

Address given by Jules Moch to the French National Assembly (16 November 1948)

Caption: On 16 November 1948, in an address to the National Assembly, Jules Moch, French Interior Minister, strongly condemns the political designs of the French Communist Party.

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Address to the National Assembly by Jules Moch (16 November 1948)

[...]

The national and international stance of the Communist Party

1. Selected orders

I will move on to the second part of my talk, which deals with the national and international stance of the Communist Party.

First of all, I will look at the orders given in France, then at those received from abroad.

We have particularly valuable intelligence on this subject. We know about a very large number of orders issued and decisions taken by the Communist Party and I am very pleased that we do, for the sake of the French Republic.

There is one difficulty, however, about which I will be very frank before the Assembly: orders received at the same time sometimes seem to be contradictory. Knowing the monolithic nature of national and international communism — with the exception of Yugoslavia — we were initially intrigued by these discrepancies.

But there is a simple explanation. Where two sets of information, both fairly comprehensive, seem to be contradictory, this is because they have been, if I may say, collected at different levels of the communist hierarchy. Like any mystical group, communism has different levels of initiation. There is a different response to the same event depending on the level, since interpretations are tailored to cultural level, to ideological capacities — in particular the capacity to embrace a more or less distant future in the order of, depending on the case, weeks, months, years or decades — and, last but not least, the public or secret role of the recipient within the party.

This also explains why so many grassroots communists are perfectly sincere when they deny any foreign influence on their behaviour. They have never been told about it, of course! (*Applause from the left, the centre and the right*)

2. The various demands in the miners' strike

In the miners' dispute, for example, this hierarchy of initiations is very evident. For many grassroots-level miners, only immediate, material demands are at issue and the dispute should be resolved in a matter of weeks.

At the level immediately above that, in the meetings of the cells or sections of this 'active minority' that purports to be the Communist Party, the ongoing objective is the fall of the Government and the establishment of a ministry with communist representation or leadership, and the campaign will be one of not weeks, but months.

At an even higher level, the miners' strikes are seeking to destroy the Marshall Plan, both by ruining the French economy and by dissuading America from its European aid effort. At this level, the objective goes beyond mines and the national context. It extends to all industries, throughout western Europe, and demands an effort lasting several years.

At the very top, lastly, there may be coaching for insurrection, training given to professional revolutionaries of international class, of whom there are still very few in France, despite the existence of FTP (*Franc-Tireurs et Partisans*) leaders. Mr Tillon would not dispute this. (*Laughter*)

The objective would therefore be assessed over decades, as Lenin did when, in Switzerland in 1917, in his

1905 *Lessons of the Moscow Uprising* – which we should bear in mind – he studied the shift from strike to insurrection, the progress made by the revolution by stirring up a strong, united counter-revolution, the need to increase mass unrest by gradually accustoming the masses to a bloody, desperate campaign from the onset of the insurrection, including the extermination of civil and military leaders; when he also claimed that it was necessary to win over the army, to move onto the offensive, which is a prerequisite for success, to wage a partisan war, to impose a reign of terror. I think I have summarised this pamphlet quite accurately.

I will not elaborate on initiation at this latter level, even though some operations conducted in recent weeks by FTP units, in particular in Firminy, under the orders of the former FTP leader in the Loire who I have just mentioned, Mr Vial-Massat, are clearly consistent with the actions advocated by Lenin thirty-one years ago. However, I will enlarge a little on initiation at the two levels immediately below.

3. The fight for the return to power of communism

At the lowest level, the communist sections and cells, the emphasis has not been on the immediate demands of the miners, as in the mining villages, but on the need to bring the communists to power through the strikes.

Here are eight examples, spread between 20 and 29 October. With the exception of one of these, I will not mention the towns from which they come, so as not to give leads for the Communist Party's investigations. (*Loud laughter from the extreme left*)

Indeed! I would like to keep my informants within the Communist Party. (*Applause and loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*)

Gentlemen, you are quite concerned about this (*the speaker addresses the extreme left*); signs of this can often be seen among you.

