

Manifesto of the Belgian Socialist Party (9–11 June 1945)

Caption: At the 'Victory Congress' held from 9 to 11 June 1945, members of the Belgian Socialist Party (PSB) adopt the new party manifesto based on the Socialist principles adopted when the party was founded in 1894 in Quaregnon, Hainaut.

Source: Parti Socialiste Belge. La Ligne Politique du Parti précédée de la Déclaration de Principes, Textes adoptés par le Congrès de la Victoire des 9, 10 et 11 juin 1945. Bruxelles: Editions Soc, Juin 1945.

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Political programme of the Belgian Socialist Party (9-11 June 1945)

Declaration of principles

Quaregnon Congress, 1894

1. Wealth in general, and the means of production in particular, are either natural agents or the product of manual and intellectual work by this generation and previous generations. They must therefore be regarded as the heritage of mankind.
2. The right of individuals and groups to enjoy that heritage must be based on social utility and may have no other purpose than to ensure the maximum possible freedom and well-being of every human being.
3. The achievement of that ideal is incompatible with the continuation of the capitalist system, which divides society into two necessarily antagonistic classes: one that can enjoy ownership without labour and one that is forced to relinquish part of what it produces to the propertied class.
4. Complete emancipation of the workers requires abolition of the class system and radical changes in society which will benefit not just the proletariat but the whole human race. It will, nevertheless, fall to the workers to emancipate themselves, since their emancipation runs counter to the immediate interests of the propertied class.
5. Economically, their purpose must be to ensure that they have free and unrestricted use of all the means of production. In a society in which individual labour is increasingly being replaced by collective labour, this can only be achieved by collective appropriation of the natural agents and instruments of labour.
6. The transformation of the capitalist system into a collectivist system must necessarily be accompanied by other changes:
 - (a) ethical, by fostering altruism and solidarity;
 - (b) political, by the State being converted into a body for the administration of public services.
7. Socialism must therefore work towards the simultaneous economic, ethical and political emancipation of the proletariat. However, the economic aspect must predominate, since the concentration of capital in the hands of a single class is the basis for all other forms of domination.

In order for those principles to be put into effect,

The workers' party declares:

1. That it considers itself to represent not only the working class but all oppressed people, irrespective of nationality, religion, race or sex.
2. That Socialists in all countries must unite, since worker emancipation is an international and not a national task.
3. That, in their struggle against the capitalist class, workers must fight with all the means at their disposal, particularly political action, to develop free associations and constantly propagate Socialist principles.

A. International policy

The Belgian position

1. Belgian Socialists see no contradiction between their patriotism and their internationalism.

In their international action, they will not sacrifice any of the country's legitimate interests, to which they are deeply committed. Indeed, committing Belgium more firmly to internationalism is the best way to safeguard its security, independence and prosperity.

2. With the present interdependence of nations, any war of conquest tends to become a world war. Any such war in Europe is a threat to Belgium, which, because of its geographical position, is destined to become a battlefield, transit point or operations base for the large armies fighting across the continent.

Furthermore, a country that does not defend itself or have the support necessary for its security cannot expect others automatically to restore its independence and territorial integrity.

For those reasons, the PSB, the Belgian Socialist Party, deplors any policy of non-resistance to aggression or any policy of neutrality. On the contrary, it will persuade Belgium to lend active support to other peaceful nations in maintaining and defending peace.

3. Distances and geographical obstacles are irrelevant in modern warfare. The means it uses make it futile for a small country to resist. Particularly in the case of Belgium, it is pointless to create a national defence system that claims to be self-sufficient or deliberately confines itself to the restricted field of national territory.

Accordingly, the PSB will support only a national defence system that is integrated into a fully effective joint security system.

4. The diplomatic and military history of this century proves that Belgium does not only have to fear the actions of one neighbouring country. It shows that a worldwide coalition in the United Nations, in which the five great allied powers are equally indispensable and all play a leading role, is not a disproportionate means of countering the threat.

In Europe, particularly, Belgium has everything to gain from lasting understanding and close cooperation with the United Kingdom, France and the USSR and from participation, in due proportion to its interests and capabilities, in present and future agreements between those great powers in order to safeguard peace in an international context.

5. Belgium is too vulnerable to wars not to join any international organisation that will make an effective contribution to the peaceful resolution of conflicts and their preventive settlement by the joint application of powerful sanctions.

It will be the responsibility of the Party to ensure that, in that way, it fulfils its international duty to the full, to the best of its ability.

6. If, in order to ensure its security, it enters into contractual commitments or accepts the membership obligations of an international organisation, Belgium, like other nations, will have to relinquish part of its sovereignty.

