

# THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS MEET

By YVES MOREAU

Paris (by cable).

THE tenth congress of the French Communist Party was held in Paris during the last week of June. It was a magnificent assemblage which recorded the fact that the French Communists have the largest party in the country and that its membership totals 906,627. In the halls where the congress took place were the portraits of Gabriel Peri, Pierre Semard, Felix Cadras, Barthelmy Ramier, Charles Nedelec, Georges Wodli, Daniele Casanova—all heroes who were either executed by the Nazis or assassinated by Vichy. Among the 1,300 delegates to the congress eighty-two were old members rescued from Nazi extermination camps, 187 were former prisoners of war, and 378 had spent time as political prisoners in German and Vichy dungeons.

The record of the Communist Party is known to the whole nation. Despite its illegal status in 1939, it nevertheless continued to battle the French capitulators. In 1940, when France was invaded by the Nazis, the French Communists were the first to rush to the defense of their country at a moment when all other parties had collapsed. The Party played a leading role in preparing and directing the national insurrection—an insurrection to which General Eisenhower paid great tribute as having aided the Allies move rapidly toward victory in France. The feeling of French workers for the Communist Party was expressed in the hundreds of messages sent to the congress. There were also many delegations that came to say how much the French people appreciated the Communist Party and its enlightened and heroic leadership. A young Breton girl in native costume brought a basket of her farm products and embraced Marcel Cachin, the editor of *L'Humanite* and an old and beloved comrade who was the first signer of the historic call to insurrection in Paris. There was a delegation of porters from the markets, all of them physically strong and powerful men. They were dressed in their characteristic blue blouses and large brimmed hats and they came to offer fruit. There was Marcel Prenant, a professor at the Sorbonne and author of the well known book *Biology and Marxism*, who had just been repatriated from an extermination camp. There were many other

visitors who brought tokens of their friendship for the Communists.

Those at the congress listened to many reports dealing with the future of France. Maurice Thorez, the Party's secretary, spoke for almost five hours. Andre Marty discussed the need for a national constituent assembly. Jacques Duclos spoke on the unity of the French working class as the basis of a union of all Republicans. In a constructive plan, Thorez accented the necessity of renewing commerce outside of France in order to protect France's position in the world market and not let her domestic commerce be crushed by foreign rivalry. After outlining the critical state of France's internal economy,



Thorez spoke forcibly against those who oppose increasing France's stock of tools from abroad. He emphasized that expanding production was the primary question of the moment and the "first condition of our greatness." He denounced the trusts and the monopolists who, after collaborating with the enemy, are now doing everything to sabotage production and economic recovery. He praised the program of the National Resistance Council, which saw the need to liquidate quickly the last vestiges of Vichy and to nationalize the great means of production and exchange. Thorez, along with Waldeck Rochet and other speakers also reported on the rehabilitation of the farmers and defense workers. They called for the establishment of democratic fiscal laws, the confiscation of the property of traitors and the nationalization of the credit system.

The halls of the congress were decorated with banners reading "The source of all sovereignty is the people." Other banners quoted from the "Declaration of the Rights of Man." Andre Marty pointed out that failure to apply these principles leads a country to disaster. "It is time," he said, "that the provisional government give way to a legal government; and it is only right that the government be that which expresses the will of the people." After hearing Marty, the congress expressed its deep desire for a national election.

Jacques Duclos, hailed by repeated cries of "Unity! Unity! Unity!" analyzed the charter of unity elaborated by the Communist Party's Central Committee, which projected the establishment of a single French workers' party founded on scientific socialism and organized according to the principles of democratic centralism. The congress approved, moreover, proposals to be made to the Socialist Party to develop without delay united action between the two parties to the maximum. He showed how the unity of the working class could lead to the unity of all republicans and is thus the indispensable base of France's rebirth.

The problems of France's foreign relations occupied the congress for a long time. The unity of the leading Allies was hailed as the condition for assuring a durable peace. Thorez recalled that "we ought not to forget that in order to chase the Germans from our land, Allied aid was necessary. We will again have need of the cooperation of our friends and Allies. This should bring an attitude of modesty and prudence instead of vain talk of France's greatness." After greeting the results of the San Francisco Conference, Thorez insisted on the necessity of destroying the base of German fascism in accordance with the Yalta agreement. German war industry must be diminished and controlled and the monopolists and trusts suppressed. He explained how the international cartels, which have not resigned themselves to Hitler's defeat, will try to take up again in Germany and permit Germany's rearmament. On reparations, Thorez favored payment in kind and utilization of German manpower for reconstruction.

Another outstanding Communist, Florimond Bonte, also devoted himself to international questions. He showed that French foreign policy should not be words of "prestige," nor of dangerous power blocs, but should be a policy expressing confidence in the people and not dependent on reactionary groups. When he said that a realistic policy of collective security must be based primarily on the union of the three great powers to guarantee peace and liberty, the halls of the congress roared with cheers.

This congress of Communists will live for many years in the memory of the French working class.

