Note to readers: Thanks for the opportunity to discuss my paper with you all. I’m very much looking forward to it. I apologize in advance for the length of my paper. As a historical paper, I struggled to find ways to cut it without weakening the argument. The main argument and theoretical framework are laid out in the first 30 pages, and pages 30-66 consist of historical exposition. If you’re pressed for time, please feel free to skip pages 9-15 and skim pages 30-48. In general, I think the second half of the paper can be read fairly quickly without losing much by way of the point—Matt.

**The Invention of Neo-Socialism: The Dynamics of Schism and Doctrinal Distinction in the French Socialist Party**

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Mathieu Hikaru Desan

University of Colorado Boulder

Email: mathieu.desan@colorado.edu

**Abstract**

The 1933 schism within the French Socialist Party is often understood as the convergence of a doctrinal revision called "neo-socialism" and a separate tactical challenge to the party's parliamentary practice. However, a careful reading of the factional conflict within the party reveals that it was the preceding tactical debate over ministerial participation that was transmuted over time into a debate over socialist doctrine. But this distinction between "tactics" and "doctrine" did not have a self-evident analytical value; rather, it functioned as an axiological operator defining the limits of acceptable party discourse, and as such was both a weapon and a stake in the factional conflict. I trace the evolution of this conflict and show that, as long as the minority faction posed no threat to the majority, all agreed that the issue of participation was "tactical" and thus safe for discussion. But when minority strength grew, the majority sought to redefine the conflict as a doctrinal one in order to delegitimate the challengers as heretics. Finally, only as the minority challenge faltered and schism became inevitable did the challengers self-consciously adopted the label of "neo-socialism." Neo-socialism was thus not a pre-constituted political heresy driving the schismatic process. Rather, it was the contingent and emergent outcome of this very process. The neo-socialist case thus suggests that in parsing the relationship between political schism and identity, we ought to pay more attention to the way in which the latter is dynamically and performatively constituted in and through the process of schism.

**Introduction**

At the July 1933 party congress of the Section Française de l'International Ouvrière (SFIO)—i.e. the French Socialist Party—three leaders of the party's right-wing faction mounted what came to be perceived as a frontal assault on the party's revolutionary doctrine. Alarmed by the rise of European fascism and the party's inaction in the face of a worsening economic crisis, they called for a revision of the party's traditional proletarian orientation. What was needed was a strong state capable of rallying the middle classes, and to that end it was proposed that the party take up "order,” “authority,” and “nation" as its new watchwords. The "neo-socialists," as the leaders of this right-wing faction came to be called, were accused of flirting with fascism and were expelled from the SFIO several months later, trailed by their followers in the party. In total, the SFIO lost 7 senators, 28 deputies, and just under 30,000 members to the schism (Lefranc 1982, Ligou 1962). The schismatics went on to found a new political party—the Parti Socialiste de France (PSdF)—with “neo-socialism” as its doctrinal basis.

The 1933 schism has commonly been referred to as the "neo-socialist schism," and it is often presumed that the schism was provoked by the neo-socialists' doctrinal revision. The historian Daniel Ligou, for example, has claimed that the "crisis of confidence in democracy" represented by neo-socialism was "at the origin of the schism" (Ligou 1962: 390). Likewise, Dan White has suggested that the core of the factional conflict within the party was the neo-socialists' fundamental challenge to Marxist doctrine (White 1992: 104).

In fact, the schism was precipitated by something else—namely, the repeated indiscipline of the party's parliamentary group, a majority of which was aligned with the right-wing party faction advocating collaboration with the center-left Parti Radical. The schism was the culmination of a long factional conflict within the party between “participationists,” as those who favored socialist ministerial participation in bourgeois governments were called, and the “anti-participationist” party majority. The neo-socialists were not technically expelled for their doctrinal heresy, but rather for their refusal to follow the will of the party majority on questions of parliamentary strategy.

If neo-socialism in itself was not the proximate cause of the 1933 schism, then what role did it play? Specialists on French socialism have tended to interpret the schism as the conjunction of two parallel challenges to party orthodoxy. On the one hand were reformist parliamentarians whose objections to the party line were largely tactical—the party's attitude towards ministerial participation foremost among these objections. On the other hand were supposedly authentic neo-socialists, who "demanded a complete revamping of Socialist theory and action" (Colton 1966: 82). In the words of Stanley Grossman, the "Neo-Socialist split of 1933 combined those elements in the party favoring participation with elements favoring a more basic doctrinal revision" (Grossman 1985: 48). According to this view, the 1933 schism was driven by two concurrent challenges to the party line, one tactical and the other doctrinal. If the expulsions were ostensibly triggered by the participationists' intransigence over tactics, the neo-socialists' doctrinal revision was a separate but no less significant factor in splitting the party. In other words, if tactical differences were the proximate cause of the schism, underlying doctrinal differences constituted its ultimate cause.

The above interpretation is only partially correct. By the time of the schism in November 1933, neo-socialism had indeed come to represent a doctrinal alternative to the traditional socialism of the SFIO. But the historiographical tendency has been to unduly hypostasize the distinction between doctrinal heretics and reformist parliamentarians, as if the neo-socialists were an always-already constituted heretical group, and neo-socialism a coherent doctrinal challenge emerging ready-made from the heads of its founders. In this view, the dissident discourses pronounced at the 1933 party congress were only the expression of a pre-existing will to doctrinal revision.

Prevailing accounts of the 1933 schism have thus tended to reify neo-socialism. If neo-socialism linked up with the participationist dissidence within the SFIO, their histories are nonetheless seen as essentially distinct, the latter having to do with diverging tactical assessments of the political opportunity structure and the former concerning more fundamental points of doctrine. Another feature of the prevailing accounts of neo-socialism's relation to the 1933 schism, then, has been to take this analytical distinction between tactics and doctrine for granted.

The 1933 “neo-socialist” schism is interesting not because it is unique, but because extant historical accounts of it reproduce the biases in the sociological literature on schisms more generally—namely, the tendency to treat internal organizational heterogeneity statically. Though the literature focuses on the conditions under which such heterogeneity becomes schismatic, much less attention has been paid to the ways in which internal classifications and the meanings attached to them can be dynamically altered through the schismatic process itself, generating new identifications. The 1933 schism, I contend, is an especially fruitful case for critically examining the relationship between factional conflict, the process of schism, and doctrinal heresy.

Contra the prevailing accounts of the schism, I argue that the history of neo-socialism was inseparable from the history of the factional conflict over ministerial participation, inscribed as it was from the beginning within this conflict. The neo-socialists were not an identifiable group until 1933, before which neo-socialism as such, i.e. as a self-conscious and widely recognized doctrinal heresy, did not exist. Before being labelled heretics, the neo-socialists-to-be were in fact fervent participationists, focused principally on re-orienting the SFIO's parliamentary action. Neo-socialism was not a ready-made doctrinal alternative, but was collectively elaborated in and through the factional conflict over ministerial participation. It only came to be recognized as a political doctrine distinct from traditional socialism once the factional conflict reached a point such that a schism became inevitable.

Crucial to this process was the discursive mobilization of the distinction between tactics and doctrine within the SFIO. I do not assume that this distinction has any analytical value, such that some issues are considered inherently tactical (e.g. participation) and others doctrinal (e.g. neo-socialism). I argue instead that the distinction functioned within the party as an axiological operator, i.e. as a polemical device defining the limits of legitimate discourse (Sapiro 2004). The SFIO considered its doctrine to be sacrosanct, yet the line dividing doctrine and tactics was fluid. Thus whether what came to be labeled as "neo-socialism" constituted a doctrinal heresy or was instead simply a tactical argument for ministerial participation was not self-evident, but was instead the object of a classification struggle within the party.

The classification struggle over the meaning of neo-socialism was an element in the long factional conflict over ministerial participation, and its outcome depended on the factional balance of forces. Thus I show that so long as the party incumbents hostile to participation were secure in their majority, it could be agreed that the factional debate concerned only a tactical question. But as the challenge from the participationist faction grew and threatened to overturn this majority, the party’s left-wing faction began accusing the participationists of a doctrinal heresy in order to delegitimize them. At first, the neo-socialists resisted this label and insisted on their doctrinal fidelity. It was only when a schism became a near certainty after the participationists' stubborn bid for party supremacy was decisively dashed and party leader Léon Blum entered the fray that a segment of the party right began to explicitly recast their challenge as a doctrinal one. Indeed, "neo-socialism" as a term became widely used and, more importantly, began to be adopted by the dissidents themselves only several months before the schism was consummated. What started as a tactical disagreement was thus transmuted into a doctrinal controversy following the ebb and flow of the factional conflict. What was initially a polemical label imposed on the dissidents as a means to discredit them became for them the foundation of their new political identity, precisely at a point when a new political identity was necessary. Neo-socialism's existence as a coherent and self-conscious revision of socialist doctrine was thus less a cause of the 1933 schism than its product.

**The SFIO and Its Doctrine**

*Doctrine and Socialist Identity*

The 1933 schism in the SFIO was preceded by a larger schism in 1920 that resulted in the creation of the Parti Communiste Français (PCF). Tony Judt (1976, 1986) has pointed out that the dynamic following the 1920 socialist-communist schism, rather than freeing the SFIO to embrace a reformist vocation, instead compelled it to anxiously prove its own revolutionary credentials. Besides being anathema to the many self-styled revolutionaries remaining within the SFIO, a move to the right would have been complicated by the solid implantation of the Radicals on the center-left of the political spectrum. To its left, the SFIO was in danger of losing much of its proletarian base to the PCF. The SFIO's solution to this dilemma was to repeatedly reaffirm its doctrinal fidelity to the founding principles of the old SFIO, both as a bulwark against any backsliding to its right and as a demonstration of its rightful inheritance of the true revolutionary socialist tradition.

What was the nature of this doctrine? The old SFIO was formed—at the prodding of the 1904 Amsterdam Congress of the Second International—with the 1905 merger of several competing parties representing the socialist movement’s reformist and revolutionary wings (Ansell 2001, Lefranc 1963). The resulting “Unity Pact” declared:

The Socialist Party is a class party whose goal is to socialize the means of production and exchange, that is to say to transform capitalist society into a collectivist and communist society, and whose means are the economic and political organization of the proletariat. By its goal, by its ideal, by the means it employs, the Socialist Party, all the while pursuing the realization of immediate reforms demanded by the working class, is not a party of reform, but a party of class struggle and revolution.[[1]](#footnote-1)

This unequivocal affirmation of the revolutionary class character of the party was accompanied by strict party control over socialist parliamentarians, enjoining them for example to vote against all bourgeois budgets. At the most basic level, the party's doctrinal inheritance was of a proletarian party committed to social revolution.

Nonetheless, in a 1908 party congress resolution that came to be seen as an equally authoritative doctrinal statement, the party effectively acknowledged the revolutionary value of reforms, thereby attempting to reconcile the revolutionary and reformist tendencies in the party. So while socialist deputies were reminded of their duty to oppose the bourgeois regime, this did not preclude them from fulfilling an equal obligation to defend and extend political liberties and to support reforms that would benefit workers. Until revolution came on the agenda, the party's immediate task was to prepare for a future revolutionary event through propaganda work and, in the meanwhile, to pursue reforms within the bourgeois republican framework.

It is tempting to see in this hedging between revolution and reform a sign of doctrinal incoherence. This, however, misses the point. If, as Judt argues, the 1905 merger necessarily glossed over profound differences among party factions, it was nonetheless "precisely *because* the foundations of socialist unification were so shaky" that "there was a tendency to make a fetish of the principle of unity" (Judt 1986: 116). It was, in other words, precisely the deceptive simplicity of its propositions and the ambiguous relation of reform to revolution within it that allowed doctrine, in 1920 as in 1905, to become "the cement of the organization" (Bergounioux and Grunberg 2005: 90). For the party left, doctrine guaranteed the party’s revolutionary vocation, whereas for the party right it gave meaning and direction to its pursuit of reforms.

A certain vulgarized form of Marxism, codified into doctrine, thus became a factor of unity in an otherwise divided party. Doctrine’s importance to the party's self-conception can be gleaned from the countless references and appeals to it in the party press and during party congresses. Indeed, the virtues of socialist doctrine were a recurring theme in the columns of Paul Faure, the party’s orthodox secretary-general. For example, in one of his typical panegyrics to doctrine in the party newspaper, he wrote that doctrine was "our only reason for being, our 'guardian angel' that protects us against our own errors and possible weaknesses, the pure goddess whose golden robe is never tarnished by desertions or betrayals and by which are illuminated our acts, our thoughts, are harbored our hopes and without which, for us, the present cannot be explained nor the future understood."[[2]](#footnote-2)

Doctrine was at the core of socialist identity. In the post-1920 SFIO, doctrine was both a guarantor of unity and a marker of distinction for a party that could only precariously claim either. Even after the 1920 schism the reconstituted SFIO remained riven by opposing factions and unity was secured only by repeatedly invoking the party's original doctrine and thus reaffirming its covenantal function (Ansell 2001). Challenged by a vigorously proletarian PCF on its left and anxious not to be absorbed into the bourgeois-democratic reformism of the Radicals, the SFIO insisted on its fidelity to socialist doctrine in order to prove its revolutionary legitimacy and stake out an independent position for itself on the left. Without this faith in its doctrine, the party would lack an identity, and aware of this, party leaders ritualistically invoked doctrine and zealously guarded its purity.

*Challenges to Traditional Socialism*

The general significance of doctrine to party identity did not, however, preclude individual party members from criticizing elements of the party’s revolutionary and proletarian conception of traditional socialism. Indeed, by the early 1930s impatience with the party’s traditional line began to grow. According to a number of young challengers in the SFIO, the post-World War I changes in the capitalist economy—e.g. mass production, industrial rationalization, and the formation of cartels—had rendered anachronistic an orthodox socialism born from 19th century conditions of liberal capitalism (Biard 1985). While these challengers all urged the party to adapt its methods, to varying degrees they also gestured toward a doctrinal revision. In doing so they were openly calling into question the sacred core around which the party's unity and identity were constituted, and thereby risked excluding themselves from the socialist community. And yet, as I describe below, these gestures toward doctrinal revision were not equally consequential.

Among the future vanguard of neo-socialism, Barthélémy Montagnon and Marcel Déat already had a history of challenging the SFIO’s traditional conception of socialism. As such, the temptation to see their heterodoxy as always-already an effective heresy is understandable. In a 1929 book, for example, Montagnon complained of the party's outdated doctrine that "no longer correspond[ed] to the facts" (Montagnon 1929: 10). He explicitly rejected the Marxist premises of revolutionary socialism and advocated a re-orientation of socialist theory and practice toward a frank reformism, believing that industrial rationalization had opened a peaceful road to socialism. This same process, according to Montagnon, had blunted class antagonisms and created a community of interest between the working and middle classes, such that in his view there had ceased to be any essential doctrinal difference between the center-left Radicals and the Socialists (Montagnon 1929: 165).