The name that I will mention, I will give because he is an unwitting informant, the secretary of a cell, an official in your organisation who, in order to escape, after a member of the Republican Guard seized his bicycle, left it behind with a speech written entirely by him in the saddlebag; I will show you a photograph. (*Loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*)

I will therefore simply tell the Assembly — which will believe me — that this intelligence comes from eastern, south-eastern, southern, central, western and northern France, that it is virtually concomitant, and covers a period of nine days. Of course, the informants do not know about one another; they do not live in the same towns. This information therefore undoubtedly corresponds to the orders given by the central organisations to those initiated at the second level, the cells and sections, in their special meetings. These are the orders:

East, Town 1 — which I will not refer to otherwise – 21 October: ‘Openly and vehemently blame and criticise all those in power and their acts ...’ — here special mention is made of the Minister for the Interior ... unimportant — ‘... hold information meetings, wherever possible, even with non-communist elements, so as to cause the masses to rise up against the current government, whose fall must remain the main objective of the miners’ strike.’

Here are orders given on the same day in central France; I will quote only the part that is relevant to my point: ‘Complete hardening of attitude, with a view to achieving the fall of the Government and, then, seizure of power, even if direct action has to be taken.’

The man who said this is in this Assembly. I will add that he was travelling incognito, as it were, because he feared being arrested. (*Mixed reactions*)

Town No 3: ‘Objective: fall of the Government and establishment of a people’s democracy’. (*Loud laughter from the extreme left*)

Town No 4, in the south-west: ‘We must not give up the fight; you know our aim: to overthrow the Government and to replace it with a democratic coalition government. Consequently, only sporadic, well-placed strikes can be effective; they will wear down the Government, deplete its energies. The miners are on strike, the dockers will follow.’ What a long way from the poor material demands of miners in the mining villages!

Town No 5: ‘Absolutely necessary for each party member to build up food reserves.’ (*Loud laughter from the extreme left*)

I will not give you names; I will simply say that the man who gave these orders is a communist municipal councillor, the secretary of a departmental association of the CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail*) and that the orders were given in a section meeting comprising five cells.

I will go on:

‘From the time the central committee decides to prevent any movement of troops by rail, agreement is reached with SNCF union leaders to paralyse, by all possible means, the rail centre of ...’ – excuse me for not giving the name. ‘In the event that troop movements by rail are made impossible, comrade X ...’ – I won’t give his name either; he is an ex-FTP colonel – ‘... would be responsible for blocking any road traffic with a core group of volunteers. Means of action: method employed against German troops under the occupation.’

And since they are thinking of everything, these orders add: ‘Pressing need to obtain public service stamps. If this is impossible, these stamps will be made by the party.’

Here are similar orders from another town: ‘If the miners are victorious, the Government is obliged to stand down. The working class, which will then have proven that government is impossible without the communists, will demand the formation of a democratic coalition government that includes communists and, a few weeks later, we will hold power.’

Let us not forget that Dimitrov said: ‘1948 will be the Year of Communism’. (*Loud laughter from the extreme left*)

I will tell you the main difference between the unfortunate Czechoslovakia and France. The percentage of communists has been no higher in Czechoslovakia than in France in recent times; the love of democracy was as deep, education was as developed; and if it was possible to move from a democratic regime to a totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia in forty hours, whilst all attempts to date in France have failed, this is perhaps because in Czechoslovakia there was a communist Minister for the Interior, a communist Minister for Information and a pro-communist Minister for the National Defence, whilst the men in these posts in France are not close to infiltrating France’s administration. (*Applause from the left, the centre and the right*)

I will pass over order No 7 and come to the document that Marcel Mirot — take note of his name — who is both secretary of Avignon communist section and an appointed official of the Communist Party, kindly left in the saddlebag of his bicycle; it is currently under seizure; its owner can come to claim it, we don’t want him to get into trouble! (*Loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*)

In this document, which is written on National Assembly paper —you, gentlemen (*the speaker addresses the extreme left*), put National Assembly paper to remarkable use (*Loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*) — in this document, as I was saying, drafted carefully and in writing that would suggest that the text was, let us say, ‘whispered’, there are some of these orders that I will set out for the Assembly:

‘The conference of nine parties ...’ — that’s the Cominform — ‘... draws the attention of the Italian and French communist parties to the fight that could only intensify in our countries between the imperialist camp and the anti-imperialist camp ...’ — this is the beginning of what is called the ‘plan for action’ — ‘... In

France, the declaration by the Political Bureau of the French Communist Party that the French people will never go to war with the USSR has the support of all the French. However, the French working class, which has absorbed the declaration by the Nine in Warsaw ...’ — what a claim! (*Laughter*) — ‘has, with the miners, just dealt a terrible blow to the defensive forces of imperialism and its lackeys.’