# CHINESE WAR DIARY

By M. MOSKVIN and V. PETRENKO

THE rain was falling in a fine autumn drizzle as we rode out on to the Kunming Highroad. Our Chevrolet moved along at the rate of twenty-five to thirty miles an hour. About two hours later we began to overtake pedestrians. Judging by the badges they wore they were Chinese soldiers. They were a sorry sight. Gaunt, worn out, barefooted or in straw sandals, they barely dragged their feet along. They wore shorts and khaki tunics. In addition to a rifle and bullet pouch, each carried a knapsack on his back and had a rolled blanket strapped across his shoulder. Later we met stretcher-bearers carrying wounded soldiers. Evidently we had reached the tail end of a large military unit.

Our car was held up for several minutes near a group of soldiers who were resting. In conversation we learned that they belonged to a Chinese army that was marching into the province of Hunan. Thousands of coolies constituted the baggage train. They carried everything from baskets containing staff papers to kitchen cauldrons and boxes of ammunition. Riding down the column we counted no more than twenty motor trucks and three passenger cars, six pieces of artillery of different calibres, and several mortars. As regards technical equipment, the Chinese army has nothing to boast about.

The soldiers were of the most diverse ages. We met eighteen-year-old lads and fifty-year-old veterans. Some of them were so exhausted that they could barely keep on their feet. We saw men lying by the roadside obviously incapable of going on further. The junior and medium rank officers did not appear to be in much better shape. They all marched along in silence, with downcast eyes, bent by the burden of life on the march. This was a real front-line army, the like of which may be met with on any sector of any war area in China.

Not all Chinese troops are like this, however. The Republic possesses armies that are far better constituted, armed and equipped; but these are in the rear. Take, for example, the army of Hu Tsunan, which we saw in Sian. It consists of several units constituted entirely of physically fit young men, who are well clothed and equipped with modern types of weapons. These soldiers are

fed much better than the men in the armies at the front. The same can be said of the troops quartered in the province of Szechwan, and of the units directly under the command of the Army Committee. These troops have not set eyes on the enemy almost throughout the entire period of the war. Their function is to "guard the tranquillity" of the rear, to blockade the Special Border Region, i.e., to carry out "special tasks" as the Chinese leaders call it.

WE ARRIVED in Kunming late at night. In the morning we went to look round the town. In the streets, in the shops and in offices we saw plenty of young, sturdy, well-fed men, and we could not help recalling the exhausted soldiers we had seen the day before. We saw the same picture in other towns besides Kunming. Hundreds of salesmen were in the shops, bored to death because they had nothing to do. And how many shops there were! It was often difficult to tell who were the buyers and who the sellers. On visiting government offices we met an enormous number of men of military age. If the staffs of these offices were reduced by only twenty or thirty percent, and if those released were called up for the army, scores of divisions could be formed.

Why were they not in the army?

We were told that it was all the fault of the law. The law, it appears, prohibits the conscription not only of persons employed in government offices, but also of those employed in private commercial offices and banks. To evade military service it is not even necessary to be employed in any of these offices; all one needs is an exemption paper. To put it more plainly, as an official in Chengtu explained to us, only those go into the army who have no money and cannot buy themselves off. The question as to who is to go into the army and who is to be exempted is decided by the recruiting officer and the *paodzya* (foreman). If a conscript, or his kinsman pays a definite price in money or in kind, he is allowed to remain at home. If he has not the wherewithal to pay, he is called up, irrespective of whether he is sick, has physical defects, is too old or too young.

Often, in the streets, or on the high-

road, one meets a column of ragged and unwashed men, tied together by the wrist. You ask in astonishment: who are they? and you are told: conscripts. It appears that conscripts are rounded up, tied by the wrist in groups of three or four and sent to the mustering and training centers under convoy.

The conscripts undergo a period of three or four months' training, after which they are sent off on foot in the same manner, but in larger contingents, to replenish the units at the front.

Every modern army is a complete organism and has a uniform system of recruitment and administration. In China, however, it is different.

The armed forces of the country are not unified to this day. Very often one meets with large units which are counted in the strength of the Chinese army, but actually are troops belonging to individual Chinese generals, or provincial governors. For example, the troops at the personal disposal of Lung Yun, the governor of Hunan, number together with garrison units, as many as 200,000 men. Ma, the Mohammedan general, has a force of 150,000 men under his command. General Yen Hsi-shan, the commander of the Second Military Area, behaves as if he were the ruler of an independent state.

During the heavy fighting that took place in the province of Honan, a situation arose in which the troops of General Chang Ching-wang were being bled white. One would have thought that General Yen Hsi-shan, seeing the straits the neighboring army was in, would have commenced operations against the Japanese. He not only failed to do that, however, but even refused to carry out the order from General Headquarters to assign several units to participate in this operation.

"What are Yen Hsi-shan's troops employed for?" we asked a Chinese whom we met in Loyang.

"For the maintenance of order in the rear," answered our acquaintance significantly. "General Yen Hsi-shan is afraid that fighting the Japanese would weaken his troops, and once his troops were weakened his strength and influence would wane. Without troops one cannot acquire money, and without money and troops one cannot exercise power."

"Recall the fate of General Chang