratique* (Paris, L'Eglantine, 1933).

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La Peuple, published daily by the CGT, Paris, 1932-1936.

Le Populaire, published daily by the SFIO, Paris, 1932-1936.

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1954-1972.)

Boris, Georges, Servir la République (Paris: R.  
Julliard, 1963).

Guérin, Daniel, Front Populaire, Révolution Manquée,  
First Edition, (Paris: 1963).

Moch, Jules, Le Front Populaire, Grande Espérance . . .  
(Paris: 1971).

Thorez, Maurice, Fils du Peuple, Edition revue et mise a  
jour (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1960).

## Other Books

## On France

Chastenet, Jacques, Histoire de la Troisième République,  
7 vol. (Paris, Hachette, 1952-1963).

Colloque sur "Léon Blum, Chef de Gouvernement (1936-  
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Colton, Joel, Léon Blum, Humanist in Politics (New York,  
1966).

Kriegel, Annie, Les Communistes Français, Essai  
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Larmour, Peter J., The French Radical Party in the  
1930's (Stanford, 1964).

Lefranc, Georges: Histoire des Doctrines Sociales dans  
l'Europe Contemporaine (Paris: 1960); Histoire du  
Front Populaire (Paris: 1965); alias Jean Montreuil,  
Histoire du Mouvement Ouvrier en France-Des  
Origines à Nos Jours (Paris: 1959); Le Mouvement  
Socialiste Sous la Troisième République (Paris:  
1963).

Wolfe, Martin, The French Franc Between the Wars (New  
York, 1951).

### On Franco-American Relations

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Crane Brinton, C., *The Americans and the French* (Cam-

bridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

Ansermoz-Dubois, Félix, *L'Interprétation Française de*

*la Littérature Américaine d'Entre-Deux Guerres*

(Lausanne, 1943.)

Rémond, René, *Les Etats Unis Devant l'Opinion Française*

1815-1852 (Paris, 1962).

McKay, Donald, *The United States and France* (Cambridge:

1951).

Sommer, Walter, *Die Weltmacht USA Im Unteil der*

*Franzosischen Publizistik 1924-1939* (Tübingen,

1967).

### On the New Deal

Derber, Milton and Edwin Young, *Labor and the New Deal,*

(Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1957).

Einaudi, Mario, *Roosevelt et la Révolution du New Deal*

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Diplomacy, (Madison, 1964).

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New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row,  
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de la Planification en France," in Le Mouvement

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