

Anti-Communist Socialism

Lecture No. 0013 (February 15, 1974)

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Preliminary remarks

I'm going to make one small announcement, and that is that I'll be able to show, apparently, sometime in the course of the term the excellent film *The Battle of Algiers*, which somebody has very kindly offered to co-sponsor with this class, and really is just looking for a room in which it can be shown. And since I've exhausted the money that any one of us gets for showing films — in fact I ran over it last term — so that anytime you have a free film that you think is important, I will find time to show it. I'm really very impressed with the value of that kind of thing.

Lecture

By the time you came to that second week of May of 1947, when it was a Socialist prime minister of France, Paul Ramadier — who ousted the Communists from his government and who ended the last of those so-called tripartite progressive government that had ruled France since the liberation down to May of 1947 — by the time Paul Ramadier did that in May of 1947, American policymakers had made it pretty clear what their objectives were in Europe and what their objectives were specifically in France. And they had made it perfectly clear that they were capable of using their power, deploying it in order to reach those particular objectives. Look, that they had made it clear to the French what kind of economic influence or economic clout they had. That was made apparent in April and May of 1946, when the French sent a delegation headed by Léon Blum to Washington, really begging for a loan. And you've got to think of those years because, really, they are the touchstone for the kind of transformation that we go through now.

You are thinking of years, after all, when foreign ministers and finance ministers of Europe are coming to Washington with their hat in hand, really begging for some kind of relief, begging for some kind of recovery. And so that French economic mission went in April and May of 1946, and they got their loan. And Jimmy Byrnes, the Secretary of State, offered them a \$300 million loan at 6% interest to be paid off in thirty-five years, and a \$650 million loan from the Import-Export Bank to buy American imports. All of that was true, but the French had to promise certain things. They had to promise, in the first place, that they would not engage in any of those restrictive bilateral agreements in which they should restrict American trade potential in France. And they had to remove all of those kinds of restrictive trade barriers, in terms of tariffs and the

like, that would keep foreign imports out. And consequently, the Americans already showed by that agreement what kind of influence they could have in a country like France.

In the second place, they already indicated what kind of political influence they could have. Because all during the late months of 1946 and in the early months of 1947, American policymakers, people out of the State Department, were talking to French politicians — talking to members of the Socialist Party and the MRP [right-wing Mouvement républicain populaire] — and telling them that they really had to get rid of those Communists in the government, that the Communists in the government had to be ousted. And, in fact, communism had to be ousted from any kind of viable public influence. And all of that became rather frenetic among policymakers in Washington after the November elections of '46. Because in those November elections, you recall, the French Communist Party scored almost 30% of the vote and it got five ministers in the French ministry. And one of them, François Billoux, was the minister of defense. And the Americans thought that was all an extremely dangerous kind of presence of communism, and consequently demanded of French policymakers that they oust them.

And, you see, those kinds of demands, as covert as they were, really became very overt with the Truman Doctrine. Because the Truman Doctrine of March of 1947 really anchored the whole premise of American military and economic aid within the framework of fighting against subversion, fighting against external or internal subversion. The idea being that there was a *quid pro quo* that France or any country would get help from the United States insofar as they made a frontal confrontation against the Communists. And that was made even more explicit by the American ambassador to France in April of 1947, Jefferson Caffery, who very bluntly told Paul Ramadier that France would much more quickly and much more easily get extensive economic aid if the Communists were ousted. And it's in that framework that you have to see, after all, that action, that surgical operation of the first week of May of '47 in which, over the Renault strikes, when the Renault strikes forced the Communists to vote no confidence in the government, no confidence in that program of freezing wages — when they vote that no confidence, they are forced out of the government.

And it's not, you see, only in France. Because that echoes what went on in Belgium earlier that year in March of 1947, when Paul-Henri Spaak, who was the Socialist prime minister of Belgium, ousted the Communists from that government. And it already presages what will go on in Italy later in the month of May, on the 30th of May, when [Italian premier Alcide] De Gasperi ousts the Communists from that Italian government.

All of which takes you, then, to the plane at which American policymakers systematized and generalized their strategy for Europe. And that they do, after all, with the famous speech that Secretary of State George Marshall is to make at Harvard University on the 5th of June of 1947.

Because when Marshall goes to Harvard and makes that speech, what he does is to outline, already, what we call the Marshall Plan. Because in that speech he talked about the possibility that European countries would draw up a coordinated plan for their economic recovery and that if the United States approved, it would subsidize, and it would finance that plan.

Now, that outline of the Marshall Plan, which Marshall made here in June of '47, became law by the 3rd of April of 1948 when the Congress passed the Foreign Assistance Act and set up what we call the Economic Recovery Program. And ERP was finally put into effect in the spring of 1948. But already the year before, the strategy was pretty clear. And it was that the United States was going to subsidize or buttress conservative capitalist regimes in Europe. It was the idea of restoring, after all, of that tremendous turmoil of the war, of restoring a conservative capitalist climate in Europe. And, secondly, and note it well, integrating the economy of Europe: in other words, making it, if you please, what we call a common market. Integrating the economy of Europe into a kind of common economic market which should be coordinated, after all, with what the needs of American economic expansion were.

And so we ask the concrete question: What did this kind of a framework mean for a society like France? What did it mean in terms of the kind of society, the kind of country that really developed from 1947 on? And you can take it at the immediate, and you can say first off that it was perfectly obvious that the American influence meant an increasing conservatism in French public life: that the governments of France, insofar as they represented the political strategy of that country and the socio-economic strategy of the ruling class, became increasingly conservative, further and further away from any of the premises or any of the insights of the resistance or the liberation.