I will pass over the lengthy details and even over the chapter entitled ‘The lies by Jules Moch’ — the lie that this is a political strike, the lie that there are orders from abroad — and I will come to the conclusion. A meeting had to be held – which was banned and which did not take place – to try to liberate the saboteurs from Gard transferred to Avignon prison. I read:

‘Make serious preparations for the huge demonstrations on Friday for the release of the miners from Sainte-Anne prison. Method: things must be heated up in the firms. We have to act quickly. We must sweep people along on a broad wave of friendship. We must spread communists carefully among the demonstrators ...’ — we have seen examples of this tactic — ‘... We must provoke ...’ — this is in large letters — ‘... anger, enthusiasm.’

An appeal, in conclusion:

‘The miners must be victorious ...’. I will not dwell on this. I think that the Communist Party will make the necessary observations to the careless man who leaves documents of this kind in the saddlebag of his bicycle. (*Laughter from the left and the centre*)

4. Fight against the Marshall Plan

I would now like to move from the second level to the third, where, certainly, the orders for the two lower levels are disseminated: the miners’ demands, formation of a government with communist involvement, but where particular emphasis is placed on the call to disrupt our economy and where they are wary of talking about a more or less distant insurrection, since this subject is reserved for the secret apparatus, for the fourth level.

In order to make clear to the National Assembly and to the French public the motives now compelling the Communist Party to undermine our economy, it is necessary to make a brief incursion into the arena of international politics.

In September 1947, fourteen months ago, the USSR was concerned by the aid that America was considering providing to Europe, even before the adoption of the Marshall Plan.

It saw that aid as a weapon against communism, a barrier to its westward expansion.

So it decided to reform the Communist International under the name Cominform.

As the Marshall Plan was taking shape, the orders were also taking shape. The aim was to nullify the effects of the Marshall Plan, at least after the first year, to dissuade the US Parliament from continuing to grant aid to France and Italy by throwing these countries into such chaos that no American capitalist or statesman wished to invest private or public funds there any longer.

The Cominform is thus designed to make it possible to take back control of the political leadership of the various European communist parties, to unify their propagandist orders, to give them new instructions in the international arena and, lastly, to eliminate the relative autonomy that they have enjoyed since the dissolution of the Cominform during the war.

It is interesting that the first instructions were received by these gentlemen (*the speaker indicates the extreme left*) in November 1947 through two Belgians, Mr Lallemand, general secretary of the party, and Mr Claessens, who, returning from Moscow ⁽¹⁾, revealed to their French counterparts, who had not been notified, that direct action was to be taken in France and in Italy, undergirded by the French and Italian

communist parties, and things would be set in motion in Belgium only later.

We did indeed see large actions in France and in Italy at the end of last year. I would add that we knew about these discussions several months before these events.

Throughout this initial period, financial aid from the Cominform was almost non-existent, despite appeals made by the French Communist Party. I will mention one of them: in March 1948, after the collapse of the strike in December 1947 and the trade union split, Mr Frachon, travelling to Belgrade, met with Mr Jdanov, who was passing through. He suggested, in vain incidentally, the foundation of an international fund for strikes, financed by eastern Europe.

What is more, it should be noted that when Mr Frachon, faced with the strikers wanting to return to work, faced with the measures taken at the time by Mr Schuman's Government, had to give the order to return to work on 9 December last year – which was the simple realisation that the strikes were about to die – he had publicly added that the working class had to regroup with a view to future struggles and that battle would recommence.

But, in fact, the birth of *Force ouvrière* posed a critical problem for the communists. The defeat had to be wiped from minds as soon as possible and prime position had to be recaptured, politically and socially.

Communist propaganda was immediately modified once again. It was not the first time, incidentally, and it will not be the last. The Cominform allowed the French party greater freedom and, on 18 April, at the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, Mr Thorez once again practised the policy of openness to all men of goodwill and expressed the desire for his party to collaborate in a democratic government, a statement that, moreover, went hand-in-hand with a running battle with the coalition government, which saw, in the event of negative votes, similar ballot papers from the extreme left and the extreme right and an ongoing and virtually futile effort to dissociate itself from the Socialist Party, with the aim of bringing about a ministerial crisis.

Three months later, last July, the USSR launched its peace offensive.