The PSB accepts that here and now, in so far as any association between States, large and small, is based on equal rights, mutual respect for each other's independence and a fair apportionment of responsibilities and sacrifices.

In particular, it will not agree to Belgium's being subordinate to any power or group of powers, or to any other change in the Governments of the Congo or Ruanda-Urundi or those that might simultaneously become applicable to the colonies or territories under the mandate of the other allied or associated States.

7. A peace based on an armed balance between peaceful nations imposes burdens on them that cannot be

reconciled for long with their technical and social progress. On the contrary, the solution for the future lies in the gradual disarmament of all States. That cannot be achieved unless the economic and ideological causes of wars are first eliminated through a concerted international effort.

The Party will therefore fight and strive unceasingly:

for the establishment of an international law that puts an end to the use of force;

for an international economic structure conducive to the peaceful solution of economically-based conflicts;

for effective solidarity between democracies in fighting all forms of Fascism and Nazism;

for the Socialist workers of the world to unite against the forces of reaction, both national and international.

8. Regardless of the internal reforms proposed for domestic policy, Belgium's economic future will be assured only by a significant expansion of its foreign trade, in terms of both imports and exports.

As means of promoting that expansion internationally, the PSB advocates, *inter alia*:

active participation by Belgium in any international economic structure that will help develop trade;

a Belgian contribution to the rebuilding of Europe, not for the sake of profit but as a sensible step towards making Belgian products more acceptable on European markets;

in the same spirit, the conclusion of long-term contracts with the USSR;

the inclusion of Belgium in a customs union or, failing that, in a series of economic agreements between several countries encompassing at least, and jointly, the Netherlands and France.

[...]

An end to dictatorships

1. German aggression has been the most dramatic manifestation of the fundamental 20th century conflict, both international and national, between two irreconcilable positions: authoritarianism, which uses open or covert dictatorship to enslave nations to the conservative or imperialist interests of the propertied classes, and democracy, whose objective is to achieve, more or less effectively, government of the people, by the people and for the people.

Since Conservatism is doomed by evolution, since world peace may no longer be left to the mercy of imperialists, since dictatorship is an outrage to human dignity, since authoritarian regimes and ideas are a constant threat to the world's democracies, the PSB advises free men and nations to make sure that the end of the Second World War marks the end of dictatorships.

2. Regardless of the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of States whose governments are a constant threat to peace and democracy, the PSB advocates concerted international action by the democracies as a means of reinforcing collective security.

Such action may take various forms: open criticism of the offending regimes, refusing asylum to their

emissaries, removing their representatives from official or private international organisations, restricting or breaking off diplomatic relations, banning sales of weaponry, trade boycotts, declared support for democratic national liberation movements and, in all cases, international solidarity between workers.

3. In whatever country, democrats and workers of all shades of opinion, and Socialists in particular, may count on the international solidarity of the PSB to work with them in promoting the universal cause of freedom, democracy and the emancipation of labour in the manner indicated above.

The organisation of peace

1. The Party warmly welcomes the fact that, in the course of their common struggle against totalitarian aggression, the allied nations have resolved to remain united around the five main nations in the future defence and organisation of peace.

In particular, it welcomes, amongst the authors of that initiative, the United States and the Soviet Union, without which countries peace could not be organised on a lasting basis.

It recognises that, as international law and the balance of economic and military power stand at present, the only possible way to preserve peace is to extend the United Nations alliance, under the responsibility and leadership of the five great powers.

2. Considering, however, that the organisation of peace is a long-term task requiring constant improvement, it proposes that men of goodwill in every country should work to build up gradually, on the existing basis, an international organisation that, without disregarding the *de facto* inequality between nations, establishes international rules of law covering all areas in order to consolidate understanding between peoples and national prosperity.

3. To that end, the Party recommends that a Charter of the Rights and Obligations of Nations be included in the rules of the international organisation, incorporating, for all its member states:

firstly, the right to independence, security, peaceful development and international aid in the event of attack or emergency;

secondly, the solemn renunciation of all acts of aggression, acceptance of all obligations to society, with particular regard to participation in the imposition of sanctions, and a guarantee of fundamental freedoms for citizens, irrespective of sex, race, colour or creed.

4. To sanction the national duties thus defined, each Member State should enshrine in its Constitution an undertaking that it will comply with the Charter and accept all the obligations of the international organisation, at the same time, drawing up penal provisions applicable to any of its citizens who contravene international decisions.

5. The Party believes more than ever that the three underlying principles of the international organisation should be arbitration, collective security and disarmament.