Look, that you go from what are called tripartite governments to what are then called third-force governments. Tripartite governments, they meant coalitions of the resistance parties, coalitions of the Communists, the Socialists, and the MRP. But what we mean by the third-force governments, which now followed in May of '47 and for the following years, those governments are coalitions of the Socialists, the MRP, and the old, rather discredited Radical Party. And you see what third force means: that these governments would be a force between the Communists on the left and completely reactionary Vichyite parties on the right. But that doesn't really tell you what third force is. Third force, basically, is the American operation. It is the American ploy. It is these governments, after all, that will try to turn France into some kind of a proper political and economic client of American foreign policy. And to say that those third force governments stand between the right and the left is not accurate, because they move increasingly to the right until that momentous date of the 6th of March of 1952, when the prime minister who accedes to power is one Antoine Pinay. And when Pinay comes in as the prime minister less than ten years

after the end of the war, you have your first Vichyite prime minister. The man who loves [collaborationist politician Pierre-Étienne] Flandin, the man who admires [Pétainist premier Pierre] Laval, and who becomes then the prime minister of France.

And so you're talking about that comfortable conservative political climate that American policymakers really wanted. And there is a second point, which is a corollary to that and terribly important if you are to understand your world and your universe. And that is the increasing isolation of French Communists in French political life. Not only isolation from the point of view of being ousted from the government. But I'm talking about a kind of excommunication from the nation itself: that kind of isolation which means that the Communists become pariah, that they become the excuse for any kind of anti-labor or anti-social action because they stand for subversion. Now, I want to think of what that means strategically. Once you begin so to isolate the Communists, to identify them with subversion, the old ruling class of France that had collaborated with Vichy, that was a little bit on the defensive after the Second World War, comes back into its own. Suddenly, after all, it can fight communism. And under that flag, after all, crush the working-class movement. Crush that CGT, that General Confederation of Labor which had 6 million members by the end of 1946 but which was led by Communists. And, consequently, to fight it is to preserve French freedoms, is to fight against Communist subversion.

And in creating that climate, General de Gaulle played his part. Because General de Gaulle launched that RPF — that Rassemblement du peuple français, that assembly of the French people — launched that party of the right in April of 1947 at Strasbourg, and then made his famous speech at Rennes on 27th of July of '47. And it basically is such a dishonest speech, because De Gaulle says in that speech, "Our beloved soil, on our beloved soil, in our very midst, there are men who have bound obedience to the orders of a foreign power. These Communists would subject our beautiful country to totalitarian servitude where a Frenchman owns his own body and soul." Now, you see, De Gaulle had fought with those Communists all during the resistance. He knew damnably well that they had supported him up to the hilt. But it was convenient here in 1947, when the question is what kind of strategy of development there will be for France, so to isolate the Communists, to excommunicate them from the body politic.

But don't "let's just blame De Gaulle," or don't even "let's just blame the ruling class." That the Communists themselves really helped to impose that isolation upon themselves, because it is very, very interesting for us to note that here, from the middle of 1947, after they are expelled from the government, the Communists suddenly refined and rediscovered their purity. And they began to launch a very hard line against the Cold War. And after years of being very soft on the Americans, of loving that Grand Alliance during the war, of collaborating with the French

bourgeoisie, of urging the workers to produce and not to strike — suddenly they find the enemy that is American imperialism. Now, in finding that enemy, they are responding to a shift in the tactics of the Soviet Union. A response of the Soviet Union to the imperatives of the Cold War, which response came in September of 1947 in the formation of the Cominform: the formation of the Cominform, or the Communist Information Bureau, which succeeds then the Comintern that had been dissolved in 1943. And the Cominform is founded at a meeting in Warsaw between the 22nd and the 27th of September of '47. And the Communist line the world over then changes. And we must understand that to understand something about the reality of the Cold War and something about the mythology of it. And how, after all, Russian policy was persistently misinterpreted and sometimes quite willingly.

Now, go back for a minute in terms of understanding why the Russians changed and why, consequently, the French Communists and all other European Communists changed with them. Go back for a minute and remember that from the end of the war right to the beginning of '47, that Stalin and Russian foreign policy were hellbent on getting an entente with the United States. What they wanted, after all, was credit or economic aid. What they wanted was recognition by American diplomacy of the Russian sphere of influence: in other words, recognition of a bipolarized world, and a world in which the United States could trust the Soviet Union not to go beyond its own defense perimeter. And we are rather astonishing at how long Stalin very overtly and publicly hews to that line.

There's Harry Truman, after all, saying in August of 1945 — after he pulled the switch and made that magnificent contribution to civilization of dropping the A-bomb — and Harry Truman said at that point, with a great deal of pride, that "America is now the most powerful country in the history of the world. She can do anything." Now, within that framework, you'd think that Stalin would get very paranoid and think that Russia was very much in danger, but look at these statements of Stalin in '46. Here he is in September of '46 in a speech in which he says, "I don't believe that the atomic bomb represents as imposing a force as some political leaders are inclined to believe." In other words, what he's saying is that the atomic superiority is a temporal thing; in other words, the Russians will get the bomb fairly quickly, that the only long-term resolution to the problem of the world is an entente or some kind of viable agreement with the United States. And then, the very next month in October of 1946, he is interviewed by a group of Western journalists and asked the direct question, "Do you think that the tension between the Soviet Union and the United States has grown greater?" And he answers, "*Nyet*" — in other words, that it has not.