Trained as an engineer, Montagnon was part of a new cohort of activists who imported a managerial sensibility into socialist politics (Biard 1985, Denord 2007). Yet he remained a marginal figure within the party until the 1933 schism, and consequently his book, despite its call for doctrinal revision, did not provoke an outcry within the SFIO. Such was not the case for Marcel Déat and his 1930 book, *Perspectives socialistes*. An academic by training, by the late 1920s Déat had emerged as a prominent figure on the socialist right. He would go on to become the intellectual and political leader of neo-socialism, heading the neo-socialist PSdF following the 1933 schism. Given Déat’s centrality to the history of neo-socialism, many scholars have traced the birth of neo-socialism specifically back to his 1930 book (Grossman 1975, Sternhell [1983] 2000), with Bergounioux for example calling it the "charter" of neo-socialism (Bergounioux 1978: 396). Indeed, in his post-war memoirs, Déat himself lent support to this interpretation (Déat 1989: 234-236).

Yet to treat *Perspectives Socialistes* as a coherent articulation of neo-socialism, such as it came to be understood at the time of the 1933 schism, is questionable for at least a couple reasons. First, although the term "neo-socialism" was invoked shortly after the book's 1930 publication, it was done so pejoratively by an orthodox critic of the book (Lebas 1931). In fact, Déat initially rejected the term and the doctrinal heresy that it implied. The term only caught on several years later when the factional struggle within the party intensified. Second, likely owing to his leadership aspirations, Déat was at the time less willing than Montagnon to explicitly repudiate the doctrinal foundations of the party.[[3]](#footnote-3)

In the book, Déat did not mount a frontal assault on Marxism as such, but rather recast it in idealist terms. Influenced by the German historicist tradition, Déat rejected the rationalist materialism that undergirded economic determinism and instead saw capitalism as a "type of civilization" defined as much by the psychology of profit as the private ownership of the means of production (Déat 1930: 20). Like Montagnon, he noted that the Marxist prediction of growing proletarianization had not come true. Nonetheless, modern finance capitalism increasingly exploited the middle classes indirectly through the mechanisms of credit and the market, making them natural allies of the working class. Déat thus advocated the formation of a broad "anti-capitalist" front, which he conceived as a counter-civilization capable of morally and politically isolating the bourgeoisie.

Rejecting the old Marxist understanding of the State as the executive committee of the bourgeoisie, Déat argued that socialist strategy should be reoriented toward penetrating the State with an "anti-capitalist" spirit, with the goal of initiating a series of structural reforms to direct capitalist development toward socialist ends. Observing the growing separation of managerial authority from ownership in the modern corporation, Déat argued that formal ownership of the means of production was a less urgent concern for socialists than exercising practical control over the economy. Déat thus proposed as a first step the "socialization of power", i.e. the imposition of partial State and worker supervision over the management of major industrial firms. This was to be followed by the "socialization of profit", i.e. a redistribution of profits to discourage speculation. Finally, only after power and profit had been socialized and the political influence of the bourgeoisie thereby effectively neutralized would property be socialized along syndicalist and cooperative lines.

Several commentators have pointed out that Déat's thinking was broadly in line with emerging reformist currents within the European socialist movement, and anticipated the basic principles of post-World War II social democracy (Bergounioux 1978, Berman 2006, Biard 1985, Cointet 1998). With its call for an “anti-capitalist” alliance with the middle classes and its outline of an intermediary regime between capitalism and socialism, *Perspectives socialistes* did indeed represent a departure from socialism’s revolutionary orthodoxy at the time, and as such was sure to rankle the party establishment. Yet, as will become clear further below, whether the book was meant as a frontal “doctrinal” assault on the core tenets of socialism and as an elaboration of an alternative doctrine (i.e. neo-socialism) is questionable.

In any case, Montagnon and Déat and other future neo-socialists were not alone in challenging socialist orthodoxy. Significantly, however, these other challengers—many of whom went as far if not further than Montagnon and Déat in criticizing traditional socialism—were not branded heretics and did not become schismatics. Jules Moch, for example, rejected the Marxist prediction of increasing class polarization and was an admirer of American and German industrial rationalization, which he envisioned as a kind of proto-socialism. Arguing that capitalist and workers’ interests were in fact converging, Moch urge socialists to “confront, complete, or modify their doctrines while taking into account the new forms that the capitalism of tomorrow will necessarily take” (Moch 1927: 140-141). Yet Moch would remain a loyal party leader through the years. Like his friend and mentor Blum, Moch largely stood above the factional struggles of the party and benefitted from the prestige accorded to him for his technical competency.[[4]](#footnote-4) As such, his calls for doctrinal renewal provoked little reaction within the party.

Likewise, André Philip went on to become a distinguished SFIO leader despite having been a vocal critic of traditional socialism in the 1920s.[[5]](#footnote-5) Philip was perhaps best known at the time for popularizing the ideas of heterodox Belgian socialist Henri de Man to a French audience. This connection to de Man is significant, considering some have claimed de Man as a critical influence on the neo-socialists, particularly Déat (Biard 1985, Burrin [1986] 2003, Cointet 1998). But while de Man’s influence on Déat prior to the 1933 schism has tended to be overstated, his influence on Philip is unquestionable.

In his widely translated book, *Zur Psychologie des Sozialismus* (1927), de Man offered a psychological critique of Marxism that sought to recast socialism as an ethical movement grounded in the Christian values of equality, dignity, and justice. Translated into French in 1928, de Man's magnum opus was also given a book-length résumé by Philip, read and approved by de Man himself. In it, Philip fully endorsed de Man's attempt to "go beyond Marxism and work towards the constitution of a new doctrine" (Philip 1928: 157-158). The Marxist notion of the struggle between classes (*lutte des classes*) had become outdated, and had to be replaced with a notion of class struggle (*lutte de classe*) understood as the "revolt of the entire collectivity against capitalism in the name of the democratic ideal of the equality of rights" (Philip 1928: 42). Several years before the publication of Déat's *Perspectives Socialistes*, Philip approvingly characterized de Man's ideas as a "neo-socialism" (Philip 1928: 52). But Philip was never considered a heretic like Déat, and indeed remained loyal to the SFIO. Unlike Déat, Philip was an opponent of ministerial participation and, like Moch, generally stood outside the party's organized factions. For this reason, his revisionism could be safely ignored as a harmless idiosyncrasy.

Among de Man’s disciples in the SFIO were also a small group of intellectuals known as Révolution Constructive.[[6]](#footnote-6) The group attributed a redemptive value to socialism as a representation of the "ideal and nebulous world that lived deep within [them]." And yet, socialist doctrine had ceased to satisfy them fully (Boivin et al. 1932: 12). At the heart of socialism's crisis was that it no longer presented itself as a "total doctrine that must light up [each militant's] soul and guide all his acts and all his thoughts" (Boivin et al. 1932: 18).

Like the others cited above, Révolution Constructive rejected a millenarian conception of revolution and argued that the evolution of capitalism had rendered a progressive construction of socialism possible.[[7]](#footnote-7) Nonetheless, the group insisted that its gradualism should not be mistaken for reformism. The success of socialist construction required a revolutionary *élan* that only the party, through its elaboration of socialist culture and values, could provide. The party's task was not to prepare for a distant revolution but to effect a "permanent revolution" tending towards the material and spiritual construction of a new human civilization (Boivin et al. 1932: 231).

By aligning itself with de Man’s idealist revision of traditional socialism and by embracing a gradualist conception of socialist construction, Révolution Constructive was clearly outside the SFIO mainstream. And yet the group did not share the fate of the neo-socialists. The group not only did not provoke much controversy, but was in fact sympathetically viewed, albeit with reservations, by all factions of the party.[[8]](#footnote-8)

In the socialism of these challengers to the party orthodoxy, the proletarian class struggle gave way to a notion of the social interest, the socialization of the means of production was displaced in importance by the societal control over economic development, and to the extent that socialism remained revolutionary, it was so only in a spiritual sense.

**Explaining the 1933 “Neo-Socialist Schism”**

*Doctrinal Heresy or Factional Conflict?*

For the above challengers to traditional socialism, class struggle gave way to a notion of the social interest, the socialization of the means of production was downplayed in favor of social control over capitalist development, and to the extent that socialism remained revolutionary in their eyes, it was so largely in a spiritual sense. But not all of these challenges to led to a schism—not even the ones explicitly calling party doctrine into question. Indeed, they were not all equally threatening to the party leadership. So, for example, while Montagnon and Déat came to be regarded as the intellectual architects of a schismatic neo-socialism, Moch, Philip, and the Révolution Constructive group were spared official condemnation and remained within the party fold.

The 1933 neo-socialist schism thus cannot be satisfactorily explained by reference to doctrinal heterodoxy alone. It is clear that a challenge to orthodoxy did not lead inexorably to schism. It would be a mistake, however, to simply qualify this notion by adding various conditioning factors. Most accounts of the schism privilege its ideational dimension even while recognizing the contextual factors that mediated its development. In this view, the schism was at least in part the logical expression of a doctrinal divergence between neo-socialism and traditional socialism, and to the extent that other factors came into play it was either to hinder or facilitate this expression of what is implicitly still taken to be a prior and independent explanatory principle. The problem with this is that it presumes a selfsame and coherent neo-socialism, faced with an equally selfsame and coherent traditional socialism. In essentializing both, moreover, this view also assumes that neo-socialism and traditional socialism were always-already distinct and incompatible doctrines. This, however, is to take as given what was in fact a stake of a classification struggle within the SFIO. Indeed, as I demonstrate below, neo-socialism did not emerge ready-made as an unequivocal revision of socialist doctrine. Rather, it was only elaborated and labeled as such over the course of a factional conflict within the party in which the meaning and identity of neo-socialism was itself an object of contention.

In fact, the most significant factor that separated Déat and Montagnon from Moch, Philip, and Révolution Constructive is that the former were active in the party minority faction advocating Socialist ministerial participation in a coalition government, whereas the latter were largely opposed to this. The question of what attitude to take vis-à-vis bourgeois governments had long been a contentious one within European socialism (Sassoon 1996). But while the question had largely been settled in most countries in favor of accepting some kind of socialist ministerial presence, it continued to divide the SFIO through the 1920s and early 1930s. Indeed, in the period between the 1920 and 1933 schisms, the single most divisive issue in the party, and the one on the basis of which the party's various organized factions were formed, was whether or not the SFIO should participate as a junior coalition partner in a non-socialist cabinet. Whether or not the above-mentioned challengers to traditional socialism were considered doctrinally problematic ultimately depended on where they stood on this more practical question.

As I will show below, the birth of neo-socialism as a coherent doctrinal alternative to traditional socialism cannot be understood apart from this conflict over ministerial participation. It was the anti-participationist majority that first raised the specter of doctrinal heresy, I argue, as a way to delegitimate the participationist minority, and the latter self-consciously assumed the mantle of neo-socialism only when it became clear that their insurgent efforts within the party had failed. Neo-socialism thus did not lie at the origin of the 1933 schism; it was its emergent outcome. What had begun as a tactical debate was transmuted into a doctrinal controversy.

*The Ambiguous Doctrinal Status of Ministerial Participation*

The doctrinal status of ministerial participation was sufficiently ambiguous that both participationists and anti-participationists could claim to have doctrine on their side. The party's position on participation was supposedly defined by the party "Charter", which consisted of the 1905 “Unity Pact” (and the preceding resolutions of the Second International on which it was based) and the declarations immediately following the SFIO's reconstitution following the 1920 schism. In affirming the party's revolutionary vocation, the “Unity Pact” also enjoined the SFIO's parliamentary deputies to

refuse the Government all means that assure the domination of the bourgeoisie and its maintenance of power; to refuse, by consequence, military credits, credits for colonial conquest, secret funds, and the ensemble of the budget. (Parti socialiste SFIO 1905: 14)

The pact added, however, that,

Even in the case of exceptional circumstances, elected representatives cannot engage the Party without its consent. (Parti socialiste SFIO 1905: 14)

Thus "exceptional circumstances" were admitted under which the party's injunction could legitimately be violated. The 1905 pact explicitly referenced the 1904 Amsterdam Congress of the Second International, whose resolution defined the principles on which the unification of the SFIO was to be based. Following on the heels of the “revisionist controversy” in Germany, the 1904 Amsterdam resolution condemned revisionism and reaffirmed socialism's revolutionary vocation. To this end, it declared

1) That the Party declines all responsibility, of any sort, under the political and economic conditions based on capitalist production and consequently cannot approve any means likely to maintain in power the dominant class.

2) That socialist democracy cannot seek any participation in a government under bourgeois society, in conformity with the Kautsky resolution, voted at the international Congress of Paris in 1900.[[9]](#footnote-9)

The resolution went on to reject "every attempt to mask the ever-growing class antagonisms for the purpose of facilitating a rapprochement with the bourgeois parties."[[10]](#footnote-10)

The 1900 motion, sponsored by Karl Kautsky, and cited by both the 1905 “Unity Pact” and the 1904 Amsterdam resolution, stated that the conquest of political power by the proletariat required a long effort of economic and political organization. However, it also warned that

in the countries where governmental power is centralized, it cannot be conquered fragmentarily. The entry of an isolated socialist in a bourgeois government cannot be considered as the normal commencement of the conquest of political power, but only as a forced expedient, transitory and exceptional.[[11]](#footnote-11)

But the motion added:

If, in a particular case, the political situation necessitates this dangerous experience, this is a question of tactics and not of principle, the international Congress does not pronounce itself on this point, but, in any case, the entry of a socialist in a bourgeois government can be hoped to produce good results for the militant proletariat only if the socialist party, in its great majority, approves such an act, and if the socialist minister remains an agent of his party.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Even after the 1920 communist schism, the reconstituted SFIO maintained its intransigent attitude toward bourgeois governments. Thus, in its 1921 manifesto, the party reminded everyone that

Neither the *bloc des gauches*, nor ministerialism, condemned both by our doctrinal conceptions and by experience, will not find in our ranks the least success. The Socialist Party (SFIO) remains a Party of relentless struggle against any economic and political system that will not have recognized and proclaimed the total emancipation of the world of labor.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Together, these documents constituted the "Charter" of the party and formed the basis of its doctrine. But considerable ambiguity remained. On the one hand, the documents clearly establish that the SFIO was not a party like any other, and that it was fundamentally opposed to the bourgeois political system. Consequently, measures such as participating in bourgeois governments and approving bourgeois budgets were expressly forbidden. The task of Socialist deputies was to carry on the class struggle in parliament and vote for specific reforms, all the while refusing to legitimate the bourgeois State as such.