Accordingly, it recommends that, in order to increase the chances of a political solution being found to conflicts, conciliation, mediation and arbitration procedures should be developed and that nations, guided by public opinion, should learn to abide by them.

It stresses the crucial importance of the proper functioning of the sanction machinery, which, in addition to the feeling of international obligation on the part of the member states, requires a precise definition of the aggressor, the gradual involvement of political, economic and military sanctions, a determination to impose

them before any harm is done and a fair distribution between the member states of the burdens and risk inherent in any kind of sanctions.

It would also point out, however, that the overriding purpose of the international organisation is to achieve general, simultaneous and controlled disarmament, as legal action progressively prevails over the use of force.

6. As regards economic or military sanctions, the Party considers that, when the burden falls more particularly on certain States, it is fair and conducive to the functioning of the international organisation that those States should be assisted by the other members, in order that the sacrifices to be made for the common good are shared as fairly as possible between all members.

To that end, it suggests incorporating clauses in the pact providing for permanent arrangements for such mutual assistance in the application of sanctions.

7. Conversely, where States refuse to participate in the application of validly agreed sanctions, or where they or their nationals sabotage such application, they should be deemed to be colluding with the offending States and treated accordingly.

8. For the application of military sanctions, which must be on a scale making intervention generally unnecessary because it is too effective to not deter aggression, the PSB is in favour of:

the establishment of an international ground, sea and air force made up of contingents of all nationalities, to guard danger zones under the orders of the Security Council and the international organisation;

the inclusion in the pact of clauses in which Member States undertake to provide specified military assistance at the request of the Security Council when conflict is imminent.

9. The PSB believes that, in all political, economic and social affairs, the international organisation should be based on the supremacy of the Assembly, through which all important questions are to be submitted to world public opinion.

It considers that the current situation, where only a few major powers are effectively responsible for military sanctions, must be replaced by a system where all matters may be decided by majority decision, in accordance with a system of voting that takes account of the relative size of States.

When such decisions are accepted and respected by every State, large and small, world peace will be firmly established.

10. Whatever the structure and procedures of the international organisation, its success and effectiveness will ultimately rely on the support it receives from enlightened public opinion and the awareness that the public has of its own responsibilities.

Its future, therefore, depends on proper representation of the people, wide-ranging dissemination of its work and proceedings, the progress of democracy in the world and international action by workers. It will not be fully guaranteed until a sufficient number of countries, particularly amongst the larger countries, finally abandon capitalist methods and become Socialist States.

[...]

The International Socialist Organisation

1. It is true that, by joining together, workers will bring about world peace. Workers have the strongest

possible grounds for opposing war, which for them entails nothing but suffering and sacrifice; there is no antagonism or rivalry between workers in different countries that gives them a reason to fight each other, and they aspire to democracy, social progress and the emancipation of labour, something which cannot be achieved on the battlefield.

It is also true that, in their fight for emancipation, everywhere directed against the capitalist class, it is in the interests of workers to unite across borders in order to compare experiences and take international action for their mutual benefit.

The Party would therefore like to see the re-creation of a Socialist International, in which it may restore contact with sister parties with similar beliefs, manifestoes and methods.

2. In its conception, the International should not be a super-party, dictating slogans and imposing discipline on member parties, or merely a meeting place in which resolutions are drawn up and then not acted upon.

Whilst allowing member parties the autonomy required for the determination of their tactics, it must enable them to decide jointly on directives for international Socialist action, compare methods and results in order to assist the progress of their national action, facilitate relations and special agreements between members and provide them as quickly as possible with all the information required for these various objectives.

3. In so far as the question of unity arises in the international context, the Party cannot conceive of a solution to this that departs from the solution that it will adopt nationally.

B. Domestic policy

Purge of the country

1. The Belgian Socialists have done their duty to the full in the war against the Nazi invader and in the active and passive resistance to its occupation of the country. Thousands of them sacrificed their lives and liberty in the process.

The PSB does not intend the sacrifices that they and other patriots made to be in vain. As a tribute to them, it will fight tirelessly for treason and collaboration with the enemy to be justly penalised, for Fascism in Belgium to be totally destroyed and for freedom, democracy, social progress and Socialism to be developed to the full.

2. The Party is not satisfied with the measures taken to date to purge the country and punish acts of collaboration. It deplores the lack of consistency in Government action, the slow pace of judicial investigations and the political and extra-political steps that are hampering or delaying the implementation of the law.