Now, all that, I say, strikes one as being very bizarre. Because, after all, from the Potsdam Agreements of July 1945, in which Truman and Stalin met, until the announcement of the

Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan, there had been all kinds of evidence of a very militant American foreign policy. For one thing, American policymakers had designed the whole strategy of containment and counter-revolution within their particular selected zone. They'd done it in Italy, in France, especially in Greece where they were crushing, after all, an armed civil war. But it's more than that, you see. And that is that American diplomacy began to operate in those marginal zones to which the Russians really lay some kind of claim. So that you get American pressure, for example, beefing up the Iranian government in 1946 to demand the ouster, effectively, of Russian troops from the north of Iran. And Russian troops were expelled in May of 1946. And then you get the Americans in Iran beefing up the government and telling them to march into that northern province of Azerbaijan which had been put under the Tudeh government, a pro-Soviet, progressive, left-wing government. And the Iranian government did that. All, of course, within the framework of the United State's desire to get a foothold in Iran and to get access to that petroleum.

Or take the case of Japan, to which we will return, but it suffices to say that the Soviet Union had an interest in what was going to happen in Japan. It was, after all, as the Soviet Union, an Asiatic power likewise. And the United States very categorically told the Soviet Union, in no uncertain terms, that there would be no Soviet influence in the occupation of Japan and in the kind of development that that country would have. So that one wonders why it is that Stalin thinks that he can get the Americans to give him aid, to come to some kind of an agreement.

And my explanation of that — and, granted, it's one that I make myself, but my explanation of that — really is that I think Stalin thought that he had an ace up the sleeve. And that the ace up the sleeve was China. That he knew damnably well that the entire cornerstone of America's policy in the Far East was a big, friendly, client China: in other words, a China under Chiang Kai-shek and the Kuomintang, which should be, after all, the funnel for American political and economic influence upon the mainland of Asia. But the problem was the Chinese Communists. And the Chinese Communists were not quite as much a pushover as the French or the Italian Communists. Now, Stalin had urged the Chinese Communists to make collaboration just as he had urged the French and Italian Communists to do that, to collaborate with the national bourgeoisie; in other words, to collaborate with the Kuomintang, with Chiang Kai-shek, with that kind of conservative nationalist movement. And the Chinese Communists were a bit reluctant to do that. But anyway, it was out of their hands because Chiang Kai-shek attacked the Chinese Communists in 1946 and the civil war begins. And in that civil war the Chinese Communists don't lie down, don't roll over — they fight like hell and they really, by the end of that year, have a privileged position. They're defeating the Kuomintang, despite all of that American aid.

Now, look: now, Stalin saw that son of the former president, Franklin Roosevelt, he saw Jimmy

Roosevelt in the December of '46 in Moscow. And he says a most interesting thing to him. He says, "We can resolve a lot of problems by pursuing a common policy in the Far East." And what I think Stalin is saying is that, "I can still pull the chestnuts out of the fire for you in China. I can still put the restraints upon the will or the passion of the Chinese Communists to move *jusqu'au bout*, right to the very end in China and make an accommodation with which, basically, you can live." And it seems to me that was the kind of thing that Stalin counted upon for working out some kind of an agreement with the Americans, even within the framework of all of these affronts to those places in which the Russians might have a claim. Furthermore, Stalin knew perfectly well that the Americans were aware of how much the Russians had restrained revolutionary movements.

Look, Bedell Smith — General Walter Bedell Smith, who becomes the ambassador to the Soviet Union in February of '46, replacing Averell Harriman — Bedell Smith sends a long report to Secretary of State Byrnes in November of '46. And that report is fascinating because it shows to us that American policymakers were pretty damn aware that Russians were holding a very tight rein over the Communists. And this report was a version of what [Maurice] Thorez, the head of the French Communist Party, told the Politburo (or the political bureau of the PCF, or the French party) after his trip to Moscow in the summer of '46. And what happened was that American intelligence agents had gotten leaks from the French Politburo and that got back to Bedell Smith, and he wrote in this report the following, and its extraordinary as a document: "Because the Soviet Union" — and this is Thorez talking to the Politburo — "Because the Soviet Union is in the position of having to avoid any participation in a major war for a relatively long period of time, it follows that the French Communist Party should not advance too rapidly. And, above all, it should never endeavor to seize power by force, since to do so might provoke a strong American retaliation." In other words, the Americans were aware that that was the position being pushed upon the Communists in France by the Russians. That they had in this very document that Bedell Smith had sent along.

So, I suppose that within that framework, it shouldn't surprise us so much that when the Marshall Plan was enunciated by Marshall in that Harvard speech of the 5th of June, and did not specifically exclude the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as recipients of American aid for recovery, that the first reaction of the Soviet Union, and certainly of the Eastern Bloc, was a very favorable one to the idea of a Marshall Plan; that they might be able to get help. Now, Stalin wasn't stupid. He wasn't so naive as to think that the Americans were doing this gratuitously. His feeling was that there was an imperative in the American economic system, that they had to have those markets and they had to buy them at the cost of these recovery credits. And Stalin was right, except in one very important detail, which was that if there was an American economic imperative, it was really for the Western bloc. That they didn't really need Eastern Europe and

were not going to make very many concessions for that.