On the other hand, the documents left considerable room for interpretation. For example, though the 1921 manifesto condemned ministerialism, the reference to the *bloc des gauches* referred specifically to Alexandre Millerand's controversial 1899 decision to join the Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau government over the opposition of many fellow socialists. Following this controversy, the Kautsky motion at the 1900 congress of the Second International specifically condemned the entry of "an isolated socialist" in a bourgeois cabinet. But it was an open question whether this proscription covered all forms of participation. Individual ministerial ambitions stood condemned, but what if those individuals were given the green light by the party? Were participation and ministerialism synonymous, or did the latter only refer to cases such as Millerand’s?

The documents of the "Charter" also recognized the existence of "exceptional circumstances" under which a Socialist presence in a bourgeois government could be legitimate. This came with certain conditions. The "Charter" was clear that even under "exceptional circumstances" Socialist deputies had to remain under the control of the party, and that by implication the decision to participate rested with the party and not with individual parliamentarians. Moreover, the Kautsky motion stated that this decision had to be approved by a "great majority", and that participation, being only a "forced expedient, transitory and exceptional", should not be normalized or conflated with the conquest of power. What specifically counted as "exceptional circumstances", however, was not spelled out. Nor was it clear what constituted a "great majority", nor which party bodies had the authority to judge the circumstances and decide whether or not to join a bourgeois cabinet. Indeed, these would all become objects of contention in the later debate over participation.

Finally, the Kautsky motion explicitly qualified the question of participation as one of "tactics and not of principle." A salient distinction was thus introduced between “principle”—or, as it would later be rendered, “doctrine”—and “tactics.” But this distinction was also bound to be ambiguous. The "Charter" enshrined into doctrine a general hostility towards the bourgeois State. Participation was allowed, but only exceptionally, and even then, given that it could only be a "dangerous experience", with considerable suspicion. Indeed, the various documents constituting the "Charter" repeatedly condemned participation, not just for circumstantial reasons, but as an expression of the party's revolutionary identity. The 1904 Amsterdam resolution, the 1905 “Unity Pact,” and the 1921 manifesto all seemed to suggest that participation should be rejected as a matter of principle. Yet the 1900 Kautsky motion to which they all refer explicitly recognized participation as a “tactical” problem. Depending on which passages from which document one cited, a plausible argument could be made either way about the doctrinal status of ministerial participation. Indeed, whether or not, and under what circumstances, a decision to enter a coalition government with bourgeois parties constituted a violation of the “Charter,” and thus party doctrine, would become the central question that would consume the SFIO in the years leading up to the 1933 schism.

*The “Doctrine”/“Tactics” Distinction as an Axiological Operator*

If the doctrinal status of participation was ambiguous, this was due to the arbitrary nature of the “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction itself. Party doctrine was left purposefully vague, such that it is impossible to draw a clear boundary between what counts as “doctrinal” and what counts as “tactical.” This distinction did not objectively demarcate two essentially different orders of discourse, but rather served a polemical function by drawing the boundaries of acceptable debate and discursively performing party identity. The line separating “doctrine” and “tactics” was never fixed, and shifted according to circumstance. The basic structuralist insight—that meaning does not inhere in things but is relationally constituted through difference—thus applies to the “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction (De Saussure [1916] 1998, Lévi-Strauss [1958] 1963).

To grasp how the “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction operated in party debates, the individual terms should not be understood substantially, but relationally.[[14]](#footnote-14) That is, the terms were only meaningful in relation to one another. So while “doctrine” denoted the inviolable sacred core of socialist identity and “tactics” all that was profane and thus open to debate, what these terms actually signified was the relation of the sacred to the profane itself, not any essential quality of the discursive utterances that were assigned to either category (Durkheim [1912] 1995). In other words, the "doctrine"/"tactics" distinction did not point to two analytically separate and positively defined domains of party discourse, one in which conformity was demanded the other in which legitimate disagreement was permitted. Taken as a pair, “doctrine”/“tactics” fundamentally denoted a relation of difference. This distinction did not objectively denote a fixed classification of utterances, but rather the distinction between illegitimate and legitimate party discourse as such.

The “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction functioned much like what Gisèle Sapiro has called an axiological operator (Sapiro 2004, 2015). Sapiro defines axiological operators as those "ethical categories of scholastic understanding that confer on systems of cultural oppositions their 'sense', in the double acceptation of meaning and of orientation in space, in this case, the high and the low, that is to say the honorable and the dishonorable" (Sapiro 2004: 21). The social efficacy of axiological operators, moreover, lies "in their capacity to realize the symbolic unification of systems of classification or of heterogeneous types of hierarchies, in the order of values and in the institutional order" (Sapiro 2004: 21). As such, the distinctions designated by axiological operators are major stakes of symbolic struggles, as each side seeks to impose a definition of the situation in which their position aligns with the honorable term of the discursive opposition and their opponents are relegated to the dishonorable term.

The “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction within the SFIO functioned as an axiological operator in several ways. First, it ordered party debates by distinguishing honorable from dishonorable challenges to party policy. Challenging party tactics was fair play, but to explicitly challenge its doctrine was to risk delegitimation. Second, the “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction organized and gave meaning to a host of other discursive oppositions mobilized within party debates, including those between autonomy/collaboration, reform/revolution, activity/passivity, democracy/dictatorship, and realism/utopianism. In moments of relative party unity, these secondary oppositions largely remained disarticulated from the “doctrine”/“tactics” opposition. When factional tensions flared, however, factional actors sought to discursively align these oppositions in self-interested ways. Thus the meaning of the “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction and its appropriate application was an object of a symbolic classification struggle.

As I will elaborate further below, initially both proponents and opponents of ministerial participation within the SFIO agreed that the question was tactical in nature. As the conflict escalated, the anti-participationists accused the participationists of embarking on a reformist and collaborationist (i.e. with the bourgeoisie) deviation from socialist doctrine. The participationists for their part refused the terms of the debate imposed by their factional opponents, instead affirming their doctrinal fidelity and turning the accusation of deviation back on the anti-participationists. The participationists claimed that they were in fact the true revolutionaries, and that the anti-participationists were passive utopians turning their backs on the party's democratic mission. Eventually, the anti-participationists succeeded in imposing a definition of the situation according to which their factional adversaries were seen to be engaged in a doctrinal revision. That the neo-socialists themselves came to internalize this frame is an example of what Laurent Kestel has called the "successful assignation of identity" by "entrepreneurs of classification" (Kestel 2012: 139, 141).[[15]](#footnote-15)

As an axiological operator, the “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction was performative in nature. An analysis of the shifting boundaries of this distinction in the course of the participation debate suggests that certain utterances did not fall outside the bounds of legitimate debate *because* they naturally pertained to the realm of “doctrine.” Rather, they only came to be labeled as “doctrinal” as a consequence of efforts by incumbent factional actors to delegitimize party challengers. The categories of “doctrine” and “tactics” thus cannot be taken at face value analytically. As stakes and weapons in a classification struggle, their value was chiefly polemical. Dishonor was not a function of prior doctrinal heresy; to designate someone a doctrinal heretic was *ipso facto* a public imputation of dishonor.

To claim that a controversy was “doctrinal” and not “tactical” was thus a kind of performative speech act whose illocutionary force and intention was to draw a line between legitimate and illegitimate speech and define the boundaries of acceptable socialist identity (Austin 1962). The stigmatization implied by the accusation of doctrinal heresy was an act of "institution and destitution" through which an individual or group "indicates to someone that he possesses such and such property, and indicates to him at the same time that he must conduct himself in accordance with the social essence which is thereby assigned to him" (Bourdieu 1991: 106). However, as Bourdieu points out in his critique of Austin's speech act theory, the performative efficacy of this act of naming does not lie in any inherent properties of the word itself, but in the social conditions of its utterance. The ability to successfully impose a legitimate vision of the social world is dependent on the accumulated symbolic capital of the speaker, i.e. the degree to which the speaker is recognized to speak in the name of the group for which he is the authorized spokesperson (Bourdieu 1991). In other words, symbolic power—i.e. the capacity to designate legitimate classifications—is a power “granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition” (Bourdieu 1989: 23). Only one figure enjoyed that degree of recognition from virtually all SFIO members: Léon Blum, the *de facto* party leader whose synthesizing efforts in party debates were usually oriented toward saving party unity.

The label of doctrinal revisionist functioned as "a kind of curse...which attempts to imprison its victim in an accusation which also depicts his destiny" (Bourdieu 1991: 121). Yet as I argue below, the efficacy of this label depended on the balance of factional forces within the party and, critically, the partisan intervention of Blum. The classification struggle over the “doctrine”/“tactics” distinction cannot be understood only at the level of discourse, but must be seen in relation to the ebb and flow of the factional conflict over ministerial participation.

*Schism and Political Identity*

A central contention of this article is that the identification and elaboration of neo-socialism as a doctrinal challenge to traditional socialism was not a parallel development to the factional conflict over ministerial participation, but rather emerged from it. In other words, neo-socialism was not a pre-constituted political identity that stood as a contributing cause of the 1933 schism, but was instead constituted in and through the schismatic dynamic itself. This has implications for how we understand schisms more generally.

The sociological literature on schisms spans a variety of substantive fields, including the study of religion (Bruce 1990; Bryant 1993; Liebman, Sutton, and Wuthnow 1988; Stark and Bainbridge 1996; Sutton and Chaves 2004; Wallis 1979), political parties (Balinski and Young 1978; Graham 1994; Nyomarkay 1967; Sani and Reicher 1998; Schorske 1955), social movements (Ansell 2001; Balser 1997; Gamson 1975; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin 1996; Zald and Ash 1966), and organizations (Defrance 1989; Dyck and Starke 1999; Hirschman 1970; Pondy 1967). Though this literature remains diffuse, some general tendencies can be discerned. Most of it, for example, has been primarily concerned with identifying the factors determining the likelihood of organizational schism. Researchers have variously pointed to the morphological characteristics of organizations (Liebman, Sutton, and Wuthnow 1988), processes of organizational closure (Ansell 2001, Sutton and Chaves 2004), social differentiation within organizations (Niebuhr 1929), the nature of organizational legitimacy (Bruce 1990, Nyomarkay 1967, Wallis 1979, Zald and Ash 1966), and environmental factors (Balser 1997). In looking at such institutional factors to explain organizational propensity to schism, much of this literature challenges the presumption that schisms are primarily the product of ideational heterogeneity within organizations. As Gamson (1975) has noted, heterogeneity is a natural feature of all organizations, whereas not all organizations are prone to schism. Schisms thus do not simply express heterogeneity, but rather represent an institutional failure to solve the problem of internal conflict. This is consistent with one of my arguments in this paper: that the 1933 schism was not the necessary outcome of a pre-existing doctrinal conflict between neo-socialism and traditional socialism.

But if the 1933 schism was not pre-determined by doctrinal disagreements, neither were intra-party conflicts always-already understood to be “doctrinal” in nature. Indeed, my argument is *not* that neo-socialism was a coherent doctrinal revision of traditional socialism that only became schismatic once certain institutional or environmental conditions were met, but rather that the elaboration of neo-socialism as a distinct political doctrine was an emergent outcome of the process of schism itself. This highlights a limitation in the literature on schisms: though the reduction of schism to intra-organizational heterogeneity is rejected, this heterogeneity is still conceptualized in largely static terms. Doctrinal and other internal disagreements are generally assumed to be fixed, with the only question being under what conditions these fixed disagreements become schismatic. Much less attention has been paid to the ways in which the dynamics of organizational schism transmute and reclassify existing divisions, creating new allegiances and identifications.

One promising move in the schisms literature has been the attempt to develop a “process model” of group exit (Balser 1997, Dyck and Starke 1999). For example, in their critical discussion of Hirschman’s (1970) “exit, voice, loyalty” paradigm, Dyck and Starke (1999) argue that exit, voice, and loyalty are all phases in a schismatic process marked by a series of cognitive shifts shaping actors’ group and sub-group identifications. This approach is broadly resonant with a growing sociological literature highlighting the ways in which political identities, motivations, and interests are contingently constituted through short-term interactional processes within shifting local contexts.

For example, Walder (2009a) has criticized the social movements literature for treating movement motivations and identities as fixed and given, and has called instead for a reorientation of political sociology back toward an examination of the structural determinations of political identity. But in doing so, Walder urges us to rethink what is meant by structure. Against prevailing structural accounts that locate the determinants of political identity in macro-structural conditions, Walder highlights studies that emphasize local and short-term contingent processes that shaped political orientations (e.g. Markoff 1985, 1988, 1997; Markoff and Shapiro 1985; Shapiro and Markoff 1998; Tilly 1964; Traugott 1980, 1985).

 In his own work on factional struggles during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, Walder (2006, 2009b) argues that factional identities were not fixed by actors' social position, but were instead "emergent properties" of highly localized conflicts within rapidly shifting political contexts. These shifts rendered the straightforward expression of prior commitments problematic, forcing actors to make consequential choices in ambiguous circumstances. These choices in turn generated new interests, identities, and antagonisms, thus realigning the political landscape. Although an attention to local contexts in the construction of political identities is not new (e.g. Gould 1991, 1993), the central implication of Walder's analysis is "about the consequences of *shifts* within local contexts, not cross-contextual variation in their (stable) features" (Walder 2006: 740). Sudden shifts in context "can rapidly alter the implications of social position for political choice that we might otherwise expect," giving greater weight to short-term and contingent interactional processes in the construction of political identity (Walder 2006: 74).

In the same vein, Slez and Martin (2007) have put forth a model of political action that is sensitive to temporal context. Whereas a linear model of political action “assumes that all interests are fixed and that the corresponding actions are conditionally independent across time,” they argue that the substantive meaning of certain issues is sometimes conditional on past political action in a path-dependent way, such that actors’ interests can become re-aligned in time as they engage in an “iterative process of position-taking” within a structural context continually altered by the congealed effects of past action (Slez and Martin 2007:45-46).

An interactional view of how movement identities are formed in and through contentious episodes is also shared by McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly, who highlight the significance of what they call "category formation" to contentious action (McAdam, Tarrow, Tilly 2001). Likewise, Ermakoff has criticized explanations of political commitment predicated on the idea that “conjunctures precipitate latent dispositions” (Ermakoff 2008: 176). In his study of the 1933 and 1940 parliamentary votes empowering Hitler and Pétain respectively, Ermakoff (2008) instead develops a model of collective alignment that emphasizes the contingent nature of political preference formation under troubled circumstances. More recently, Jansen (2016) has drawn inspiration from pragmatism to suggest that the emergence of new modes of political practice—“populist mobilization” in his case—can be explained by what he calls “situated political innovation”—an interactional and iterative process by which collective actors confronted with problematic situations fashion novel political repertoires through recombination and experimentation.