It demands from the Government, the purge commissions and the judicial authorities:

more formal instructions and stricter criteria for punishment and purging;

removal of all collaborators from Government institutions and departments and the closure or conversion of bodies set up by collaborators or with their assistance;

full enforcement of sentences of any kind imposed for collaboration offences;

diligent prosecution of crimes and offences not yet tried, starting with the most notorious and serious;

exemplary punishments for flagrant cases of economic collaboration;

full recovery of all sums wrongfully received by collaborators and profits obtained from trade with the enemy.

3. In so far as the conscience of the nation requires that any weakness in the face of the enemy should be justly punished, it would be intolerable for collaborators to be able to continue influencing the country's future.

The Party is accordingly calling for legislation to deprive all collaborators of their political rights and, in addition, to prohibit the most culpable from engaging in any occupation placing them in a position where they may influence public opinion.

4. Belgium wants to be clean, that is to say, rid of those Fascist elements. If the purges and punishments are sufficiently rigorous, they will ensure that.

It wishes to be safeguarded, now and in the future, against any resurgence of Fascism within the country. The PSB and the other democratic parties will remain vigilant and, where necessary, take vigorous steps to stop any attempts at reactionary demagoguery.

The most efficient barrier to reactionary Fascist activity, however, is the development of a system of true liberty, true democracy and true social progress, which citizens support because they consider it an effective way of satisfying their most legitimate aspirations.

The Party will therefore devote its best efforts to the development of such a system, which it envisages in the spirit of Socialism.

The political system

1. The fundamental question for Socialist workers with a deep commitment to peace and freedom is why the early part of this century has been marked by Fascism, a worldwide phenomenon. There is little point in opposing the effects of evil unless we identify its causes so that we may combat or destroy them.

The PSB believes that the underlying reason for the decline of democracy is the development of two extreme forms of capitalism: firstly, the anarchy of production for profit, generating serious crises and poverty in the midst of material wealth, and, secondly, the existence of trusts and monopolies sufficiently powerful to want to put an end to such chaos by an interventionism that works to their advantage.

Liberal capitalism, unable to survive as such, is tending to turn into State capitalism, a pillar of Fascism, with the support of the disaffected masses and, in particular, the lower middle classes hit by the crisis.

Since a return to capitalism is both unthinkable and undesirable from a Socialist point of view, the PSB believes that the only way to destroy Fascism completely and save democracy is to *destroy* the capitalist system.

The PSB will consider all the specific problems arising from domestic policy in the light of the above factors.

2. The entire history of Belgian Socialism demonstrates its unwavering attachment to freedom. It sees the state of freedom as the only state consistent with respect for human values and, at the same time, a necessary condition for efforts by workers to emancipate themselves.

However, whilst appreciating its true value, Socialists are not content with political freedom, which is only the start of freedom. There can be no real freedom in a system, even one with universal suffrage, in which poverty, economic servitude and uncertainty about the future deny people material and psychological

independence.

Therefore, whilst demanding that the full exercise of constitutional freedoms be guaranteed, the Party will fight with every means at its disposal to emancipate society, with no distinction being drawn between classes based on the unequal distribution of wealth.

3. The freedom of the individual has to be restricted by respect for the freedom of others. Only the law can properly define where that limit should be. Socialism assumes the need for three such restrictions: on the exploitation of man by man, on the oppression of man by man and on the arbitrary use of power.

To hinder the exploitation of man by man, the Party calls for proper regulation of the economy, legislation to protect employment rights and a general social security system. To put an end to such exploitation, it will pursue its campaign for emancipation until the capitalism that lies at the root of all abuses of economic power has been abolished.

Being opposed to the oppression of man by man, the Party rejects any discrimination on grounds of sex, race, colour or creed and, more specifically, anti-Semitism and religious intolerance. For the same reason, it will resist any further Fascist tendencies within the country by every possible means, including special legislation that deprives of their liberty those who use it only to destroy it, and even direct action if the law no longer affords sufficient protection.

Finally, the Party is opposed to the arbitrary use of power by any party and accepts only one system, a democracy in which all powers actually derive from the people and are exercised under its control, with respect for the rights guaranteed to citizens by the Constitution and the law.

4. In expressing its support for democracy, the Party intends to define its precise position on that form of government.

Bourgeois democracy, based on a capitalist economic structure, gives organised workers a political freedom that is vital to their emancipation movement, however tainted it might be by the influences of money and bourgeois tradition. At the same time, it provides them with minimum social security, albeit scarcely the amount that the capitalist system is prepared grudgingly to concede to the organised struggle of the workers.

Whilst it accepts this imperfect democracy as the historical context of its action, the Socialist movement cannot be satisfied with that. Its task is to improve the political system, to extend it to the economic and social order and to replace it by Socialist democracy as soon as it has the power to do so.