But, you see, when the foreign ministers then of Great Britain and France, who would be Ernest Bevin for Great Britain and Georges Bidault, invited the Soviet Union to a conference in Paris on the 27th of June of 1947, so that the three powers could discuss a possible plan of economic recovery, the Russians responded favorably. And Molotov arrived with eighty-nine Russian advisors. Well, that's taking something seriously. You don't come with eighty-nine technicians if you're going to laugh. And consequently Molotov came, and what would you do if you were Molotov? The first thing he did was to say, "Alright, we've all been bludgeoned in the war. We all have a bill of particulars of things that we need. So, the way we draw a European plan is for every country to draw up its set of needs, make them in one, and present them to the Americans. And then, if they can do it, they do it. If not, *tant pis*. And, consequently, the answer then came from Bidault and from Bevin because they had already been briefed by Will Clayton and by American policymakers. And the answer was, "No, that's not the way to do it. We must draw up together, at once, a common overall plan that does not take into account the specificities of each country's needs, but takes into account a common European economy."

You see the point? Well, the Russians did. The point was that if you make this kind of common European economy, you have that marvelous division of labor. Some places will be raw material and agricultural, and what better than the Soviet Union and its Eastern Europe area, which already are pretty agricultural. Other places will be industrial, but not competitive, really, to the United States.

Well, Molotov heard all of that and he decided he heard enough. And, consequently, when he left Paris on the 2nd of July after his talks with Bevin and Bidault, he made this statement to the press: "Today pressure may be exerted on Poland to produce more coal, even at the cost of restricting other Polish industries. Norway will be forced to refrain from developing her steel industry because this would better suit certain foreign steel corporations, and so on. What will remain of the economic independence and sovereignty of such European countries? The Soviet government deems it necessary to warn the governments of Great Britain and France against the consequences of such actions which aims not at uniting the efforts of the European countries for their postwar recovery, but for entirely different purposes that have nothing in common to do with the true interests of the peoples of Europe: to put those countries under American dominion." What the Russians smoked out was that if they went into this particular plan, they would have to give up their idea of Communist development, their idea of Communist economic development. They would become part of that European satrapy, and that they were not about to do.

So that when those Paris talks broke down, the Soviet Union was hellbent against the Marshall Plan. And it was hellbent on two scores, primarily. One, because it suspected that the Marshall Plan was the cement by which the Americans were going to weld together an economic and political bloc in Western Europe, including Germany, which should become aggressive against the East. And, secondly, because they saw in the Marshall Plan a threat to their bloc: a threat of disaggregation of the Eastern Bloc, of those seven countries that belonged within the framework of Soviet influence. Now, that is crucial in the whole founding of the Cominform.

Because, you see, of those seven countries of Eastern Europe, of those countries which had pro-Communist regimes, only one of them, namely Yugoslavia, had made its own revolution. For the rest, those regimes had turned leftward on the basis of the Soviet armies. In other words, they were fragile regimes, and already there was evidence the so-called popular democracies, that really were their governments — those alliances in those Eastern countries between the Communist parties and certain progressive bourgeois parties — that the politics of those countries were being undetermined by American propaganda and American agents.

But what was most vulnerable was that those Eastern countries really had a much more realistic trade relationship with the United States than with the Soviet Union. And to let them go into the Marshall Plan was to let them, after all, go into the American economic orbit. The Russians saw full well that in the last six months of 1946, and the first six months of 1947, that Czechoslovakia's imports from the United States tripled while her imports from the Soviet Union were cut in half. Perfectly reasonable. You're talking about countries that are either primarily agricultural and need industrial goods that the Russians can't give them, or, as in the case of Czechoslovakia, that must refurbish their industrial base and consequently need the sophisticated material the United States can supply.

And it's in that framework that the Russian sponsor the meeting in Warsaw on the 22nd of September of 1947 which founds the Cominform, or the Communist Information Bureau. Now, get it straight that the Cominform in no way is successor to the Comintern; that it in no way preaches world revolution; that in no way is it concerned, after all, with promoting social revolution around the world. Let me give you two very crucial bits of evidence.

There are nine representatives at the Cominform meeting. They are the seven Eastern countries plus the Communist parties of Italy and of France. Now, I tell you that at that moment, there were two Communist parties, the one in Greece and the one in China, that were fighting American imperialism. If the Cominform had been founded in order to undo the bases of American imperialism, those parties surely would have been represented, the French and the Italian...

[audio cuts out]

... to undo the American bloc, but so too disaggregated that it could not become a progressive bloc. In other words, to prevent the Marshall Plan really from working in France and in Italy, so that the United States couldn't consolidate that kind of bloc that the Russians feared.

And the second bit of evidence: the very long speech and the central speech that was made by [Andrei] Zhdanov. Now, Zhdanov was the Soviet spokesman at the founding meeting of the Cominform. And Zhdanov, in that speech — which is a speech that's so misinterpreted, that is constantly referred to, that is the source in Western press and Western diplomacy of the Russian desire to conquer the world for communism — Zhdanov, you see, said in that speech that "the world is now divided into two camps, the imperialist camp and the anti-imperialist camp." Now, I ask you to think of what the very word "camp" means. He's not saying "between the anti-imperialist movement and the imperialist movement"; he's saying "camp," and camp means blocs of countries. It doesn't mean the anti-imperialist movement of China, it doesn't mean the anti-imperialist movement of Greece: it means the blocs of countries which Zhdanov is talking about is a bipolar world. And, secondly, when he talks about what the aim of this meeting is, it is to try to bring peace between these two blocs. The aim is not socialism. The aim is not to disaggregate that imperialist bloc to the point that it's revolutionary. It is to force it into an entente.