My argument in this paper builds on the above perspectives on the contingent, processual, and interactional formation of political orientations to advance an account of schism that foregrounds its character as, in essence, a classification struggle. Schisms, I suggest, do not simply ratify pre-existing divisions; the schismatic process is what renders divisions meaningful, and on some occasions it can even constitute the very divisions that are subsequently held to be at the origin of a schism. In other words, sometimes the process of schism itself generates schismatic identities, not vice versa.

The 1933 schism in the SFIO was just such a case. I argue that neo-socialism was not always-already a coherent doctrine distinct from traditional socialism, but was only constituted as such in and through the vicissitudes of the factional conflict over ministerial participation. Moreover, the birth of neo-socialism as a novel political identity was an interactional phenomenon in that the label was first imposed by the neo-socialists' factional adversaries—successfully mobilizing the relational “doctrine”/”tactics” distinction for their own factional purposes—before the neo-socialists assumed it themselves. The identification and self-identification of the neo-socialists as doctrinal heretics was thus an emergent outcome of a classification struggle that was a stake in the factional conflict within the SFIO. It was through the dynamics of this specific conflict, and not prior to it, that neo-socialism was instituted—and thereby destituted—as a “doctrinal,” not “tactical,” deviation from traditional socialism. The invention of neo-socialism was not at the origin of the 1933 schism, but was instead its product.

**The 1933 Schism and the Invention of Neo-Socialism**

*Post-War Compromises*

The SFIO’s principled rejection of bourgeois politics was not in practice inviolable. With the outbreak of World War I, for example, the SFIO authorized the entry of several Socialists in successive wartime cabinets. This was justified, however, by invoking the "exceptional circumstances" of national defense, and the party stressed the momentary nature of this participation.[[16]](#footnote-16)

Following the war and the 1920 schism, the party reiterated its pre-war opposition to ministerial participation. So when faced with an offer to form a coalition government with the Radicals after the 1924 elections, the SFIO refused. Yet this did not preclude all compromise. Indeed, the SFIO had entered into an electoral alliance with the Radicals.[[17]](#footnote-17) The *Cartel des gauches*, as this alliance was called, did not commit the SFIO to a lasting coalition with the Radicals, but was rather a "one minute cartel" limited to the election, after which the party would reclaim its autonomy.[[18]](#footnote-18) Still, with the SFIO winning 104 seats to the Radicals' 139, the election results were such that a left-leaning Radical government required Socialist backing to survive. At the same congress where it rejected the Radicals’ participation offer, the party therefore mandated the SFIO parliamentary group, or Groupe parlementaire (GP), to pursue a politics of "support," temporarily relieving it of the obligation to vote against bourgeois budgets.[[19]](#footnote-19)

The party continued the policy of "support without participation" on and off until the collapse of the *Cartel des gauches* in 1926. By then, however, the unanimity within the party had begun to fray. For example, at the August 1925 extraordinary congress, the party was, for the first time since the war, presented with a minority motion accepting the idea of ministerial participation (OURS 1974: 21). Although the motion lost by 559 votes to 2,110, the question was not settled.[[20]](#footnote-20)

The GP refused another participation offer during a November 1925 ministerial crisis, but there was enough pressure from the participationists to revisit the question that another party congress was called for January 1926. The minority motion empowering the GP to accept future participation offers only mustered 1,331 votes to the 1,766 gathered by a motion categorically refusing any presence in a non-Socialist cabinet. However, the majority resolution stated that the party did not intend "in the present exceptional circumstances to evade the direct responsibilities of power."[[21]](#footnote-21) Thus for the first time the SFIO declared its willingness to form a government even within the framework of bourgeois society, though on condition that it would be the leading force in such a government.

In so doing, the SFIO officially endorsed Blum's distinction between the "conquest of power" and the "exercise of power". Emerging after the 1920 schism as the *de facto* leader of the reconstituted SFIO, Blum was most concerned in this period to maintain party unity and prevent another such schism.[[22]](#footnote-22) As such, he often played a mediating role in party debates, helped in this by his considerable intellectual and moral authority. Blum regularly struck a middle course between those on the party left who systematically opposed any accommodation to the bourgeois political regime and those on the party right who sought full integration into the republican political system.

According to Blum, the party's ultimate goal remained the revolutionary conquest of power, which he saw as a necessary condition for socialist transformation. Nevertheless, Blum only envisaged this possibility once the economic and political conditions for it were ripe. In the meantime, the SFIO could one day be called upon to "exercise" power, i.e. constitute a Socialist cabinet within the political framework of bourgeois society. When it came to the "exercise of power", Blum categorically declared that he was committed to bourgeois legality, and that any effort to prematurely transform the "exercise of power" into the "conquest of power" would not only be undemocratic but impossible. Blum worried that the "exercise of power" would be confused with the "conquest of power", leading to widespread disappointment among socialists expecting a revolutionary transformation. Yet this risk was an inevitable consequence of the party's involvement in the parliamentary game. Sooner or later, but prior to the development of a revolutionary situation, the SFIO would be called upon to constitute a government, and Blum believed that it should do so faithfully.

If Blum accepted the "exercise of power", it was all the more to reject ministerial participation. Participation entailed all the risks of the "exercise of power" without any of its compensations. But the central danger for Blum remained that of confusion. He saw the same risk of disappointing an impatient working class in ministerial participation as in the "exercise of power". The proximity of the Radicals to the Socialists in the political field made the risk of confusion greater. For the sake of maintaining the SFIO’s independence of action and identity, and for the sake of not deceiving its proletarian base, Blum therefore came down firmly against Socialist participation in a Radical government.

Since the war, the SFIO thus consistently rejected participation, but it also abandoned something of its revolutionary intransigence. It declined to enter a coalition government in 1924, only to offer its "support" to a bourgeois government. Moreover, in endorsing Blum's compromise notion of the "exercise of power", the party only ruled out participation at the price of admitting a possible stewardship of the bourgeois state. In assuming its share of responsibility in the bourgeois regime, it could be argued that the party had thus already violated the spirit, if not the letter, of its "Charter". [[23]](#footnote-23)

*A Question of “Tactics”*

Ministerial participation re-emerged as a divisive issue in the party in 1925. But what is striking is the extent to which both opponents and proponents of participation initially agreed that this was a question of tactics and not doctrine. Thus at a 1925 extraordinary congress, Pierre Renaudel, a leading participationist, insisted that participation was not a theoretical problem but a tactical one.[[24]](#footnote-24) Even the majority resolution at the congress ruling against participation emphasized the circumstantial character of this rejection:

Independently of the difficulties that follow from the very character of socialist action, participation, in the current state of the Party and within the ensemble of political circumstances, cannot but harm the interests of workers and of socialism itself, without facilitating, moreover, in any case and in any measure, the task of a democratic government.[[25]](#footnote-25)

This agreement on the nature of the debate continued through the 1926 extraordinary congress. Participationists repeatedly maintained that they wished to reorient the party's tactics, not its doctrine.[[26]](#footnote-26) That those seeking to legitimize participation would make this distinction is perhaps unsurprising, but what is significant is that most opponents of participation also made the distinction. Blum opposed participation not on *a priori* grounds, but only after weighing the relative advantages and disadvantages of the "exercise of power" versus participation.[[27]](#footnote-27) But even the more dogged anti-participationists agreed this frame as well. Thus, for example, the powerful anti-participationist Jean Lebas wrote that his and his friends’ attitude was "not explained by doctrinal theoretical considerations," but was justified instead by "a clear and true view of the current political situation."[[28]](#footnote-28) At the congress, Lebas held himself to "arguments of fact," pointing out that the political situation was even less propitious for participation than it was in 1924.[[29]](#footnote-29) Indeed, even the party's leading orthodox theoreticians, such as Compère-Morel and Bracke, largely made the case against participation on circumstantial grounds, with Bracke explicitly admitting that participation was not a question of doctrine.[[30]](#footnote-30) This sentiment was also echoed by those on the revolutionary left wing of the party. For example, Jean Zyromski noted that "ministerial participation is not a question of doctrine." Far from being a series of proscriptions or rules, Zyromski claimed that "socialist doctrine consists in an analysis and explication of economic evolution", and that it was on the basis of such an analysis that participation had to be rejected.[[31]](#footnote-31) Participation was a question of opportunity, though one that had to be answered in the negative "in light of recent events."[[32]](#footnote-32)

There was thus a general understanding at this time that stretched across the party right, center, and left. Étienne Weill-Raynal, himself a participationist, put it thusly:

The question of the entry of socialists into the government is not posed to the national Congress of January 10, such as in other times, as a problem of a doctrinal order. Very rare must be those at this moment in the Party who refuse an entry of socialists into the government under any form. Almost all members of the Party are in agreement in recognizing that the circumstances are grave and truly exceptional. The principal debate opposes those who accept only a ministry that is entirely or in majority socialist and those who are favorable, under certain conditions, to the entry of socialist party delegates within a government whose majority would be formed by representatives of other parties.[[33]](#footnote-33)

*Factionalization*

Despite this agreement on the nature of the debate, these initial confrontations inaugurated a period of intense factionalism that would last until the 1933 schism. Flanking the diffuse grouping of party centrists surrounding Blum, there emerged two broad organized factions within the party. La Vie Socialiste (LVS), as the participationist faction came to be called, was named after Renaudel's weekly paper that was revived after the 1926 extraordinary congress. Representing the party right, LVS was more reform-oriented and generally looked positively on the *Cartel* experience. Tending to privilege parliamentary action, the faction was especially strong within the SFIO parliamentary group (Morin 1994).

Though the faction was somewhat heterogeneous, it engaged in several common rhetorical strategies. First, the participationists distinguished a participation authorized and delegated by the party from the individual opportunist "ministerialism" condemned by the "Charter". Renaudel insisted that the party-to-party accord he envisaged with the Radicals had "no relation with the participation of those who went to the government by personal ambition".[[34]](#footnote-34) Likewise, Marcel Déat, another prominent participationist and future leader of the neo-socialists, proposed making participation conditional on the adoption of a joint program that would establish clear parameters for any Socialist participation.[[35]](#footnote-35) Thus whereas opponents of ministerial participation tended to conflate "ministerialism" and "participation", LVS sought to disassociate the two such that the latter would not be marked by the discredit of the former.

Second, a pragmatic appeal to political and economic realism was a favorite theme within LVS.[[36]](#footnote-36) A common argument was that socialist isolationism in the current parliamentary conjuncture would push Radicals into the arms of a reactionary majority. But their "realism" also went beyond parliament. Renaudel, for example, wrote that although doctrine had in the main been "confirmed by events," if it did not “bend itself” to new facts, “if it turned into immutable and rigid formulas, doctrine would risk becoming a dry and sterile dogma."[[37]](#footnote-37) In drawing this distinction between “doctrine” and “dogma,” LVS made the case for participation on circumstantial grounds without thereby calling party doctrine into question. According to LVS, the divide was not between doctrine and participation, but rather between two different conceptions of doctrine. To be a "realist" was not to abandon doctrine, but only its dogmatic interpretation.

The party left was mainly composed of two different currents: an "old left" embodied by the party secretary-general, Paul Faure, and his deputy, Jean-Baptiste Séverac, and a "new left" led by Jean Zyromski, who founded the La Bataille Socialiste (LBS) faction in 1927 around the eponymous monthly newspaper (Baker 1971). The Faurists dominated the party apparatus through their control of the secretariat. Moreover, as the party's most prolific propagandist, Faure was a favorite among the party rank-and-file. The Faurists used their administrative power to jealously guard doctrinal orthodoxy and maintain the party’s traditional line. Zyromski and the insurgent LBS, on the other hand, were more hostile to the politics of the *Cartel*, more open to other influences, more indulgent toward the Communists, and more voluntaristic in their orientation than the cautious Faurists (Hohl 2004, Nadaud 1989). Nonetheless, LBS and the Faurists shared an aversion to ministerial participation and would combine forces to defend the party's anti-participationist line.

The primary concern of the party left was to prevent any dilution of the SFIO’s proletarian identity. A common rhetorical trope in their arguments against participation was thus to defend the party's "independence" against its potential "absorption" into a broader democratic majority. But LBS and the Faurists differed in accent. Zyromski initially opposed participation on tactical and not doctrinal grounds. Indeed, Zyromski appealed not to a "religious respect" for tradition, but to the "fact of class struggle," arguing that it was precisely an appreciation of such facts that made any accord between the Socialists and Radicals increasingly impossible.[[38]](#footnote-38) The position of LBS was that the party should reject joining a coalition government, "not by virtue of a theoretical formulation, but because of the very conditions of economic and social life."[[39]](#footnote-39) LBS thus largely accepted the participationists’ terms of the debate, though for LBS it was the politics of collaboration that was "utopian" as opposed to their own "true revolutionary realism.”[[40]](#footnote-40)

The Faurists, on the other hand, were more willing to question the doctrinal propriety of participation. Already in 1926 Faure wondered aloud if the true problem were not a concealed "neo-revisionism" within the party.[[41]](#footnote-41) Faure occasionally invoked the "Charter" and frequently lamented that the party was still debating what he considered a settled matter. Indeed, this appeal to doctrinal fidelity and tradition was a recurrent feature of Faurist argumentation..[[42]](#footnote-42) Still, the Faurists were for now largely isolated in their view, which was not even shared by their anti-participationist allies. Neither Blum and the party center, nor Zyromski and the left, shared a doctrinal interpretation of the debate. A renewal of the participationist debate in 1929, however, would lead to the alignment of the Faurists and LBS around a common anti-participationist position.

*The Specter of Heresy*

The end of the *Cartel* and the return of the SFIO to the parliamentary opposition temporarily muted the debate over participation. The prospects for participation further diminished after the 1928 elections brought a slim right-wing majority to the Chamber of Deputies. However, simmering factional tensions boiled over in October 1929 when the Radicals were invited to form a new government and asked the Socialists to join it. The Socialist GP voted 36 to 12 in favor of accepting the participation offer and urged the party bureau to convene a national council to make a final decision. However, the party's highest executive body—the Commission Administrative Permanente (CAP)—which consisted at the time almost entirely of anti-participationists, declared that the GP's resolution was not in conformity with past congress decisions, and asked the national council to repudiate it.[[43]](#footnote-43) Thereafter the conflict took on a new dimension, with an open breach developing between the GP and CAP over their relative authority to interpret party policy.