It is not for me to judge now whether that offensive was sincere or whether it was intended to lay the blame for the tension on America, to show that the Marshall Plan was making preparations for war and also to ease the strain on the western communist parties, which had been severely tested by their social and electoral failures. Whatever the case, this diplomatic offensive coincides very closely with a clandestine offensive in the opposite direction.

This is not the first example – and certainly not the last – of the duality that is made possible by the coexistence of a State where a single party is all and an international organisation which is theoretically independent of that State, but which makes similar parties in foreign States subject to this all-powerful party in the first State.

I don't know if I am making myself clear. I believe I am. I would hope that all France understands the methodological flexibility that can be enjoyed when you have this dual mechanism, the official and the other, obeying the same master, the general secretary of the all-powerful party.

For example, a note was sent to the west by Jdanov, one of the last documents from him before his death on 31 July. As a result of crosschecks in France and abroad we have very precise information about it.

The general secretary of the Cominform gave the following orders:

Whatever the outcome of the diplomatic negotiations at that time in Moscow which, as we know, would subsequently fail, the fight against the Marshall Plan had to be continued without respite and by all possible means in eastern Europe.

Even a possible diplomatic appeasement could not allow the western communists to cut back efforts against

– I quote – ‘the imperialist policy of the United States and against the governments in servitude to Washington,’ since, as this note states, ‘a diplomatic calm would be just one episode in the war begun by the true democracies against capitalism, which must be brought down at any cost.’

5. Preparation for the action in October

On receipt of this note, the origin of which was known only by the initiated, the French communist leaders brought forward their preparations for an ambitious new action which they intended to launch in September, a few weeks after workers returned from their paid holidays.

However, precautions were needed. To be successful, the support of the non-communist masses was necessary, in particular the workers following the orders of *Force ouvrière* or the *Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens*. This was the necessary condition for achieving sufficient success throughout the country. Hence the calls for unity of demands, first of all, which unfortunately encouraged the price increase at that time, then, after the unity of demands, the call for unity of action.

At the beginning of September, the secretaries of the communist federations could claim to the leaders of their party that everything would be in place for serious unrest at the end of the month.

At the time, I had informed my colleagues about this. Some of them are sitting here and could confirm that, several weeks before the strike, I had pointed out the regions where they would take place and the professions that would be affected.

I can see, agreeing with me, Paul Coste-Floret, who sat on the Council of Ministers at the time and who remembered these notes, whose origin I have not disclosed, but which, as we have all observed, have been fully verified subsequently.

Our intelligence, communicated to the relevant prefects, suggested that the regions where communism was expecting renewed unrest were, first and foremost, Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Moselle, Loire-Inférieure, Puy-de-Dôme, Rhône and Bouches-du-Rhône — as we have said, even before action began — and that the trade union federations most likely to follow the call would be the miners and the dockers, then, registered seamen and metal workers.

At around the same time, one of those who I can see sitting opposite me (*the speaker indicates the extreme left*) travelled to Prague to give the Cominform general secretariat a report on the activities of the communist officials.

From the opening of the UN session, the orders given to the Communist Party were clarified in many discussions with foreign diplomats, about which we know, but will give precise details only in due course. The Communist Party was asked to declare its support for the USSR in the event of war, which the Political Bureau did by a communiqué dated 30 September, stating that the French workers would always refuse to go to war against Russia.

However, the Cominform did not simply demand this declaration. It asked the Communist Party to state that the fight begun against the Marshall Plan should be combined with a fight against the supposed war aims behind the plan.

At the same time, social unrest, under the guise of professional demands, was to be pushed full ahead in order to bring about the collapse of the French economy.

Such a collapse had two aims: first, to show that the presence of communists in government was the only way to avoid chaos — just as it was the only way to resume infiltration; but this second objective was passed over in silence — then, to prove to America that the communists, even removed from power, would still be capable of paralysing our economy, and thus dissuading the government in Washington from continuing to grant aid to France. (*Mixed reactions from the extreme left*)

I am not making any of this up.

The communists are certainly wary of saying that the strike is directed against the Marshall Plan, but they are attacking it in the mining areas and I could give you many examples.

I will also note this in passing, which is certainly interesting: some French strikes were reported by Polish, Hungarian and Romanian newspapers before they had been set in motion in France. (*Loud laughter from the right*)

Our communist counterparts are well aware of this, because it bothered them.