And that put a special obligation upon the French Communists. The French Communists, a bit attacked at the Cominform meeting by Tito for having been too opportunistic. And out of that meeting, the French Communists got their mission. Their mission was to go back to France and to attack the Marshall Plan. To say that it meant the subservience of French capitalism to American capitalism, to say that it was an instrument of war and not peace. In other words, to go back to France and to push the line of national capitalism against American imperialism, and to push the line of peace against war, and try to urge a restoration of those national front governments in which they had participated. All of that to give Stalin time. All of that so that Russians got the A-bomb, so that they could force the Americans to recognize the balance of power and to make some kind of entente.

And that is defensive. And yet, you see the way it is interpreted. It is interpreted as the beginning of a great Communist offensive for world domination. It is interpreted as meaning that the Communist parties are subversive. And you see what that means for France. What it means is that the Communists succeed, really, in isolating themselves. They follow and they speak this hard line. For the ruling class, it is perfect. They are back in the open, all of those damnable Vichyites crawling out from under the rocks. And suddenly, you see, they've got this Communist really where they want him, showing how subversive, how much they want to undermine

liberties defended by the Americans.

All of which takes us to the third fact about the impact of this structure upon France. Within that framework of a growing conservatism politically, of an isolation and a kind of excommunication of the Communists comes a third point. And note it well, because really it is the tragedy. And the third point is the crushing of the working-class movement: the crushing of the working-class movement, the containment of the trade union movement, the defeat of the trade union movement. Three years after the liberation. Three years after all of those hopes. Well, you see what I'm talking about. I'm talking about the great strikes of 1947 and '48.

And you really have to know about those strikes. They are at the foundation of all of the mythology of the world that you live still live in. And why were there big strikes? Wow, they were big in 1947. There were three million French workers on strike in November of 1947. And you don't have to be a great genius to understand why. That the cost of living is inflationary and going way up. If you take the year 1938 as your index number of 100, the cost of living in 1946 is already 650; in 1947, it is 960; in 1948, it is 1,655. In other words, you have a spiraling inflation which is terrific. With that, you have frozen wages. With that you have the wage freeze that is always on. And especially severe, the cost of food. And it begins to sound familiar. And it is the cost of food, and in part, of course, because the farmers simply will not sell in the regular markets. They sell in the black market. The cost of food really spirals upward, and finally the workers can't take it any longer. And they bypass their own Communist leadership in the FCP. They make that strike at Renault in May of 1947, largely under the impetus then of Trotskyist leadership.

And what I tell you is that between May and the beginning of November of 1947, there was a continuous round of strikes. It just never stops. But all of those strikes were economic, spontaneous, and came out of those conditions. And they came, to a great extent — and I want you to think about this — they came to a great extent in what was called the nationalized sector of the French economy. Because in '45 and '46, the French had nationalized the coal mines, nationalized the gas and the electricity, nationalized some of the banks and the rest of the railroads. In other words, there was a nationalized sector. But the point is that if you have an *état patron*, a state that is your boss within a capitalist society, it's no better than that boss who is a private entrepreneur, and even worse, because the state has all of that apparatus of force at its particular disposal. The result is, you get this spiral of strikes that has nothing to do, really, with Communist impetus or Communist leadership. It has to do, simply, with the dismal economic conditions.

But for the Americans, in the American press in 1947, if you read the *New York Times* for the

summer of 1947, those strikes are always referred to as Moscow-bound strikes, or Communist-bred strikes. And certainly that was the case with French politicians. And French politicians who wanted more emergency help from the United States, who wanted a loan even before the Marshall Plan should be legislated into law, they began to talk this way, the way that Ramadier talked, who was the prime minister, on June the 4th of 1947 before the National Assembly. And he says this, you see, and see what kind of paranoia you suggest this way: "You see a crescendo of strikes, sector by sector in the French economy. Yes, there is a hidden orchestra leader directing this dangerous symphony." Well, that may be good musicology, but it is very bad politics. And for somebody who was a Socialist prime minister, as Ramadier was, a little bit bizarre to look at the way in which French workers were really living, the way in which the fight was being taken out of them, and to say that there is a hidden hand.

But then that hidden hand comes out. And that's in November of '47. You had this crescendo of strikes, separate sector by sector, not very successful. And then there is explosion. And there is a general strike in November of '47. And it begins with an action in Marseille. And in Marseille there is an absolute Cro-Magnon as the mayor. He's an RPF, he's a Gaullist, and consequently, at a city council meeting on the 12th of November, he's roughed up pretty badly and deserved every bit of it. And then there's a street riot outside the town hall, and in the street riot a Communist is killed. And suddenly, there is the explosion of a general strike. And from that Marseille strike the explosion begins because, at that point, the CGT, the General Confederation of Labor, demands an increase of wages across the board, an increase in the minimum wage for all workers, and says that it's going to poll the workers, federation by federation, to see if they will go out on a general strike. Well, it never had a chance to poll the workers because on the 17th of November, spontaneously, the general strike began. It began in Paris in the metals trades and spread especially into the coal fields, into those 200,000 coal miners in the area of the north of France. Those people who were living under the same conditions that they had had in the period of the occupation, for whom the nationalization of the coal mines was supposed to have meant liberation and meant nothing but a repressive state. And it spread, and it exploded.