The debate over ministerial participation took on a new character as it considered whether the GP had violated its mandate in publicly expressing an opinion favorable to the Radicals’ offer. At issue was the GP's competence to judge for itself what constituted "exceptional circumstances." In the interest of unity, Blum proposed a compromise resolution which, while rejecting the Radicals’ offer, nonetheless refused to censure the GP. Both sides, however, rejected the compromise and pushed the council to take a clear position either validating the CAP against the GP or vice versa. Thus the final vote was between a Faure resolution reaffirming "the sovereign decisions of the national congresses that have settled the question [of participation] in the negative," and a Renaudel resolution authorizing the GP to pursue further negotiations with the Radicals.[[44]](#footnote-44) The Faure resolution won a slim 1590 to 1451 majority.

With the balance of forces nearly equal, questions were immediately raised regarding the legitimacy of the vote. The participationists accused the majority-controlled Nord federation in particular of underestimating participationist support in the distribution of its mandates, and the anti-participationists in turn retorted that had the council delegates honored the distribution of mandates from 1926—the last time departmental federations had been consulted specifically on the question of participation—the Radical offer would have been rejected by a wider margin.[[45]](#footnote-45) With the council ending acrimoniously and the final result contested, the GP and the CAP agreed to convene an extraordinary congress for January 1930 in order to settle the question decisively. However, while the GP suggested defining the agenda as "Socialist action in parliament and the problem of government," under the impulsion of the Faurists, the CAP instead decided on "Socialist action in parliament, the problem of government, and the party Charter" as the congress’s official agenda.[[46]](#footnote-46) And with that, by implying that the choice facing the party was between participation and fidelity to the "Charter", the CAP attempted to transmute what had before largely been a “tactical” controversy into a “doctrinal” one.

This maneuver by the anti-participationist majority coincided with an escalation in the participationists’ own propaganda efforts. The council vote did not just register a spontaneous upsurge in support for the participationist position, but was in part the fruit of a determined campaign to win over the party. Central to this effort was Déat, who increasingly became the most active spokesman for the minority. An ambitious and brilliant young intellectual, Déat was seen by many within the SFIO as Blum's successor and even as a "future Jaurès" (Lefranc 1980a: 157).[[47]](#footnote-47) By his own account, Déat at this time sought to "conquer the party from the inside" (Déat 1989: 196). Aligned with LVS since 1926, Déat became the administrative secretary of the GP with Blum's support after losing his seat in the 1928 elections. From his new position, Déat engaged in a "veritable frenzy" of activity, turning the GP secretariat into a propaganda hub rivaling Faure's party secretariat in influence (Déat 1989: 218). Indeed, in the 1927-1929 period Déat beat out Faure to become the party's most prolific non-permanent propagandist, speaking at 142 meetings outside his home department compared to 108 for Faure (Parti socialiste SFIO 1928, 1929, 1930). The rivalry thus began to take on a personal note, and rumors started circulating that Déat sought to replace Faure as secretary-general (Lefranc 1963: 290).[[48]](#footnote-48) For the Faurist incumbents in the party apparatus, then, it was not just the party line that was at stake, but their very leadership of the party.

A grand debate took place in the party press before the January 1930 extraordinary congress. Blum continued to oppose participation by weighing its relative disadvantages, citing again the inevitable risk of confusion in the absence of "exceptional circumstances"—which a normal ministerial crisis did not amount to.[[49]](#footnote-49) But with the gathering strength of the participationists, a worried party left underwent a realignment to better push back against an insurgent party right. Thus after several years at odds, the Faurists and LBS once again combined forces, with the former formally joining LBS in 1929 (Nadaud 1989). Now the entire party left was united in calling into question the doctrinal fidelity of the participationists.

In defending the CAP's addition of the "Charter" to the congress agenda, Faurist deputy secretary-general Séverac—a CAP member—denied any malicious intent. Yet in invoking the "Charter" and suggesting that the "normal practice of ministerial participation" went against the "most fundamental principles of socialism," Séverac effectively sought to discredit the socialist credentials of the GP. The debate over participation was now characterized as a debate for or against the "Charter," i.e. "for or against the *raison d'être* of the party itself, such as it was conceived in 1904, created in 1905, and recreated in 1921."[[50]](#footnote-50) Séverac even insinuated that the heart of the divergence was not the definition of "exceptional circumstances," as Blum continued to claim, but rather two incompatible conceptions of socialism: one that saw it as the "avant-garde" of the bourgeois democratic parties, and another according to which it was the revolutionary political expression of the proletariat. Only the latter was "consistent with the constitutive principles" of the SFIO, and the "triumph of participationism...would signify...the acceptance of an altogether different conception of its role, mission, and action."[[51]](#footnote-51)

The rest of the party left followed Séverac’s lead. Thus Lebas, changing his tune from 1926, accused the participationists of pursuing a "Millerandist" and "ministerialist" politics and thereby negating the 1905 Unity Pact.[[52]](#footnote-52) The old core of LBS also fell into line with their new Faurist collaborators. Gone now were the assurances that participation was a tactical matter ruled out only by economic and political “facts.”[[53]](#footnote-53) Indeed, there were now frequent references to the "Charter," and LBS raised the specter of "revisionism" as it goaded the participationists to own up to their desire to revise the "Charter."[[54]](#footnote-54) According to Zyromski, "revisionism" was now the "authentic expression" of the participationist thesis, and he lauded the CAP for having "underlined that such a revision of the constitutive and fundamental principles of the Party signified a repudiation of the 'Charter.'"[[55]](#footnote-55)

*The Participationist Retort*

The participationists protested vigorously against the anti-participationists’ maneuver. The GP continued to insist that participation had nothing to do with ministerialism and that it remained a merely tactical question.[[56]](#footnote-56) Déat took umbrage at the "doctrinal opportunism" of the anti-participationists and complained that it was a "grandiose farce to make of participation a problem of doctrine."[[57]](#footnote-57) Moreover, he accused the CAP of blackmailing the party by linking the question of participation to the "Charter":

Up to now, we believed that the rule of the Party was that of democracy and that the minority had to yield before the majority, whatever the bitterness and resentment. It seems that this rule is unilateral and only works in one direction. Those who were until now in the minority are tolerated in the party provided that they stay a minority. The day they become a majority, the current leaders of the party announce that the charter will have been torn up, that unity will have been broken, that the party will have been destroyed.[[58]](#footnote-58)

The participationists sought to neutralize the accusation of doctrinal heresy. For example, they pointed out that most major European socialist parties had already joined coalition governments, and that to accuse the participationists of doctrinal infidelity was by extension to impugn the fraternal parties of the International.[[59]](#footnote-59) LVS frequently noted that Kautsky, the “Pope of Marxism,” supported participation in the French case.[[60]](#footnote-60)

The participationists also countered anti-participationist invocations of the “Charter” by citing more recent party decisions that supposedly affirmed their position. So, for example, Déat claimed that a 1928 joint resolution of the CAP and GP—approved unanimously at the 1929 national congress—unequivocally expressed that participation was a matter of circumstance.[[61]](#footnote-61) The issue, as always, was how to identify "exceptional circumstances." Most participationists cited the need to defend republican institutions in the face of reaction. The refusal to participate, according to them, was responsible for the formation of a reactionary government led by André Tardieu, whom many in the party considered a proto-fascist.[[62]](#footnote-62) The prospect of a fascist France, they argued, surely qualified as an “exceptional circumstance” calling for a defensive alliance with the Radicals.

Another strategy pursued by the participationists was to gainsay the doctrinal integrity of the anti-participationists themselves. For example, in an effort to drive a wedge within the anti-participationist camp between Blum and LBS, Déat threw back the epithet of "revisionism," arguing that in accepting Blum’s idea of the "exercise of power" the party left had already in effect revised the "Charter." Consequently, it was those who insisted on going back to the 1905 “Unity Pact” against more recent precedents who were the "authentic revisionists."[[63]](#footnote-63) Moreover, Déat claimed that there was no essential difference between the "exercise of power" and participation, the latter being only a case of the former. The participationists began calling participation the "shared exercise of power" to make their point.[[64]](#footnote-64) It was up to the anti-participationists to frankly choose between the "exercise of power," in all its modalities, and an exclusive commitment to the total "conquest of power"—the latter being indistinguishable from Bolshevism. To equivocate on this choice between democratic socialism and Bolshevism was, according to Déat, and act of bad faith built on doctrinal incoherence and contradiction:

One invokes the Charter: in order to tear it up. One displays doctrine: in order to reduce it to mush. Principles mix with circumstances of fact, dogma is permeated with opportunity, one baptizes an impossible salad a synthesis...Avow frankly that you are undertaking a maneuver to collect mandates, to conserve...a majority in the Party. But don't come presenting to us this incoherent rhapsody as the *Credo* of a regenerated socialism."[[65]](#footnote-65)

Déat also turned the tables on the party left by questioning its revolutionary credentials. The refusal to participate was for him a form of quietism. The left's revolutionary verbiage masked a lack of revolutionary ardor, and it was the anti-participationists who were "essentially *defeatist*" and demonstrated "a formidable mistrust, not only of the leaders of the Party, but of its mass, not only of the means of which it disposes, but of its doctrine itself."[[66]](#footnote-66) Déat affirmed the revolutionary value of participation, arguing that the revolution now "passed through the State" and that in assuming a share of power socialists could transform it in a revolutionary direction.[[67]](#footnote-67) Within the SFIO, then, the left represented "regression," the center "immobility," and the right "movement." Déat hoped that at the January congress it would finally become "clear in the eyes of all that those who [were], stupidly or perfidiously, baptized reformists [were] the only revolutionaries in the Party."[[68]](#footnote-68)

At the January 1930 extraordinary congress, the participationists continued to insist on the tactical character of the debate, and accused the anti-participationists of opportunistically mixing doctrinal and circumstantial reasons for opposing participation.[[69]](#footnote-69) If there were a question of revisionism, it was that of the left's pseudo-Bolshevik revision of the party's democratic tradition. Nonetheless, the congress registered a clear victory for the anti-participationists, with the majority motion confirming the decision of the October council—and declaring that the party "intended to stay faithful to the Party Charter"—winning 2066 votes to the 1507 for the participationist motion—a larger margin of victory than at the council.[[70]](#footnote-70)

Once again, however, matters were far from settled. The participationists remained defiant. The congress ended with a declaration from the minority challenging the authority of the CAP, stating that nobody could "consider as forever settled a question that depends much less on the will of the party than on events themselves" and vowing to continue its agitation in favor of participation.[[71]](#footnote-71) Despite losing the vote, the participationists claimed that the congress had in fact been an implicit victory for them.[[72]](#footnote-72) Arguing that the only decisive conclusion of the congress was to reject the latest Radical participation offer on circumstantial grounds, Déat and his allies still believed that they would ultimately triumph. As for the statement of fidelity to the "Charter" in the majority motion, what the party left had intended as a call to order was, because they had always denied violating doctrine, nothing of the sort in the eyes of the participationists.[[73]](#footnote-73)

The anti-participationists had thus managed to beat back the participationist offensive, but the participationists were disinclined to fall into line. Furthermore, what had once been mutually recognized as a debate over tactics was now transmuted into a struggle over the legitimate definition of socialist doctrine. Not only could neither side now back down without disavowing itself and admitting its doctrinal deviation, any further conflict over participation was bound to take on a doctrinal cast.

*(Neo)Socialist Perspectives?*

Factional tensions kept rising after the 1930 extraordinary congress as new disagreements over the agrarian question, national defense, and the role of SFIO parliamentarians emerged. The participationists continued to deny the doctrinal character of their challenge, but the factional conflict was beginning to take a more theoretical turn. Thus following the January congress, Renaudel wrote that the debate would henceforth take place on a "broader terrain", and appealed to all those who were for "a socialism of reformative penetration and 'revolutionary evolution'" and not a "socialism of revolutionary destruction."[[74]](#footnote-74) It was Déat, however, who emerged as the participationists' chief theoretician at this time.

Formerly an aspiring sociologist, Déat was disposed to approach problems intellectually, often transmuting personal and political rivalries into theoretical disputes (Desan and Heilbron 2015). This helps to explain why, after the January 1930 setback for the participationists, Déat began systematizing the ideas that would culminate in the November 1930 publication of *Perspectives socialistes*—the supposed “charter” of neo-socialism (Bergounioux 1978: 396). In a series of theoretical articles for *La Vie socialiste*, the factional organ of the party right, he warned against the threat of fascism and developed an analysis of the state as the expression of the balance of class forces.[[75]](#footnote-75) The central themes of *Perspectives socialistes*—discussed above—were also elaborated at this time.[[76]](#footnote-76)

Déat's interventions gave the factional conflict a theoretical scope it had hitherto lacked on the participationist side. Yet it would be a mistake to see a will to heresy in his writings at this time. To suggest that the factional debate took a "clearer doctrinal twist" starting in 1930 is not quite right (Bergounioux 1984: 7)*.* Even while developing the theses that would come together in *Perspectives socialistes*, Déat continued to insist that there was no question of him revising the party's doctrine,[[77]](#footnote-77) and that at issue were "two hypotheses...and not orthodoxy faced with heresy."[[78]](#footnote-78)

Déat's interventions in fact responded to the exigencies of the participation debate and amounted to a theoretical justification for ministerial participation. The urgent necessity of a broad "anti-capitalist" coalition and the historical possibility of divorcing the republican state from capitalist control were so many reasons for an alliance with the Radicals. Ministerial participation was validated by a theory of the state that allowed for its gradual socialist penetration. Déat's preoccupation seems to have primarily been to arm his participationist colleagues for the upcoming 1932 elections. According to one of Déat's contemporaries, *Perspectives socialistes* became the "Bible of all French socialist parliamentarians who...wanted to arm their ambition with some apparatus" (Abellio 1975: 93). Déat gave the factional conflict a new theoretical edge, but in doing so he never claimed to be revising the party's doctrine, much less founding a new one. The ideas presented in *Perspectives socialistes* were still inscribed in what, in his and his allies’ eyes, remained a tactical debate over participation.

The book, however, did not have the desired effect. In his memoirs Déat lamented the "profound and total silence in the interior of the party" surrounding the book (Déat 1989: 236). Especially stung by Blum's silence, the book's publication supposedly marked Déat's "intellectual and moral rupture" with him (Déat 1989: 237).[[79]](#footnote-79) In reality, the book did provoke a reaction, albeit a critical one from the party left. A series of critical reviews in *La Bataille socialiste*, LBS’s factional paper,condemned Déat's theses and again raised the specter of doctrinal revision.[[80]](#footnote-80) It was Lebas, in a pamphlet titled *Le Socialisme: But et moyen. Suivi de la réfutation d'un néo-socialisme*, who first baptized Déat’s thinking “a neo-socialism." Lebas wrote that Déat's book represented not even a "renewed attempt at revisionism" but rather a "complete upheaval of socialist theories and tactics" (Lebas 1931: 35). Déat was further chastised for proposing an "entirely new socialism, unknown until yesterday," and a "new doctrine" that bore no relation to the party's revolutionary Marxist tradition (Lebas 1931: 35, 63). Of the socialism that was the basis of the 1905 unification of the party, Lebas went on, "there remain[ed] nothing" (Lebas 1931: 35-36).