5. The Party sees Socialist democracy as based on the political sovereignty of the organised forces of labour, the elimination of classes by the collective appropriation of all export property, management of the economy by accountable public bodies and active participation by workers in that controlled management.

Such a system will guarantee the welfare and social security of the community, on which the only restriction will be the capacity of a production mechanism organised to meet the needs of all. It will ensure that everyone starts from an equal position, irrespective of wealth. It will recruit its leaders solely on the basis of their competence and public-spiritedness. It will free labour from financial constraints.

6. Although it might put an end to exploitation and insecurity, there is, nevertheless, more to Socialism than merely the economic and social emancipation of the working class.

There is also a need for a political democracy that is not distorted by an all-powerful bureaucracy or by arbitrary police power. Based on the freely expressed will of the people, it must uphold the basic distinction between the administration of property, subject to the constraints of the general interest, and the government of human beings, founded on free will and a respect for human values.

Organised in that way, Socialist democracy will ensure that citizens have as much individual freedom as is

compatible with the higher goals pursued by the community in seeking to create an efficient economy and achieve a fair distribution of the profit from collective labour.

7. Capitalism in Belgium, as in most States in which it dominates the economy, is now in decline.

Limited in its geographical spread by the development of the forces of production in the world, it can regain its equilibrium only if it restructures production with a view to increased consumption, thanks to a general rise in the standard of living of the masses. However, it cannot do so because it is based on private initiative. Its guiding principle, the pursuit of profit, makes that impossible. It is thus standing in the way of economic and social progress.

The PSB believes that this contradiction which lies at the heart of capitalism is now obvious to everyone.

Already perceptible in the current price war, it will become even more marked when the greed for profit is seen to be hampering national reconstruction. It will be even more apparent when, in order to avert the most terrible unemployment crisis ever experienced, the economy has to be adapted to the needs of consumption stimulated by an intrepid social policy.

The Party therefore concludes that it is time to consider the question of the system.

8. In a long-established country such as Belgium, the transition from a capitalist to a Socialist economy must be a gradual process, supported by the majority of the population at each stage and backed by the technical assistance required to ensure the success of each phase.

Accordingly, the Party is faced with the historic political task of establishing a majority in the country and in Parliament that is determined to bring about revolutionary change and does so by using the legal system and legal methods, to be more precise a legal system that is improved and strengthened as the process requires.

9. As of now, the Party is making the overriding needs of this change in the system its main domestic policy priority.

It will define its position on the reform of democracy and social and economic policy in the light of those needs.

Political reform

1. Taking account of the changes of attitude generated in the country by the war, the Party believes that the electorate should be invited as soon as possible to express its views on the management of public affairs in the post-war period at local, provincial and national level.

However, precisely because this consultation is of outstanding importance and will determine the country's political direction in these particularly critical post-war years, it considers it essential that the process should take place in the proper conditions.

By that it means, in particular, that collaborators should have been stripped of their political rights and voters should have had a chance to check the electoral rolls, notably to ensure that collaborators have been removed.

2. At national level, the Party is of the opinion that the Constitution should be revised in the manner indicated below.

To that end, it believes that a Constituent Assembly should be elected at the next elections. However, if any circumstances preclude that, either because the regency continues or the necessary quorum is not reached, the Party will nonetheless pursue the implementation of its programme in so far as it does not require revision of the Constitution, which to a large extent it does not.

3. As soon as it is possible to revise the Constitution, the Party, taking account of changing social attitudes, will recommend the inclusion in Title II of the right to work, the right to social security, the obligations of citizens to respect the international commitments of the State and the obligation for candidates for public office and their sponsors to swear allegiance to the Constitution.

4. The Party continues to support automatic universal suffrage at the age of 21. That is the only system that guarantees adult citizens equal rights.

It believes that suffrage should be extended to women at all levels.

It supports electoral reform to enable majorities to coalesce and instructs the Bureau to have proposals drawn up to that end.

5. The value of a democracy is measured partly by the quality of its politicians and partly by the effectiveness with which the electorate controls its representatives.

The Party will encourage its sections and federations to put forward as candidates only those who are qualified by their competence, dedication and political probity, to offer their members an opportunity to choose between them before each election and to give their elected representatives every opportunity to report on the performance of their duties.

6. In the opinion of the Party, the cornerstone of the political structure is Article 25 of the Constitution, which states that 'all powers derive from the nation'. It believes that that article must be translated into a political reality for democracy to be achieved.

Accordingly, it considers that legislative power should be exercised exclusively by a Parliament elected by universal suffrage, that it is not the role of the Head of State to legislate or sanction laws, and that the delegation of legislative power should cease.