And the government of Ramadier fell, and it was replaced by the government of Robert Schuman. Robert Schuman, a conservative Catholic member of the MRP. And Schuman was a great friend of the Americans. And he put in as his minister of the interior the Socialist Jules Moch. And Jules Moch really was a general. And so Moch became the minister of the interior and immediately planned the battle against what he considered an insurrection, a political insurrection led by the Communists. And so he called in 80,000 reservists, and he ultimately deployed 200,000 troops against strikers, and ultimately deployed 120,000 police (especially in the CRS, the security police) against these strikes. And even talked to the American military attaché, and drew up what was called Battle Plan Y. And I love this. And Battle Plan Y was to

block all of the roads leading into the south and southeast of France, because through those roads were going to come legions of the International Brigades who had been huddling since the Spanish Civil War. You're really dealing with a paranoia of the first order, and what happens is that all of the force of the state is brought to bear. And the accusation is that it's a political insurrection. And what is the reality?

And the reality is very interesting, because it tells you so much about the strategies of our world. In reality, the Communists were there and they were leading the CGT. And they were trying to make political strikes out of this, but political strikes in a very concrete way. In other words, they were spreading the slogan, "Down with the Marshall Plan, down with war." And they weren't getting anywhere. That the workers weren't interested in that. They were interested in their living conditions. But when you say insurrectionary, no. Because no way were the Communists planning to make an armed insurrection. And it is the CGT itself, and its strike committee running this general strike, which on the 9th of December calls it off and tells the workers to go back to work, that Jules Moch has too many troops and too many police out. And the strike collapses.

And it collapsed at a terrific expense. The weakening of the working class, the strengthening of the repressive apparatus of the state, the breaking of the unity of the trade union movement. And here, take pride and see that fine, boney hand of the AFL-CIO. Because it is American labor doing its bit for American imperialism that is so much evident in the formation of what is called the Force ouvrière, which splits off from the CGT, and really divides the unity of the French working-class movement. Now, this is nothing new. That [AFL leader Samuel] Gompers had been into that in the period of Wilson, that Gompers had been all over Europe pleading with trade unionists not to go the Bolshevik way and doing Wilson's job for him. And the American trade union movement has always been into that kind of international political work. And so, in 1944 was established in Washington the Free Trade Union Committee, and was established by three great militants of the American trade union movement: David Dubinsky of the Garment Workers Union; and William Green, the head of the AFL; and George Meany, the non-White House plumber [*laughter*]. It suffices to say that you have a very conservative auspices. They put in charge of that committee Jay Lovestone, who had once been head of the American Communist Party, later was to become an advisor in the State Department on international affairs of labor. But the real architect of that policy of American labor in Europe was the ubiquitous, ever-present Irving Brown.

And Irving Brown was there. Well, he was everywhere. And he was there for seventeen years, from 1945 down to 1962, operating in everything. And it's Irving Brown who in 1946 subsidized a dissident group inside the CGT. And it is Irving Brown who worked hand-in-glove with the

labor attaché of the American embassy at that time, a man named Richard Elbridge, to find out who the vulnerable trade unionists were — in other words, the ones you could bribe, and consequently went with money. And, at the crucial moment in November and December of 1947, in the midst of that great general strike, got a certain sector of the CGT, the anti-communist dissidents, to organize into this committee called the Force ouvrière, and to make on the 5th of December a separate peace with the government, with Daniel Mayer who gave a little bit of concession. And, consequently, 20% of the workers walked out on the strike and finished it off.

Well, that's only the beginning of that story. Brown wasn't only in France. He was in Germany, he was in Greece, he was in Italy. And, you know, all those people who work for the CIA are very, very discreet. They don't say very much. But Brown, after all, did so much he has to take credit for it. And, consequently, he told us in 1952 that he had played an instrumental part in the schism in the CGT and in really breaking the strikes of '47 and '48.

And they went further, the Americans, and helped to subsidize the division within the World Federation of Trade Unions in 1949. That there's Jim Carey of the Electrical Workers and Irving Brown, and consequently formed the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, which operates not only in Europe but in Latin America, in Asia, in Africa. Why? Why? Why preach the anti-Communist line, to preach against the class struggle, to say that the American formula for trade unionism is the only one that works for workers? Oh, well, we know that story and how much trade union leaders have sold out their people time and time again. But to sell out people in countries that aren't even your own, as a leader of labor, is a little bit much.

And so there was a loss. But that's only the beginning, because the strike of '48 was even a greater loss. And I have to tell you about that, you can't go away in the middle of the strike movement. Too much rests on it. And what happened was, of course, that the French government got the emergency help that it wanted after that '47 strike. And Truman got an emergency appropriation of \$580 million in December of '47. And the French government distributed it to French industry. And you have in '48 a recovery of French capitalism. By the fall of 1948, capital goods production is up a third over 1938 levels, investment is three times as much as it had been in 1938, and dividends are really beginning to show a profit. But that's all on the business side. Prices are high, profits are high, and wages remain desperately low. All of this is taken out of workers. And they barely make their lunch pail. When I tell you that in the first year that I spent totally in France, the first full year which was the year 1952, I spent that year at a salt mine. And that five out of twelve million French workers were working at \$50 a month, then you see what I mean when I talk about a subsistence wage here in 1948. And the point was that they were volatile, and the government might have made some concessions, but here is the American

influence. The United States by that time, through the Economic Cooperation Administration, the ECA, is really calling the terms on internal economic policies. It wants balanced budgets, it wants high profit rates, it wants low wages — it wants, in other words, a conservative capitalism. And it holds up funds unless there are these balanced budgets.