These accusations, however, must also be taken in context. They did not straightforwardly register a doctrinal heresy, but were an extension of previous polemical efforts to discredit the participationists. With the publication of *Perspectives socialistes*, and his emergence as a leader of the party right, Déat became the central target of these efforts.[[81]](#footnote-81) Déat protested vehemently against what he considered to be slanderous misrepresentations of his position, once again objecting to the invocation of the party "Charter" by LBS and demonstrating his fidelity by placing himself firmly in the SFIO’s democratic socialist.[[82]](#footnote-82) In particular, Déat complained that the publication of Lebas's pamphlet by the party's Nord federation and its continued advertising in the pages of the party daily, *Le Populaire*, gave the impression that Lebas's personal opinions were officially sanctioned judgments of the party organization, and that he thereby appeared to be implicitly "excommunicated" (Parti socialiste SFIO 1931: 21-23).

Déat and his allies thus initially rejected the "neo-socialist" label, which had originated as a pejorative term used to anathematize Déat and throw the participationists into doctrinal discredit. But Lebas’s term was not immediately adopted within the party at large; indeed, though there was a spike in 1931 in references to "neo-socialism" in the pages of *Le Populaire*, these were almost exclusively due to the ads for Lebas's pamphlet. In fact, there were no references to the term in 1932, and it was only after July 1933, when the factional conflict took a schismatic turn, that "neo-socialism" and "neo-socialist" came to be widely used in party discourse (Figure 1).

Figure 1. References to neo-socialism in *Le Populaire*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | "néo-socialiste" or "néosocialiste" | "néo-socialisme" or "néosocialisme" |
| 1930 | 0 | 1 |
| 1931 | 0 | 44 |
| 1932 | 0 | 0 |
| 1933 | 59 (all in July or after) | 54 (all in July or after) |

Almost all 1931 references to "neo-socialism" in *Le Populaire* were due to ads placed for Jean Lebas's pamphlet, *Socialisme: But et Moyen. Suivi de la Réfutation d'un Néo-socialisme*. All 1933 references to "neo-socialism" and "neo-socialist" occurred after the July congress.

To see the theses of *Perspectives socialistes* as the "charter" or the "doctrinal basis" of neo-socialism is thus premature, and risks taking the party left's tendentious denunciations at face value (Bergounioux 1978: 396; Lefranc 1982: 122). Though Déat's theoretical ambitions lend it a certain surface plausibility, such an interpretation ultimately depends on a teleological bias that reads Déat's later embrace of neo-socialism back into his past. At the time of publication, the doctrinal status of *Perspectives socialistes* was still contested. Whether or not there existed such a thing as neo-socialism, and what its relationship was to party doctrine, was the stake of a classification struggle that was itself inscribed within the broader factional struggle over participation. Following the 1930 extraordinary congress and the publication of *Perspectives socialistes*, “neo-socialism” was still just the polemical invention of the party left.

*The Road to Schism*

The debate surrounding *Perspectives socialistes* largely subsided by 1932, and “neo-socialism” did not catch on as a term of abuse or identification. But factional tensions over ministerial participation continued to aggravate. Indeed, the chain of events that directly precipitated the 1933 schism was primarily driven by the stubborn refusal of the participationists within the GP to submit to the party majority in pursuing their parliamentary strategy. The party left continued to accuse the party right of subverting the "Charter," but the schism was in fact consummated over a question of indiscipline.

The factional conflict became schismatic after the 1932 legislative elections. The elections were a boon to the participationists. The elections brought in a large left-wing majority to the Chamber, but presented the SFIO with a predicament. Winning 131 seats to the Radicals' 160, the SFIO was too weak to form a government on its own but too strong to withhold its support for a Radical government without breaking the left-wing majority. With the party thus on an awkward footing, the participation debate was bound to intensify. The participationists scored a victory when the post-election party congress quasi-unanimously voted to approve SFIO participation conditional on the Radicals agreeing to a minimum program—known as the *Cahiers de Huyghens*—drafted by the Socialists.[[83]](#footnote-83) A party majority had thus for the first time accepted the principle of ministerial participation in a Radical government. Moreover, that this was done pre-emptively, without a concrete offer of participation on the table, was an index of participationist strength in the new political conjuncture (OURS 1975a: 19-20).

A Socialist delegation presented the *Cahiers de Huyghens* to the Radicals but were rebuffed. Faced with this rejection, the party unanimously agreed to continue its old policy of parliamentary "support." Though the participationists had reason to be encouraged after this episode, their impatience would undo much of the progress they had made within the party. Things took a turn in January 1933 when the Radicals offered the SFIO a place in a new Édouard Daladier government. Though the SFIO statutes stipulated that only a national council could accept an offer of participation, Daladier let it be known that he could not wait, pressing the GP to decide on its own before a council could be convened. The GP thus voted 64-17 to continue discussions with Daladier so as to obtain from him a commitment to the broad outlines of the *Cahiers de Huyghens*, in the event of which Daladier's offer would be accepted.

In the end, Daladier rejected both the letter and spirit of the *Cahiers de Huyghens*, leading the GP in turn to refuse his offer of participation. Nonetheless, the February national council overwhelmingly (2636 to 1070) repudiated the GP, which it judged to have overstepped its mandate. With this call to order, the relationship between the GP and the party leadership became more rancorous and the factional conflict increasingly turned on the question of party discipline.

The next clash occurred in March 1933 when a majority of the GP decided to back an unpopular budget measure containing cuts to civil servant salaries, on the grounds that doing so was necessary to keep the Daladier government from falling and being replaced by a reactionary alternative. This prompted Blum and Vincent Auriol, both of whom were centrists within the party’s factional landscape, to resign their leadership positions within the GP in protest. Moreover, 20 SFIO deputies broke ranks with the GP majority to vote against the measure, violating party rules demanding that its deputies vote as a unified bloc.

For the CAP, the affirmative budget vote was an unacceptable betrayal of the labor movement, which opposed the budget cuts, and of the "Charter." An extraordinary congress was thus called for April to bring the GP into line. The congress saw another large victory for the anti-participationist majority, with a Blum motion establishing guidelines for the GP winning 2807 votes compared to 925 for a Renaudel motion affirming the autonomy of GP. However, the majority motion did not level concrete sanctions against the GP and was sufficiently ambiguous to be interpreted by the participationists—however tendentiously—in a way justifying their behavior. Things came to a head again when in May the GP once again approved a budget measure, earning a quick rebuke from the party majority who saw this as a willful flouting of the April congress. The two factions now appeared irreconcilable and the specter of schism came to dominate party discussion. Despite a declaration from the GP that any sanction would be tantamount to a call for schism,[[84]](#footnote-84) the July party congress voted by a clear majority to censure the GP and called for sanctions in the case of further indiscipline.[[85]](#footnote-85)

The participationist leaders only became more defiant as their situation within the party became more hopeless. Despite the censure and the threat of sanction, they continued to push their position. The first shoe dropped when in August a group of participationists held a public meeting in Angoulême condemning the party line.[[86]](#footnote-86) This public display of dissidence was in itself a violation of party discipline, but matters worsened when it was reported that Adrien Marquet—the arch-participationist mayor of Bordeaux—had called for the creation of a new party.[[87]](#footnote-87) The other shoe dropped in October, when another deflationary budget measure came up for a vote. This time a majority of the GP voted against the measure, but 28 of the most intransigent participationists voted for it, thereby defying both the party and GP vote discipline. According to Blum, the fate of the schismatics was effectively sealed when, following the vote, Renaudel "expressed himself as the chief of a new party, addressing as such the Chamber and...the country."[[88]](#footnote-88) The November national council convened to address participationist indiscipline overwhelmingly voted to declare that those who spoke at, or publicly expressed their solidarity with, the Angoulême meeting *and* voted for the October budget measure had thereby excluded themselves from the party.[[89]](#footnote-89) Though this only directly affected 7 deputies—including Renaudel, Déat, and Marquet—they were followed out of the SFIO by a handful of supporters and a few department federations.[[90]](#footnote-90) The dissidents quickly constituted a new parliamentary group, and in December held the founding congress of a new party, the *Parti socialiste de France* (PSdF), of which Renaudel would be the president and Déat the secretary-general.

*The Birth of Neo-Socialism*

The driving force of the 1933 schism was the stubborn indiscipline of the participationists starting in 1932. However, the factional conflict also came to take on a doctrinal dimension at this time. The party left continued to accuse the party right of subverting party doctrine much as it had since 1929, but as the participationist challenge became more desperate, and as it became clearer that their ambitions were wrecked, some leaders of the party right also came to recast the conflict in doctrinal terms and embraced the “neo-socialist” label.[[91]](#footnote-91) Indeed, the birth of neo-socialism really dates from this period, and not from the publication of *Perspectives socialistes*. Neo-socialism was not simply Déat’s brainchild, but was elaborated collectively over the final stages of the factional conflict. Moreover, it was not so much the cause as it was an invention of the 1933 schism.

Bergounioux has argued that a "notable ideological revolution" occurred among the future neo-socialists in 1933 (Bergounioux 1984: 12). Though denying a metamorphosis in their discourse, Bergounioux claims that there were important "modifications" that "tended to change the equilibrium of their doctrinal construction" (Bergnounioux 1984: 12). Others (e.g. Burrin [1986] 2003, Cointet 1998, Lefranc 1982) have likewise emphasized the impact of Hitler's rise to power in January 1933 and the subsequent destruction of the German Social Democrats on Déat and his participationist colleagues. Déat and his allies saw in German events a further confirmation of the urgent need for a broad "anti-capitalist" coalition rallying the middle classes. But the effective collapse of the international socialist movement and the disarticulation of the European economy effected by the Great Depression also led to a modulation in the participationists' discourse as they increasingly emphasized the necessity of acting within a national framework. Socialists could no longer wait for a "hypothetical and imaginary" revolution on the international level, lest they be "swept away" by fascists. Not only did circumstances constrain the SFIO to find a national solution to the crisis, Déat argued that the fascist threat meant socialism could not afford to cut itself off from the middles classes, democracy, and "the Nation."[[92]](#footnote-92) This accommodation to the "nation fact" represented a clear departure from the internationalist pieties of the SFIO, and would become a key element of neo-socialist discourse.

Still, this appeal to the nation was initially presented as a tactical adjustment to the international situation, not as a value in itself, and was in that sense in line with the established rhetorical strategy of the participationists. Déat emerged from the 1932 congress in which the *Cahiers de Huyghens* were drafted convinced that the party was now nearly unanimous in dropping its doctrinal objection to participation.[[93]](#footnote-93) As such, Déat had little reason to abandon the strategy of insisting on the tactical nature of the factional conflict, so long as it seemed that the participationists had a realistic chance at finally winning a majority within the party. This is precisely what Déat continued to do in the first half of 1933.

The 1933 July congress, however, was a turning point, marking both the end of the participationists' aspirations to conquer the party and the full displacement of the factional conflict onto a doctrinal terrain. Surprisingly, Déat played only a secondary role in this particular drama, with the leading roles played by Montagnon—whose 1929 book was discussed above—and Marquet.[[94]](#footnote-94) The congress had been charged with discussing the behavior of the GP, and the debate was largely limited to disciplinary issues until the second day when Montagnon's speech effected a "*détournement*" of the congress (Berstein 2006: 368).

Montagnon had hitherto only been a minor voice among the participationists, especially compared to Déat. With his intervention at the congress, however, he stepped forward as one of the leaders of the minority. Montagnon began his intervention expressing irritation that the party was losing its time "discussing ridiculously inferior questions." The conflict, according to him, was a function not simply of differences between the GP and the party, but of a "doctrinal crisis" within the party. The Depression had announced the death of liberal capitalism, but the working class was too weak to fulfill its revolutionary destiny. Meanwhile, the state's inability to address the economic crisis revealed a crisis of democracy. Revolutionary ferment was now strongest among the middle classes and the youth, and they were demanding something new. The lesson of Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, Soviet Russia, and New Deal America was that a strong state—"master of its currency, capable of controlling the economy and finance, of imposing certain directives on big capitalism"—was necessary, even if it meant adapting socialist doctrine and even if "certain old texts" had to be left behind. The strength of fascism lay in recognizing the necessity of a strong state, and its success belied the SFIO’s belief that there was only a single road to socialism (Parti socialiste SFIO 1933: 250-260).

Marquet’s intervention was even more inflammatory than Montagnon’s. Ambitious and impatient, Marquet was an arch-participationist who was prone to “bold and aggressive formulas” and had a reputation for opportunism (Déat 1989: 279). As such, he had long been held in suspicion by Blum (Lefranc 1982: 119). In Lefranc's estimation, Marquet was already determined to provoke a schism by the July congress, and indeed his discourse there suggests as much (Lefranc 1982: 124). Lamenting the slow progress of socialism in France, Marquet remarked that one "does not give one's life to conquer thirty seats in the Chamber." The problem in his view was that the economic crisis had benefitted reactionaries at the expense of socialists, who were unwilling and unprepared to find a solution to the "sensation of disorder and incoherence" affecting the masses. Socialism, according to Marquet, had to be "capable of appearing, in the current disorder, as an island of order and a pole of authority." Indeed, "order" and "authority" had to become the party's "new bases of action" if it hoped to attract the masses, and a strong power organized within a national framework was necessary to replace a "deficient bourgeoisie." Marquet's suggestion that the watchwords of “order,” “authority,” and “nation” were more adequate to the time than “liberty” and “justice” famously provoked Blum into interrupting and exclaiming: "I'm listening with an attention of which you can be the judge, but I confess that I am appalled" (Parti socialiste SFIO 1933: 305-317).