For the same reasons, it is opposed to the creation of an economic Parliament, which would inevitably be based on the arbitrary representation of private interests and could be expected to pass only corporate legislation. Similarly, the Party will resist any trend towards the corporate organisation of the professions, whose interests must remain under public control.

7. In response to the Fascist criticism of parliamentary institutions, the Party declared itself more than ever in favour of representative government. Whilst aware of its imperfections, which it will seek to remedy as far as it is able, it believes that Parliament should resume its full constitutional function, which is to make law and monitor the Executive.

In order to improve the work of Parliament, the Party is in favour of the funding of political groups so as to ensure that they have access to a legislative research office and of the provision of a right of inquiry into the management of public affairs by Members of Parliament.

8. The Socialists also want strong government, in relation not to Parliament but to the non-accountable interests and cliques that exercise a background influence over the decisions and even the future of the Government.

As far as interests are concerned, the Executive is safeguarded if it is equipped by the law to exercise effective control over the national economy. The establishment of interests and cliques can be prevented by a return to the parliamentary tradition, so that the nation can be informed and, where necessary, alerted.

However, the Executive also needs to be reformed. Instead of being hampered by sordid financial considerations and ill-advised press campaigns, Ministers must be able to surround themselves with specialist advisers. Instead of being placed under financial supervision and decisions being taken on a basis

of Ministerial solidarity, they must once again be in control of their departments and accountable to Parliament for the management thereof. Above all, Government bodies must offer them the new institutions that will enable them ultimately to formulate and implement social and economic policies commensurate with contemporary needs.

9. The Party believes that Government officials and public servants need to be restored to public esteem, better paid and employed in organisations where they are able to use their personal initiative and responsibility, even if that entails changes in job security and rules on promotion.

It also believes that it would be useful to modernise the equipment, facilities and working methods of Government departments and to remove priests from their staff.

10. The Party will not allow the army to be re-established on its previous basis, with particular regard to its military methods and the attitudes that prevailed there before the war.

In its view, the size, structure and technical role of the Belgian army should be determined by foreign policy, particularly the organisation of joint security. At all events, it wants the army to be made more democratic as regards the recruitment and training of officers, the treatment of other ranks and the organisation of a welfare service that respects all views. In particular, it recommends that the army, starting with its officers, receive an education in citizenship.

11. The Party remains firmly in favour of State education.

It supports a radical reform of the educational system, based on the State's duty to provide teaching and education for young Belgians.

The reform must improve teaching and welfare standards, and the two-denominational structure must not be allowed to stand in the way of its implementation.

A national commission will be set up within the Party to devise the arrangements for educational reform.

12. The Party has succeeded in avoiding divisions on the linguistic issue, to the resolution of which it has made a strong contribution in that the vast majority of its members have always declared themselves to be Socialists first and foremost and have upheld their class solidarity above all else. In the same spirit, it will endeavour to resolve all aspects of the other problem undermining national unity, namely the Walloon question.

To that end, the Congress instructs the Bureau to set up a committee of Walloon, Flemish and Brussels delegates, which will table conclusions to be submitted to the Party Congress within three months.

[...]

C. The Position of the Party

Democratic coalition

1. It is the historic task of the present generation of Socialists to continue the important organisational, political education and emancipation work of the Belgian Workers' Party (POB) and take it to a higher plane by opening up avenues for organised labour to rise to power and establish Socialism.

That will be the Party's overriding objective in all its activities.

2. The Party has sufficient political experience to know that it will not win power overnight through democratic channels. On the other hand, the views it represents are too important for it to be excluded from all participation in government in the interim without, in many cases, creating an impossible political

situation.

Having, through its own development, been led to share power on terms that are not entirely consistent with its views, it at least intends not to deviate from its political line and not to sacrifice to the contingencies of the moment its chances of one day giving the country a Socialist government.

To that end, it will retain a completely open mind on all Government policy and will, where necessary, assume its responsibilities to the country entirely independently.

3. The Party is less and less enthusiastic about what are known as Governments of national unity, which only lead to cautious fence-sitting solutions based on Conservatism that distort the parliamentary system and leave room only for futile opposition by powerless groups.

It is less and less keen to see its representatives sitting alongside to members of the Conservative clique and representatives of capitalist interventionism who eliminate any diversity from the Government to which they belong and carry the internal contradictions plaguing the majorities constituting the national union right into the heart of the Council.

4. Despite these political maladjustments, there exists in Parliament and in the country a majority of democrats, divided among the various parties and not holding the same views on every issue, but brought close enough together by changing political attitudes to be able to unite in forming a Government of democratic action.