And so the spark to the '48 strike came on the 18th of September of 1948, when Robert Lacoste, who was the Socialist minister of the national economy, when Robert Lacoste dismissed about 10% of the employees in the nationalized sectors, two-thirds of whom were Communists or militant trade unionists. And that meant that the CGT called for a general strike. This time there could be no general strike. It went largely in the mining sector. The workers were too exhausted. But you do have a real mine strike, and it's generalized in both the *Nord* and in the area around Saint-Étienne, near Lyon, and it is a pitched battle. It's very different from the strike in '47 because this time Jules Moch has his army prepared. He hasn't prepared to help workers. He has prepared his telecommunications. He's prepared his army. He calls in 40,000 troops from Germany. And the result is a terrific repression. Ultimately, there are about a dozen killed, several hundred wounded in the clashes, 2,000 imprisoned, 6,000 miners dismissed. And there is some exquisite cruelty about it, because the nationalized sector is the mine sector and one of the directors of it admits that the dismissed mine workers were permitted to live in the company houses — in other words, the houses that went with the job. And this is his explanation: "We chose to leave the blackballed workers in those houses because living among their comrades, who could see their dire misery, they became for the entire mine basin, witness of the consequences of going on strike." And fourteen years later, in 1963, a director of the nationalized sector of mines could write this: "We have held this basin now for fourteen years without the slightest contact with the leaders of the CGT." In other words, the union was broken in the mine field.

Now, what does all this mean? What does this mean in terms of the strategy of the Marshall Plan? Look, the Marshall Plan is a Janus. It's got two faces, and it looks happily into America and not so happily into other places. And for the United States, after all, it was a design, a very brilliant strategy. And when the Marshall Plan was passed in April of '48, there was set up the ECA, the Economic Cooperation Administration. And it was run by a businessman called Paul Hoffman, who was the president of the Studebaker Corporation, you see what happened to it. And, consequently, Hoffman surrounded himself with all kinds of marvelous American business types: Averell Harriman, Thomas McKittrick of the Chase Bank, George Perkins of the Merck Company. And all of these people had, really, two basic ideas. One was a favorable capitalist climate in Europe: in other words, to insure that there would be these conservative capitalist regimes.

The other was to get rid of all of those goods surpluses that the United States could produce. And, in that sense, the Marshall Plan was very good. There was set up in Europe the OEEC, the Organization of European Economic Cooperation. And the OEEC was to give the United States its needs; in other words, it was to draw up its list of its needs. And what happened in that very first year of the Marshall Plan indicated what the design on the part of American policymakers was. Because a lot of the things the Europeans asked for they didn't get, and things they didn't ask for they did get. So that there was a demand in that first year for 65,000 tractors, they got half of that because the Americans didn't want competition, ultimately, in the agricultural sector by too much beefing up of that terrain. Secondly, the Europeans did not ask for trucks. Their roads were very bad, petrol was in short supply, and they got 60,000 trucks nonetheless, because they were, after all, a help to the American economy.

What was crucial about the whole terms of these agreements of the Marshall Plan was, first of all, that part of that Marshall aid had to go to the beefing up of the production of vital raw materials in the colonies. In other words, in Belgium, in France, in Great Britain, they had to use part of those Marshall funds to increase their productivity of precious metals, of resources in the Third World, for which the United States then claimed, quite accurately, a certain priority. And, secondly, that if you used Marshall dollars, you had to take American surplus even if you got certain commodities more cheaply elsewhere. Well, the result, of course, was a great boon.

Except — you want to note this, because you don't understand it unless you see it clearly in perspective — and that is that the Marshall Plan that way, direct economic aid, worked for a while, but it had its limitations. It had its limitations, because if you keep the purchasing power very low in the European economies, it limits the amount that you can sell in Europe. And, secondly, if you protect your own market, it limits the amount that you will import. Which means that the Marshall Plan is a kind of a temporary boon, but it sort of fizzles out. And you have to keep pumping more money into it if it's going to work. And that became apparent by 1949, because the United States, you know, went into that recession in '49. And production dropped 15% and we had almost 7% unemployment, and something had to be done.

Now, it's terribly instructive that in the summer of '49, in the midst of that recession, that there is the State Department's call before Congress for a North Atlantic Treaty Organization, for a NATO. Now, there was no conspicuous Russian threat. The Russians had withdrawn their blockade of Berlin. They were launching a peace movement, but the idea was to have the framework for what could ultimately get those funds that Europe needed, and that was armaments. And through that call for NATO, through that insistence that there was a threat of internal subversion, \$1 billion in NATO funds, or in military funds, were granted for Europe in 1949. And then came manna, or the Korean War. And the Korean War created the proper climate

in 1950 and the military funds began to flow. Well, Paul Hoffman stated it all, very, very precisely in his book *Peace Can Be Won* in 1951. Listen to this: "Other nations could not afford to continue buying from us unless we gave them money. And that is, of course, exactly what we have had to do through a dozen loan and grant schemes starting from after World War I right down to our present ECA. American aid to Western Europe during the last thirty-five years" — and he's writing this in 1950 — "during the last thirty-five years has amounted to \$32 billion, exclusive of direct war outlays. This was a way of subsidizing our exports for all the American money that went abroad, returned to buy American goods."

But the Janus looks the other way too. It doesn't say that a militarized economy for Europe is such a groovy thing. It doesn't say, after all, that that's the best way to develop an economy. It doesn't say that those societies become good societies. Look, I tell you, I went to France first in that year 1952. It was a dismal year, a very deadly year, and I went to France. As a matter of fact, my pretext was that I was going to study with [American researcher Gay] Gaer Luce at the salt mines, and I did study with Luce, but I couldn't stand it here anymore and I had to get out. And I went there to France, well, it was the McCarthy period, it was just hell on wheels. And so I went over there and it was just as bad and the whole climate was absurd. And I got there just as Antoine Pinay, the Vichyite, became the prime minister. This little leather manufacturer was talking about how much he loved Flandin the Nazi. And, consequently, he finally gave way. That was March. He gave way at the end of 1952 to a guy named René Mayer, who was a terribly conservative financier, an ardent colonialist, and he didn't last very long and gave way to a guy named [Joseph] Laniel.