Though their interventions were uncoordinated and improvised, Montagnon and Marquet transformed the nature of the debate at the July congress.[[95]](#footnote-95) Not to be outdone, and perhaps to "remove the spotlight" from Marquet, on the final day of the proceedings, Déat—who had earlier in the congress limited himself to the disciplinary issues of the GP—pronounced a second discourse in which he followed Montagnon and Marquet onto more provocative terrain (Lefranc 1982: 124-125). According to Déat, the congress was no longer simply about the GP's behavior, but had been elevated into a "confrontation of our worries, the affirmation and manifestation of sentiments and ideas...that have appeared, indeed, rightly...to give off a new sound." Marquet had expressed, "on the essential, things that we are more numerous than imagined in feeling and thinking in the interior of the Party." Déat went on to reiterate his calls for an "anti-capitalist" front, a renovation of the state, and a realignment of socialism with the nation. However, these had now become fully inscribed within a doctrinal assault against Blum and the party leadership. Socialists had prepared for a battle between an internationalized proletariat and bourgeoisie, and as such were in disarray on the new battlefield, "where they no longer encounter the adversary they were expecting, where the flags no longer have the same colors, where the language spoken is no longer the same as that to which [they] were habituated, where the watchwords have changed." Moreover, Déat felt that "something in socialism [had] been distorted, that something of its spirit, its program [had] been stolen by its adversary." To combat fascism, anti-fascism was not enough; socialists could no longer wait fatalistically for the "dialectic of history", but had to build and direct an "intermediary regime" between capitalism and socialism, lest it be done against them (Parti socialiste SFIO 1933: 435-450).

Though Déat was widely applauded, and though he had tried to temper some of Marquet's excesses, his discourse came to be associated with those of Montagnon and Marquet, and together the three were dubbed the "neo-socialist trio."[[96]](#footnote-96) Indeed, it was only after the July congress that the term "neo-socialist" came to be widely used in both the party and general press to describe the positions of Déat, Montagnon, and Marquet. First invoked by Lebas in 1931 to describe Déat's *Perspectives socialistes*, "neo-socialism" had not initially caught on as a label. In 1932, there was not a single reference to "néo-socialisme" or "néo-socialiste" in *Le Populaire*. In 1933, by contrast, there were 43 and 26 references respectively, all of them after the July congress (Figure 1).

The proliferation of the "neo-socialist" label was of course a reaction to the sensational nature of Montagnon, Marquet, and Déat's interventions at the congress, but it also contributed to their marginalization by highlighting the doctrinal character of their dissidence. The gulf between the neo-socialists and the SFIO was further widened as the press started painting them as left-wing fascists.[[97]](#footnote-97) But the accusation of fascism was not limited to the bourgeois press. This became commonplace within the SFIO too, with Louis Lévy for example arguing that the neo-socialists' "doctrine of public salvation, national utility, social justice, international peace, and republican dictatorship" amounted to a left-wing fascism.[[98]](#footnote-98)

The decisive factor in the final ideological rupture between the neo-socialists and the SFIO, however, was Blum's intervention in the debate. For the first time since the 1920 schism, Blum did not act as a conciliator but as a full-fledged participant in the factional conflict, wielding his considerable symbolic power within the party to impose a new legitimate understanding of the sharpening factional conflict. Resigned to the coming schism, Blum sought to limit its scope by doctrinally isolating the neo-socialist hard-core and by portraying them as proto-fascist dupes (Berstein 2006: 376-378; Burrin [1986] 2003: 147-148). Following the congress, Blum launched a months-long campaign in *Le Populaire* criticizing the neo-socialists—whom he also began to label as such—for having abandoned socialist doctrine. Blum was dismayed that "in the middle of a congress of the French Section of the International the manifesto of a national socialist party—if not national-socialist—was just resoundingly defined." The neo-socialists, "in wanting to turn away from fascism its potential clientele," were offering "to the same public, by the same means of publicity, a more or less analogous product." In doing so, they were transforming socialism from a "class party" to a "party of *déclassés,*" and risked "drowning" the party under "that wave of 'adventurers'...that has carried...all of history's dictatorships."[[99]](#footnote-99) Fascism could not be gotten rid of by "imitation, substitution, one-upmanship."[[100]](#footnote-100) Situating the neo-socialists within a history of French socialists seduced by nationalist deviations, Blum remarked that, “In their authoritarian concision, the declarations of certain of our comrades unwittingly rediscover the accent of Bonapartist proclamations in the aftermath of the Second of December.”[[101]](#footnote-101)

The neo-socialists' appeal to heterogeneous elements like the middle classes and youth, their call for an "intermediary regime" between capitalism and socialism, and their retreat into the nation were now all condemned by Blum as clear departures from socialist doctrine. It was, according to him, undeniable that "a certain number of...comrades belonging to the minority of the Party brought to the tribune of the congress declarations that put into question the fundamental notions on which socialism rested up until now."[[102]](#footnote-102) The neo-socialists, Blum suggested, had placed themselves outside the socialist tradition:

There does not exist two species of socialism, of which one would be international and the other not. It is impossible to conceive the realization of socialism otherwise than as an international transformation of the regime of production and property. It is impossible to conceive a socialist organization and action that is limited and confined to the national framework. A national socialism would no longer be socialism and would rapidly become anti-socialism—if it were not so from the beginning. [[103]](#footnote-103)

In a relentless barrage of criticism spanning several months, Blum thus lent his moral authority to the stigmatization of neo-socialism as a proto-fascist heresy. With Blum finally aligning with the party left in its classification of the factional conflict, the notion that Déat and his allies were engaged in a doctrinal deviation indisputably became the legitimate definition of the situation.

 The possibility of a schism had led Blum and the rest of the party to try to limit its scope by defining Déat, Marquet, and Montagnon outside the socialist tradition, thereby isolating them. This operation, of course, was a response to the doctrinal turn taken at the July congress, itself a response to an increasingly hopeless situation for the participationists. The campaign of anathematization in turn constrained Déat and his allies to double down on their heresy in preparation for an exit from the party that now appeared as the only plausible option.[[104]](#footnote-104) Thus even Déat, who had always been more cautious due to his leadership aspirations within the party, no longer qualified his statements by insisting on the tactical nature of his disagreements, as he had before the July congress (Figure 2). Indeed, his articles came to take on a more frankly heretical tenor. The conflict was now one that "[surpassed] by a thousand miles the parliamentary incidents," and the issue was "to decide between a socialism of immediate action and an outdated socialism."[[105]](#footnote-105) No longer simply a personal or disciplinary dispute, the quarrel was entirely "new [*inédite*]." Two clans now opposed each other, one "*archéo*" and the other "*néo.*" The first, led by Blum, "refuse[d] to modify anything of dogmas and routines." The latter, "shrewdly accused of fascism by the former, want[ed] to take the offensive, to keep the initiative of construction, even if doctrine [was] not entirely saved." The revolution had "changed camps" and was now "'*néo*.'"[[106]](#footnote-106) Déat began—for the first time—to openly chastize the SFIO for holding on to the "Charter," arguing that it did so only "in full symbolism, in full ritualism, in full craziness," and that meanwhile "events that could care less about Amsterdam, the Charter, or the statutes proceed[ed] at their breakneck pace."[[107]](#footnote-107)

Figure 2. Characterization of the conflict within the SFIO by the different factions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **1926** | **1929-1930** | **July 1933** |
| Faure (party secretariat) | Doctrinal | Doctrinal | Doctrinal |
| Lebas/Zyromski (party left) | Tactical | Doctrinal | Doctrinal |
| Blum (party center) | Tactical | Tactical | Doctrinal |
| Déat (party right—"neo-socialists") | Tactical | Tactical | Doctrinal |
| Renaudel (party right—"reformists") | Tactical | Tactical | Tactical |

In 1929-1930 the participationists of the party right mounted a serious challenge to the party leadership. By July 1933 their fortunes had waned and a schism appeared inevitable.

The affirmations of doctrinal innovation became more common as the schism approached. But the emergence of neo-socialism as a political identity distinct from traditional socialism was confirmed by the self-conscious embrace of the term by many participationists themselves.[[108]](#footnote-108) A critical factor in the construction of "neo-socialism" as a coherent doctrinal alternative was the October 1933 publication of Montagnon, Marquet, and Déat's speeches at the July congress under the title *Néo-socialisme? Ordre, Autorité, Nation*. The book presented what were uncoordinated and improvised discourses as expressions of a single and unified stream of thought under the sign of "neo-socialism." In doing so, the book retroactively validated and enshrined a classification that had originally been applied polemically by the participationists’ factional adversaries, and represented an effort to transvalue the terms of an opposition that had become undeniably doctrinal.

Dispossessed of a party following their exclusion from the SFIO, Montagnon, Marquet, Déat, and their participationist comrades were now armed with a new doctrine. After the constitution of the PSdF in December 1933, they dropped any remaining qualms they might have had and fully embraced "neo-socialism" as a distinct political identity and as the doctrinal foundation of their new party. What began as a pejorative became openly proclaimed by those it was meant to discredit as the invention of a new position within the political space.

**Conclusion**

The 1933 schism was not the ineluctable outcome of pre-existing doctrinal differences within the SFIO, nor was neo-socialism a pre-constituted heresy spawned ready-made from the heads of its proponents. Indeed, neo-socialism was not born with Déat's *Perspectives socialistes*. Its origins lie not in a willful effort at doctrinal revision, but in the ebb and flow of the factional conflict over the SFIO's parliamentary strategy. Only when the participationists started presenting a tangible threat to the party's anti-participationist majority did the would-be neo-socialists have aspersions of doctrinal deviation cast upon them. Though initially denying any heretical intention, Déat and his allies became bolder in their dissidence as their chances of conquering the party diminished. The critical moments came after the 1932 elections, when the participationists misread their strength and persisted in defying the party majority. With a censure vote a foregone conclusion, and their hopes thus decisively dashed, Montagnon, Marquet, and Déat sought to change the terms of the debate at the 1933 July congress. The inflammatory nature of their speeches provoked a furious reaction from the party majority, this time including Blum and the party centrists. It was only then, with the schism having become inevitable, that "neo-socialism" became widely accepted as a term of classification. But what was in fact a pejorative label meant to discredit and isolate the renegades of the July congress became the self-understanding of some of the schismatics themselves. In adopting the label, the neo-socialists accepted a definition of themselves that had originally been imposed by their adversaries. Neo-socialism was thus not always-already a definite and coherent revisionist tendency, but only came to be constituted as such in and through the factional dynamics of the SFIO. In short, neo-socialism—as a distinct doctrinal identity—was in actuality the emergent invention of the very schismatic process it is often presumed to have determined. Prevailing accounts of the 1933 schism have thus largely confused cause and effect, suggesting that a broader rethinking of the relationship between political identity and the classification struggles we call schisms is in order.