Such a Government meets both a national and an international need, at a time when it is vital to destroy the final vestiges of Fascism, to consolidate democracy by improving institutions, to promote social progress for all categories of workers and to introduce into the economy the fundamental reforms that are essential to the achievement of political balance, social development and prosperity.

5. The Party firmly believes that its members are eager to become part of a political coalition that has a genuine will to achieve. It has sufficient confidence in their disciplined attitude to pledge their loyal support for such a coalition.

It also feels that the coalition's programme cannot differ greatly from the political views expressed in this report, for the simple reason that most of the measures advocated are consistent with current needs. It nevertheless agrees here and now that they should be considered by all parties, in mutual good faith and with a common desire to harmonise points of view.

6. In the opinion of the Party, a democratic coalition requires that, from the outset, the participating groups should formally agree on joint objectives and operating methods.

As far as objectives are concerned, they should constitute a complete programme of Government action, ruling out any contentious issues. The operating methods should be the methods of a parliamentary democracy, excluding any demagoguery or undesirable agitation.

In particular, the groups involved must fully agree on the legal means that they will use to safeguard against the possibility of sabotage by the wealthy.

7. On that basis, the Party appeals to all people of goodwill. It will not reject any honest assistance. It will accept them all and will not tolerate any attempt by one group to exclude another group.

It is addressing this appeal to the parties and democratic political groups that are prepared to form a political majority with the Party. It is also addressing it to professional bodies in the economic and social fields and to people of all shades of opinion who are ready to establish a democratic coalition in the country and to reinforce it by all the means at their disposal.

8. As soon as it has received permission from its Congress, the Party will take the necessary steps to unite the forces of democracy.

If it does not succeed in its efforts in the near future, the Party will, in its next election campaign, call on voters of all persuasions to elect staunch supporters of the democratic coalition to Parliament.

9. The fact that it is advocating a democratic coalition does not mean that the Party intends to limit its horizons to the current prospects for that form of action.

However the situation develops, and whatever its contribution, the Party is not abandoning its Socialist ideals or its legitimate ambition to win power and establish a Socialist system. It therefore believes that its primary task is and remains, at all events, to work tirelessly for its own development.

That means asserting its Socialist views in all circumstances, recruiting extra manpower, maintaining its cohesion and continuing its propaganda, pursuing the achievement of its own objectives and, above all, disseminating Socialist ideas.

Other parties

1. The Party asserts its determination to remain true to itself and will scrupulously respect the independence of any parties or groups with which it may form a democratic coalition.

However, there will be little point in so doing unless it succeeds in establishing a sound Government, based on a stable parliamentary majority and resolute public opinion.

It is, therefore, essential that the Party should clearly define its position on certain issues not covered by the manifesto and on which there must be no doubt or confusion.

2. The Party has already had experience of Governments formed with such a large majority that they had virtually no Opposition, at least initially. This was because the Opposition, invariably conservative, was represented in the Government and reserved the right to assert itself at a later stage, at the most inopportune moment.

It has also had experience of coalition majorities that shifted position according to the issues being debated. That happened whenever conservative interests were at stake.

The Party therefore concludes that, this time, reactionaries must be kept out of the Government. They are free to form the Opposition, but it will be in the open. The country will see more clearly what is happening, and the parliamentary balance will be restored.

3. After so many years of national unity, it has become the practice for the majority to assert itself by massive votes. There is a deeply entrenched belief that a good majority vote is one that is virtually unanimous.

A democratic coalition Government, one formed to carry out radical reforms, must be a fighting Government. It will serve the country by helping it to rediscover the mathematical truth that half the votes plus one constitutes a majority.

4. Socialists and Communists enjoy the privilege of being able to join a coalition of their choice completely independently and as a body.

The Liberals and Christian Democrats are in a different position, and the Party is resolved to show complete understanding for their particular situation.

However, it must state that there are two limits beyond which it will not go: it will not abandon its anti-

capitalist stance, and it will not compromise on education further than it would be prepared to for the sake of national unity.

5. The Party does not expect the democratic coalition to espouse all its views on capitalism.

Its sole objective at the moment is, moreover, to end capitalist interventionism and replace it with an economic structure in which the nation can act in areas where monopolistic groups currently hold sway.

However, it has no objection to the continued existence of free enterprise in the many sectors of the economy where competition is in the public interest. Indeed, it believes that free enterprise will be far more fruitful when it is released from the oppressive control of the large economic and financial associations.

6. There is nothing in the Party's stance on religion that interferes with its political action or that should place honest Christians in a difficult position.