To encourage the Communist Party, the Cominform promised it considerable financial aid, to which I will return. This aid, which was declined – as I have just said – in November December 1947, and granted to a large extent from just before October 1948, allowed the communist leaders to exercise close control over the CGT.

Whilst they did not completely impose the miners' strike – the referendum, even though rigged, proves this, we have to recognise – they have caused it and they are currently causing it to be prolonged and intensified through sabotage.

Since a date which I could clarify if necessary, but which my communist colleagues know as well as I do, the communist trade union leaders have been fighting a losing battle, sounding the alarm bell, whilst the communist political leaders, observing orders, are endeavouring to draw out the strike to the very last miner.

This discrepancy was highlighted on two occasions by Mr Frachon at the end of last month, and I must say that I have used it, since, as soon as I was notified, I took advantage of it to speed up certain operations in the north, to move at a faster pace, wearing down the stewards. I was convinced that, over several days of wavering, no serious reaction would be possible in Nord, but that, very quickly, the Communist Party would replace the trade union leaders and the clearance of shafts would become more difficult again if it had not already been done. This is what happened.

The hesitation among the miners' leaders was followed by very strict instructions being sent to the communist leaders of the coaler-dockers to strengthen their somewhat hesitant strike action.

The same reason lies behind the efforts currently being made within the railworkers' and metal workers' federations.

At the same time, the Communist Party leaders are, like Maurice Thorez at the *Vélodrome d'Hiver*, taking a public position by calling on the French not to do their duty against Russia if war ever broke out, which is not wanted by any Frenchman, nor, undoubtedly, by any human being.

Already, Mr Croizat, who is not assured of a general metal workers' strike – in the light of the information he brings back from his visits to all the regions – proposes returning, in that corporation, to the system of rotating, short, but unrelenting and paralysing strikes.

Similar approaches are envisaged in construction, textiles and, if possible, transport.

But, more than ever, these objectives from the second and third level will not be revealed to the uninitiated. Emphasis will be placed on the professional demands alone. It will be denied – since they are used to lying, lying perpetually, making the lie into a weapon of propaganda and domination – that the strikes are in any way political, as it will be denied that there are orders for violence, attacks, sabotage, which are, however, the only explanation for the current increase in the number of such incidents in the mining areas, at the same time as a strike desired by the Communist Party is dying out. (*Applause from the left, the centre and the right*)

So the Communist Party is playing a very risky game.

6. External financial aid

However, it has several advantages. The aid that it was previously declined is now, to a great extent, being granted. How is this?

In the near or distant future, you will be told about workers' solidarity and given figures. This is a new tactic.

In reality, workers' solidarity does play a part, but only for fairly low totals, very much lower than those that are published. The huge payments that have been reported, which, according to claims in the communist press, nearly all come from workers in the satellite States, are infinitely greater than can be anticipated even for active solidarity.

The totals given by the communist press yesterday amount to an exchange value of 277 million francs, including 250 million for Czechoslovakia and 10 million for Romania. Who will be convinced that Czechoslovakian miners have contributed almost one month's salary to come to the aid of their French comrades? Or indeed, if we acknowledge that all the Czech workers, farmers, soldiers and policemen supported the French miners, who will be convinced that this voluntary contribution could amount to several hundred million francs?

Please credit us with enough critical sense to see that this is not a contribution, but a levy, a tax or probably even a cunningly disguised government payment, since we now learn that the Czech army was ordered to open a spontaneous official fund. (*Applause and loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*)

I must also say that funds for this purpose in the official bodies of a State with which we have peaceful relations raise a question that must be examined. (*Very good! Very good! from the same quarters*)

What is more, incidentally — I will take my arguments further — is this a new payment or, in part, a regularisation of old transfers? This question might be asked when we know about the previous transactions, the transfers made from Czechoslovakia at the beginning of October, amounting to 93 million francs in a single bank, and a few others about which I want to say something.

The large amount of intelligence that we have received has allowed us to establish that after the defection of Yugoslavia, the leadership of the movement has shifted to Romania. The Romanian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Anna Pauker, has applied herself to this enthusiastically and actively.

This country still provides the base and the driving force for the Cominform. It uses all sorts of people as liaison agents, even former members of the 'Iron Guard', fascists who have made amends by joining the Romanian Communist Party, some of whom hold or have held until recently important diplomatic posts in Paris.