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1. Parti socialiste S.F.I.O. *1e et 2e Congrès nationaux, tenus à Paris en avril 1905 et à Chalon-sur-Saône en octobre 1905: compte rendu analytique*. Paris: Conseil national du Parti socialiste S.F.I.O., pp. 13-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Paul Faure "Méthode, Programme, Doctrine, Action" *Le Populaire* October 6 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It could be argued that Déat was only more careful to dissimulate what was in fact a doctrinal revision every bit as deep as Montagnon's. This, however, misses the point: given the sacred function of the ritual invocation of doctrine, to openly call doctrine as such into question was to risk a far more serious breach than to challenge its substance beneath a veil of equivocation. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Moch was trained as an engineer at the elite École Polytechnique. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. On Philip, see Chevandier and Morin (2005). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The group—which included future luminaries like Claude Lévi-Strauss, Robert Marjolin, and Claude Lévi-Strauss—was named after the title of their collective book published in 1932. On Révoluton Constructive, see Clouet (1991). [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Déat's élite intellectual background as well as his position at the École Normale Supérieur's Centre de Documentation Sociale made him an especially influential figure among the party's young intellectuals (Marcel 2001, Sirinelli 1988). On Déat's influence on Lefranc, see Lefranc (1981a, 1981b). On his political influence on Lévi-Strauss, see Chambarlhac (2007) and Pajon (2007). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. François Gaucher "La Révolution Constructive" *La Vie Socialiste* July 23 1932; J.-B. Séverac "Révolution Constructive" *Le Populaire* August 17 1932; Raymonde Vaysset "Révolution Constructive" *La Bataille Socialiste* August-September 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Cited in Léon Blum "Le problème de la participation. Les textes socialistes: avant la guerre" *Le Populaire* November 28 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Parti socialiste S.F.I.O. "Le Manifeste du Conseil National: Aux Travailleurs de France" *Le Populaire* February 15 1921. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. On the distinction between substantialist and relational modes of thinking, see Bourdieu (1989) and Cassirer (1923). [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Kestel is referring to the case of Jacques Doriot, a French Communist leader who became a fascist and Nazi collaborator. On Doriot's transformation, Kestel writes that it was "the consequence of a struggle between several agents or groups of agents over the legitimate interpretation of the situation. It [was]...an assignation of identity that succeeded all the more because the stigmatized finished by reappropriating for himself the identity that was imposed on him. In this sense, conversion is a double discursive manifestation: It *is* from the moment it affirms itself" (Kestel 2012: 232). [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. "Au Congrès Socialiste: Les résolutions" *L'Humanité* December 30 1916. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. The SFIO authorized unified lists with the Radicals, in the hopes of avoiding a repeat of its disastrous showing in 1919 when it decided to go it alone despite a change to the electoral system—also in effect for 1924 before being abandoned for the old two-round uninominal system—that put the SFIO at a marked disadvantage. In doing so the party noted the "exceptional circumstances" in which the electoral law had put it, as well as the momentary nature of this derogation of its "traditional tactics." "La motion de la Commission des résolutions sur la tactique électoral a été votée à l'unanimité" *Le Populaire* February 4 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Émile Goude "Un cartel d'une minute" *Le Populaire* December 29 1923. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. "Le Congrès socialiste a cloturé ses travaux: À l'unanimité, le Parti se prononce contre la participation ministérielle" *Le Populaire* June 3 1924. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. "Congrès National extraordinaire du 15 au 18 Août" *Le Populaire* August 31 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. "Motion de politique générale" *Le Populaire* January 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. On Blum, see Audry (1955), Berstein (2006), Colton (1966), Ziebura ([1963] 1967). [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Of course, the party's attitude could be justified under the mysterious "exceptional circumstances", as the *Cartel* had initially been. But even then, it is highly questionable whether the conditions of the *Cartel* or a hypothetical "exercise of power" truly constituted "exceptional circumstances" as envisioned by the "Charter". [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. "Congrès National extraordinaire du 15 au 18 Août" *Le Populaire* August 31 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. "La politique générale" *Le Populaire* August 31 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. "Le Congrès national extraordinaire. Paris, 10-11 Janvier 1926: Les débats" *Le Populaire* January 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Léon Blum "Le Parti socialiste et la Participation ministérielle" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* February 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Jean Lebas "Enquêtes sur le Socialisme et la participation ministérielle" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* January 5 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. "Le Congrès national extraordinaire. Paris, 10-11 Janvier 1926: Les débats" *Le Populaire* January 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. *Ibid.* [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Jean Zyromski "Enquêtes sur le Socialisme et la participation ministérielle" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* January 5 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. "Le Congrès national extraordinaire. Paris, 10-11 Janvier 1926: Les débats" *Le Populaire* January 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Étienne Weill-Raynal "Enquêtes sur le Socialisme et la participation ministérielle" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* January 5 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. "Congrès National extraordinaire du 15 au 18 Août" *Le Populaire* August 31 1925. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. "Le Congrès national extraordinaire. Paris, 10-11 Janvier 1926: Les débats" *Le Populaire* January 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. The epigraph on the cover of each issue of *La Vie Socialiste*, for example, was a famous quote from Jean Jaurès: "Go toward the ideal and understand the real." [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Pierre Renaudel "A nos amis" *La Vie Socialiste* March 4 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Jean Zyromski "Enquêtes ser le Socialiste et la participation ministérielle" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* January 5 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. La Bataille Socialiste "Pour les élections" *La Bataille Socialiste* October 10 1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. The "realism" of LVS was also redubbed "empiricism." La Bataille Socialiste "Déclaration" *La Bataille Socialiste* June 10 1927. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Paul Faure "La Participation Ministérielle, le Cartel des Gauches et l'Avenir du Parti Socialiste" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* March 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Jean-Baptiste Séverac "Le Socialisme Seul" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* May 15 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. "Un grand débat s'est ouvert hier soir devant le Conseil national sur l'avis favorables des parlementaires" *Le Populaire* October 29 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. "Le Conseil National, par 1590 mandats contre 1451, se déclare solidaire des décisions des Congrès nationaux" *Le Populaire* October 30 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. *Ibid*. For Faure's retort, see Paul Faure "Qui nous fait la leçon?" *Le Populaire* October 31 1929. Normally, the distribution of votes at party congresses was fixed by the federal congresses meeting before the national congress. For the council, however, which was often convened on short notice, the federal delegates were free to distribute their mandates as they saw fit, and in this were ultimately accountable only to their departmental federations. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. *La Vie du Parti* November 15 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. On the intellectualist mold Déat's ambition took, see Desan and Heilbron (2015). For first-hand testimonies of Déat's ambition, see Cogniot (1976: 68), Moch (1970: 66), du Moulin de Labarthète (1946: 318), Prenant (1980: 44), Varennes (1948: 251). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Déat, for his part, denied this and condemned it as calumnious. Marcel Déat "Jouons franc jeu, s'il vous plaît" *La Vie Socialiste* November 16 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Léon Blum "Aux camarades du Parti: La leçon des textes" *Le Populaire* December 6 1929. Léon Blum "Exercice et partage du pouvoir" *Le Populaire* December 14 1929. Léon Blum "La double confusion" *Le Populaire* December 17 1929. Léon Blum "La risque de confusion" *Le Populaire* December 21 1929. Léon Blum "Les dangers de la confusion" *Le Populaire* December 23 1929. Léon Blum "Les circonstances exceptionnelles" *Le Populaire* December 25 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Jean-Baptiste Séverac *La Vie du Parti* November 15 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Jean-Baptiste Séverac "Le vrai sens du choix qu'on va faire" *Le Populaire* November 29 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Jean Lebas "La politique ministérialiste et la cominaison Daladier" *Le Populaire* December 9 1929. Jean Lebas "Les fonctions électives et la participation" *Le Populaire* December 23 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. There was a pivot in Zyromski's rhetorical strategy: Where earlier he had subsumed his analysis of capitalism under the dogma/facts distinction made by the participationists, he now counterposed his analysis of capitalism to the mere "circumstances" cited by the participationists. Jean Zyromski "Nos arguments: et nos réponses" *La Vie du Parti* December 6 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. e.g. Bracke "Groupe? C.A.P.? Allons donc! Le Parti" *Le Populaire* December 7 1929; Jean Zyromski "A dix ans d'intervalle" *Le Populaire* November 8 1929; Louis Lévy "Les chose par leur noms" *Le Populaire* November 29 1919; Jean Zyromski "Notre projet de résolution" *Le Populaire* December 27 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Jean Zyromski "Il faut choisir entre deux conceptions de l'action socialiste" *Le Populaire* December 11 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. "Le Groupe Parlementaire et la crise ministérielle" *La Vie du Parti* December 6 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Marcel Déat "Réflexions sans joie" *Le Populaire* November 17 1929. Marcel Déat "Jouons franc jeu, s'il vous plait" *La Vie Socialiste* November 16 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Marcel Déat "Jouons franc jeu, s'il vous plait" *La Vie Socialiste* November 16 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Salomon Grumbach "Le problème de la participation du point de vue de internationale" *Le Populaire* December 1 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Karl Kautsky "Le problème de la coalition en France (1)" *La Vie Socialiste* January 11 1930. Karl Kautsky "Le problème de la coalition en France (2)" *La Vie Socialiste* January 25 1930. Pierre Renaudel "Lutte de classe et coalition" *Le Populaire* January 1 1930. Émile Kahn "Questions" *Le Populaire* January 11 1930. Ironically, the anti-participationists responded by citing circumstantial reasons for refusing to compare the SFIO to its fraternal parties: i.e. the SFIO was not strong or unified enough to enter a coalition. See Jean Lebas "L'Opinion de Kautsky" *Le Populaire* January 19 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Marcel Déat "Jouons franc jeu, s'il vous plait" *La Vie Socialiste* November 16 1929. The relevant portion of the resolution declared that the party was "always ready to assume the charge and responsibility of power, that it [was] always ready to give its support to all loyal and courageous efforts of democratic reform, that it [was] always ready to confront, in light of the circumstances of the moment...the necessity to defend republican institutions or the existence of conditions permitting it to impress a determinant impulsion to the rhythm of the economic transformation of Society..." "La C.A.P. et le groupe parlementaire se sont réunis hier" *Le Populaire* November 12 1928. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. "Le Groupe Parlementaire et la crise ministérielle" *La Vie du Parti* December 6 1929. "Un important débat sur la participation: Séverac, Zyromski, Delépine, Faure, Bracke et Renaudel prennent la parole" *Le* Populaire December 11 1929. Jules Uhry "La circonstance exceptionnelle" *Le Populaire* December 22 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Marcel Déat "Mais ou sont les révisionnistes?" *Le Populaire* December 12 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. "Paul-Boncour et Renaudel parlent, au dîner de la Vie Socialiste, de l'exercice partagé du pouvoir" *La Vie Socialiste* November 23 1929; Marcel Déat "Visite aux centristes" *La Vie Socialiste* December 21 1929; "La Réunion de LVS: Une large discussion sur l'exercice partagé du pouvoir" *Le Populaire* December 22 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Marcel Déat "Bouillie doctrinale et Charte en lambeaux" *La Vie Socialiste* January 11 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Marcel Déat "Mais où sont les révolutionnaires?" *Le Populaire* January 9 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Déat also noted that the possibility of such a revolutionary modification of the State had already been accepted by everybody in the case of the "exercise" of power. Marcel Déat "Bouillie doctrinale et Charte en lambeaux" January 11 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Marcel Déat "Visite aux centristes" *La Vie Socialiste* December 21 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. "Congrès National Extraordinaire du Parti" *Le Populaire* January 26 1930; "Le Congrès National Socialiste confirme à l'unanimité qu'il entend rester fidèle à la Charte de notre Parti" *Le Populaire* January 27 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Though the participationists managed to have a proposal requiring a two-thirds party majority for accepting any future participation offer dropped, their own proposal to create a new executive committee with the authority to accept such offers was rejected in favor of language stipulating that any "exceptional circumstances" had to be "recognized firmly as such" by a party congress or council—language that favored the status quo, especially given the Faurist secretariat's influence over the party's federations. "La motion rapportée par Lebas au nom de la majorité est adoptée par 2066 mandats contre 1507" *Le Populaire* January 27 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. "Le Congrès National Socialiste confirme à l'unanimité qu'il entend rester fidèle à la Charte de notre Parti"*Le Populaire* January 27 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Pierre Renaudel "Le gouvernement de coalition est en marche" *La Vie Socialiste* February 1 1930; Marcel Déat "Réflexions sur un Congrès: Fin, Suite, ou Commencement?" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* February 15 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. The majority motion in fact consisted of four different paragraphs, each of which was voted on once the minority resolution had been rejected. The participationists voted with the anti-participationists for the first paragraph declaring fidelity to the "Charter", which Séverac later decried as a maneuver designed the confuse the issue. Jean-Baptiste Séverac "Les résultats du Congrès National" *La Nouvelle Revue Socialiste* February 15 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Pierre Renaudel "Le gouvernement de coalition est en marche" *La Vie Socialiste* February 1 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Marcel Déat "Démocratie et salariat" *La Vie Socialiste* February 15 1930; Marcel Déat "Textes équivoques et manœuvres obliques" *La Vie Socialiste* May 24 1930; Marcel Déat "Défense nationale et défense de classe" *La Vie Socialiste* May 31 1930; Marcel Déat "Les trois formes de la socialisation" *La Vie Socialiste* August 2 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Marcel Déat "Démocratie et salariat" *La Vie Socialiste* February 15 1930; Marcel Déat Propagande rurale, et propagande agraire" *La Vie Socialiste* May 10 1930; Marcel Déat "Avenir socialiste et destins radicaux" *La Vie Socialiste* June 28 1930; Marcel Déat "Qu'est-ce qu'un programme d'action" *La Vie Socialiste* April 5 1930; Marcel Déat "Impuissance de la négation" *La Vie Socialiste* May 3 1930; Marcel Déat "Défense nationale et défense de classe" *La Vie Socialiste* May 31 1930; Marcel Déat "Propriété des biens et maîtrise des forces" *La Vie Socialiste* July 26 1930; Marcel Déat "Les trois formes de la socialisation" *La Vie Socialiste* August 2 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Marcel Déat "Au pouvoir, pour la paix!" *La Vie Socialiste* April 26 1930; Marcel Déat "Propagande rurale, et propagande agraire" *La Vie Socialiste* May 10 1930; Marcel Déat "Défense nationale et défense de classe" *La Vie Socialiste* May 31 1930; Marcel Déat "De quoi sera-t-il fait?" *La Vie Socialiste* June 7 1930; Marcel Déat "En marge de Charles Gide" *La Vie Socialiste* July 19 1930. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Marcel Déat "Reflexions sur quelques critiques" *La Vie Socialiste* January 31 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. Of Blum, he wrote: "he understood then that I was not inclined to comport myself toward him as an obedient disciple and that I would soon become a nuisance" (Déat 1989: 237). That Déat was expecting a sympathetic reception from Blum, however, suggests that he did not intend the book as a heretical attack on the party's core doctrine. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. Jean-Baptiste Séverac "Quelques réflexions sur les 'Perspectives socialistes' de Marcel Déat" *La Bataille Socialiste* January 1931; Dr. Oguse "L'état, c'est moi" *La Bataille Socialiste* January 1931; Jean-Baptiste Séverac "Quelques précisions au sujet des "Perspectives socialistes" *La Bataille Socialiste* February 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. That Déat continued to be seen as a threat by the party leadership is further corroborated by the fact that Faure usurped an initiative by Déat to create a documentation office for the party by setting up his own under the aegis of the secretariat. Henry Hauck "A propos de l'Office de Documentation Socialiste" *La Vie Socialiste* February 21 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Marcel Déat "Reflexions sur quelques critiques" *La Vie* Socialiste January 31 1931. Marcel Déat "Simple Constatation" *La Vie Socialiste* June 27 1931. Marcel Déat "Récidive et diversion" *La Vie Socialiste* July 25 1931. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. The idea of conditional participation had first been proposed by Déat in 1926. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. "Réunion du Groupe socialiste" *Le* Populaire June 10 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. The Faure motion censuring the GP won 2197 votes, a Renaudel motion approving the conduct of the GP won 752, and a compromise Auriol motion only expressing "regret" at the GP's conduct won 971. "Le 30e Congrès national du Parti a terminé, hier, ses travaux" *Le Populaire* July 18 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Déat was supposed to have spoken at the meeting but could not make it. He did, however, publicly express his solidarity with the speakers. Marcel Déat "Unité ou scission?" *La Vie Socialiste* October 7 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. "La manifestation d'Angoulême" *La Vie du Parti* September 11 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Léon Blum "La double fin" *Le Populaire* October 25 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. "La décision du Parti" *Le Populaire* November 6 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. In all, the SFIO lost 28 deputies and 7 senators. But not all participationists left the party; an important fraction stayed in the SFIO, choosing caution despite sympathizing with the dissidents (Lefranc 1982). [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Not all of the participationists took this doctrinal turn. Some like Renaudel continued their old line of argumentation and denied until the very end that there was any doctrinal controversy. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Marcel Déat "Le fond du débat" *La Vie Socialiste* July 8 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. "Une enquête de La Vie Socialiste auprès de nos camarades du Groupe Parlementaire sur la situation politique présente" *La Vie Socialiste* May 28 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. On Marquet, see Bonin et al. (2007), Brana and Dusseau (2001), Lafossas (2012). [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. According to Montagnon's testimony to Lefranc, Marquet did not warn his allies beforehand of the provocative nature of his discourse (Lefranc 1982: 124). White thus appears to be off base when he writes that "Montagnon, Marquet, and Déat informally coordinated their speeches around similar themes so as to construct as effective a platform for their case as they could" (White 1992: 105). [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Marceau Pivert "Il faut s'entendre!" *Le Populaire* July 27 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. "Encore le fascisme de gauche" *Le Temps* July 18 1933; "Fascisme et socialisme" *Le Temps* July 26 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Louis Lévy "Nos dictateurs" *Le Populaire* July 26 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Léon Blum "Parti de classe et non pas parti de déclassés" *Le Populaire* July 19 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Léon Blum "On ne fait pas au fascisme sa part" *Le Populaire* August 3 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. Léon Blum "La période intermédiaire" *Le Populaire* July 24 1933. The date refers to Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte's December 2 1851 *coup d'état* against the French Second Republic. Subsequently, "Bonapartism" came to refer— particularly within the Marxist lexicon—to an authoritarian dictatorship led by a charismatic strongman with a popular veneer. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. Léon Blum "Le cœur du problème" *Le Populaire* August 1 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. Léon Blum "Il n'y a qu'un socialisme" *Le Populaire* August 14 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. Even if it were a possibility, Déat's intellectualist ambitions discussed earlier would likely have prevented him from making the necessary disavowals to come back from the brink. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Marcel Déat "Ils exagèrent" *Le Populaire* August 5 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Marcel Déat "La querelle de la S.F.I.O. est inédite" *Notre Temps* September 26 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Marcel Déat "Unité ou scission" *La Vie Socialiste* October 7 1933. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Some, like Renaudel, continued to deny that there was anything "neo" about their socialism, even after forming the PSdF. Others, however, adopted the label with relish. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)