It respects belief and all forms of belief, provided that those who do not believe are given equal respect. Politically, it is a militant party that demands freedom of speech to oppose anyone, even church dignitaries, who attacks its principles and its work.

7. A different aspect has now been introduced into the question of unity with the Communist Party, in that the Congress has defined the PSB's political line. The Congress therefore authorises the Bureau to pursue negotiations with the Communist Party on that basis, on the understanding that no decision will be taken until the whole party has been consulted.

The Congress has decided that no joint action can be initiated in the interim without the prior consent of the Party Bureau.

Trade Unions

1. The fact that the Party has been prompted by experience and circumstances to adopt the individual affiliation system for its members certainly does not mean that it does not appreciate the virtues of trade union action or the unity of close links between trade union and political action.

True to its memories and to its convictions, it welcomes the Belgian General Confederation of Labour, the FGTB, as a sister organisation inspired by the same Socialist ideals, created, like the Party, against a background of class struggle and pursuing the same goal of emancipating the workers.

2. Firmly believing that political action is a necessary adjunct to trade union action, even if independent, it will do everything in its power to support the FGTB's action in its own field.

To that end, it will work for the development of a political system that allows trade unionism to flourish. It will back the FGTB's trade union demands. It will work to improve social legislation. It will concentrate its efforts on the major objectives which, although of relevance to trade unionists, can be achieved only through political action.

3. The Party cannot but regret that a trade union decision will deprive it of the representatives who provided it with effective help in defending trade union positions in the political arena.

It will take all the steps that are required to offset this loss to the best of its ability, in particular by instructing some of its representatives to keep themselves as well informed as possible on any trade union issues that might be debated in the deliberative assemblies.

4. The Party trusts that it will still be possible for it to collaborate with the trade unions, particularly on militant training and the drawing up of projects of common interest, so that they may be of mutual service to each other whilst respecting each other's independence.

5. Above all, the Party still trusts that it will be possible in the future for it to restore systematic relations with the trade unions, which, even if they are more flexible and less demanding on both sides, will be no less fraternal and fruitful than in the past.

Cooperatives

In the eyes of the Party, Socialist cooperatives remain what they have always been since they started: cradles of the workers' movement and experimental schools of Socialism.

The Party is proud of its consistently excellent relationship with them and is anxious to consolidate this.

It considers it its duty to defend the cooperative cause and the interests of the cooperatives in any circumstances in which its support might be useful.

In particular, it will ensure that the Cooperative Committee that it has set up in its parliamentary groups works effectively in order to provide a permanent base for the defence of cooperative interests in the legislative, governmental and administrative fields.

Mutual insurance schemes

The Party is also mindful of the important political services that the Socialist mutual insurance schemes have rendered it in many parts of the country.

It does not believe that the future structure of social security schemes will curtail their activities; on the contrary, it will be their crowning achievement, and they themselves will be an essential adjunct thereto.

Nor does it feel that there will be any threat to their future as long as they proudly uphold their Socialist principles.

Women

The Party does not pride itself on being feminist in the bourgeois sense of the word. It fights against the extra burdens placed by bourgeois society on exploited female workers, struggling housewives, sick women deprived of proper treatment, women in poor housing, mothers who bring up their sons only to lose them in battle and their daughters only for the oppression to continue unto the next generation, women whose political emancipation is the subject of considerable electoral speculation.

It has worked modestly and persistently in the economic and social fields to improve the lot of working class women.

It will continue that work, with the aim of achieving civil and political equality of the sexes. It will continue it in an egalitarian spirit, welcoming women to its ranks on the same basis as men, without a separate organisation, but nevertheless providing for recruitment methods specially tailored for them and a fair allocation of tasks.

Intellectuals

The Party's aim in changing its name was not only to reflect the radicalisation of its policy but also to dispel the old idea, for which there was very little justification, that it was the party of worker control.

The Party needs intellectuals. It appeals to them, not for electioneering reasons — which might not be worthwhile — but because it needs them, because the world that it wants to build cannot be built without their help.

It needs doctors and healthcare workers for the health service of the future, teachers for the schools of the future, engineers and chemists for Socialist undertakings, architects and town planners to transform dwellings and estates, writers and artists to show the greatness of emancipated labour, scholars and inventors for scientific and technological innovation, accounts and actuaries, economists and philologists, civil servants and lawyers.

It needs them to formulate and implement its plans, to criticise the Party and its work, to lead and to serve the community.

It is not promising them anything — good jobs or honours or special consideration — nothing but hard work, responsibility and the inexpressible joy of creating a world in which knowledge is appreciated for its true worth, even in monetary terms, and dedication to one's fellow men is rewarded by the smiles of happy children.