Well, if you lived in France during the age of Laniel, that silly Laniel, which was this kind of corporation president from the Chambre des députés, from the provinces of France, who said this, for example, which really shows you where this man's head is from a point of view of any kind of intelligence: "My father was deputy from the Chambre des députés for thirty-six years. I replaced him in 1932. I sat there for twenty-six years. Thus, our family has had sixty-two years of uninterrupted family success." And he has said, he has said now, "I have often been criticized for making no speeches in the Chamber of Deputies in my twenty-six years there. [*Inaudible due to laughter*] ...I have been criticized for remaining silent for so very long a time, but believe me, my friends, if I spoke it would be much worse."

[*Inaudible due to laughter*] ...and that world of 1952 was a world in which, I'm going to say at that point, at a time when Graham Greene is being excluded from the United States as a pro-Communist. When the man who was the *chef du conseil* — in other words, the chief assistant of Antoine Pinay, the prime minister — couldn't get into the United States because he had once belonged to the CGT in his youth. It was a period when Bedell Smith was the head of the CIA

and was telling Robert, who was the head of the French CIA (or the French intelligence services, the Sûreté générale), telling him that all intelligence archives of France must be transferred to Washington because they're not safe in Paris since it has Communists there. It was that kind of an atmosphere.

And, you see, all of it was around that Communist menace and that miserable Communist Party. And that Communist Party still drew out its five million voters. It still had 500,000 members. It still had about 40,000 militants, but it was in total disarray. And there was Thorez, he was sick, and he was in Moscow, and he was giving these orders from Moscow, and he was saying, "You've got to beef up the campaign against the Marshall Plan, against the Atlantic Pact, against the American imperialism in Western Europe. You must go to the streets. You must do this in direct action." And poor [Jacques] Duclos, who was the head of the party. How could you do that in this miserable circumstance in which everybody thought that a Communist was a terrible subversive? And they tried.

And there they were in those Ridgway riots. And the Ridgway riots tell you so much about what happened to a country that had made that liberation. And Ridgway came, you see, Matthew Ridgway in May of 1952 is the head of NATO. And so the Party decided it was going to have these great demonstrations in the street against him. And I saw those, and they really were quite a failure, and quite dismal. And on the 23rd of May there were some confrontations with the police, there were about forty people that were injured, quite a few arrests, but it was nothing in terms of really rallying or militating a public. Then came the 25th, and the editor of [official PCF newspaper] *L'Humanité*, André Schmer, was arrested and so they called for an immense, an immense demonstration on the 28th. That was the big day, and there were literally tens of thousands of people that the Party got out in Paris on the 28th of May, and terrific clashes because there were as many cops, as it seemed to me, as there were demonstrators on the streets. And it went all day, and I went from quarter to quarter looking at this thing. And it didn't seem to me as though it was going to get anywhere, it was just very, very tense for that period of time. By ten o'clock at night, the streets were pretty clear.

Well, Duclos was going home — he lives in Montreuil, which is a suburb in the eastern part, a working-class suburb literally in the eastern part of Paris — and he was driving along and he goes to the Place de la République and he was stopped by the Sûreté, by the security police. And they said, "We want to search your automobile." So, they searched Duclos' automobile, and you've got to remember what the atmosphere, the mood is at a time like this, and so they find in the glove compartment a gun. Duclos always carried a gun — well, that was bad enough, but then they found on the seat next to him two dead pigeons. Well, now the dead pigeons, which became a *cause célèbre*, the dead pigeons had been used, they were models, they had been used

in the campaign for peace. They were the doves for peace and they died that day at the Communist headquarters. And so Duclos was taking them home to eat them with peas. And they said, "No, no. These are terrorists..."

[*audio cuts out*]

... spring work in this crazy, crazy world. And the dismal part of it was that the workers who were in complete despair, complete despair, went out on strike by themselves in August of 1953. Nobody goes on strike in August. August is the vacation month. You never strike in August. You don't do anything in August. Only the crazy peasants in the French Revolution made an insurrection in August. Basically, you go on holiday and wait for the *rentrée* and then you strike. But no, no. Despair. And it happened in Air France, it happened in the postal department, it happened in *bâtiments*. Pretty soon there is a very massive strike, four million. Completely chaotic, disorganized strike that finally is broken. They all go back. And there is a precaution about it. And it is a dialogue in the city of Louviers between the mayor, who is Pierre Mendès France, and the strikers. And Mendès France goes to the strikers — a good man, Mendès France, with lost causes — he tells the French to drink milk. He does all kinds of crazy things to try to understand. And he says, "What exactly do you want?" to these hungry workers. And they say, "It just can't continue the way it is." And then he says, Mendès France, "I suppose you want an increase in your wages." And they say, "Of course. That's what everybody goes to strike about." Then Mendès France, being a bloody Communist, says, "But if you get that, prices will go up, and that will not serve you anything. You will be badly served."

And the answer to that is so that you can't go on this way no matter what. And that fantastic, fantastic response is something, it seems to me, that is the critical point that one reaches. It doesn't make any difference whether the immediate strategic or tactical principles is sound. That you can't go on that way — and we may be pretty close. [*applause*]