Without going into details, I can say that well before the present strike, we were on the trail of sizeable secret transfers from Romania to France.

In July 1948, two months before the strike, Swiss police arrested a Romanian whose official activity was to fleece his compatriots who wanted to escape from the communist regime — he sold them exit documents in return for appreciable sums — but who was, in fact, an agent responsible for distributing funds for Cominform unrest in France and in Belgium. This man is still in prison in Switzerland.

At the end of July, the Ministry of the Interior conducted a first neutralisation campaign, expelling ten of the main agents from this movement and calling for the recall of one diplomat, a request that was granted. In these cases, *Humanité* does not protest. If I may say, it has to take it. (*Applause and loud laughter from the*

left, the centre and the right)

At the beginning of September, we discovered fresh intensive activity on the part of this organisation which, this time, was no longer using as personnel only native Frenchmen, naturalised Frenchmen or those covered by a diplomatic passport.

We were aware of a whole plan for unrest in France, developed by the Cominform in Romania.

From 3 September, a number of meetings were held at the Romanian National Front, attended by certain French Communist Party leaders. We had informants there too. *(Laughter)*

The liaison agents between the two were identified and monitored. In this way we learnt that a former commercial attaché at the Romanian legation in Paris, who not only was no longer accredited by our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also was on a list of those prohibited from entering France, had resumed his post at the legation and had recently received 650 000 Swiss francs and 50 000 dollars, or more than 65 million French francs in total, to organise unrest in France, more specifically in Nord, and in Belgium. We expelled him immediately, since he was no longer a diplomat.

The threads that we held then allowed us to demand the recall of a counsellor at the legation of that same country who, after representing Romania under German occupation, had become one of the main agitators in France under the cover of a diplomatic passport. This unusual diplomat, once unmasked by us, was recalled by his government two days before he would have been expelled, had he not departed.

Could I say most sincerely that I assume that the Romanian government is not aware of this particular activity on the part of some of its diplomats and that, if it sends us others, it will ask them itself to refrain from interfering in our internal affairs, in which case they will be warmly welcomed? *(Applause and loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right)*

I would add that between this morning's Council of Ministers and this evening's meeting I took the time to examine the files from another case involving the distribution of funds and that, as a result of this examination, I have just signed six expulsion orders relating to two Russians, two Poles and two Czechs, who, as I speak, should already have been escorted to the border. *(Applause from the left, the centre and the right)*

In this case too, funds were being distributed on behalf of the Cominform. And in this case too, I will refuse to give satisfaction to representations asking me to reverse such decisions. You understand that these men generally lead a double life and therefore have firm friends in France, who naturally take action and accuse us of injustice when we take a decision of this kind.

Since mid-October, we have been certain that whilst Bucharest remains the practical command centre for the Cominform, the instructions, the means of action, go through Prague. So that when I compare this intelligence, which is reliable, with the figures for foreign payments published by the communist newspapers, I am not at all surprised that, of the reported 277 million – I am speaking in French francs – which could be even 600 million, according to Mr Frachon, 260 million, or even 350 million according to Mr Frachon, comes from Czechoslovakia and from Romania, three and a half million from other satellite States: Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, 10 million from Yugoslavia, which can now be described as a quasi-satellite State, and only 3 550 000 francs at most from countries where there are free trade unions, such as Britain, the Netherlands, Italy and Switzerland.

Is it not a presumption of fact that at least some of the 250 or 350 million francs which have reportedly been paid by Czechoslovakia, and the 10 million from Romania, represented funds moved illegally to France? I have just mentioned one example, amounting to 65 million, and I could cite a second, also from Romania, amounting to 93 million francs, and a third, much more sizeable, from Bulgaria.

It should also be noted that there have been no reports of payments from Russia until recently: the

Cominform compensated for this. Yesterday, it was reported that slightly less than 10 million francs were collected in Russia. That really isn't much, compared with the 250 or 350 million francs paid by little Czechoslovakia, which has barely 12 million inhabitants. (*Loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*)

I will add, Ladies and Gentlemen, that the French Communist Party and its subsidiaries have a considerable advantage over other organisations in this regard: party, newspapers, para-communist organisations of all kinds have their accounts centralised at the *Banque commerciale pour l'Europe du Nord*.

This bank has some interesting features, in terms of both organisation and management.

As regards its organisation, this limited company, governed by the 1867 law, has a capital divided into 100 000 shares, 99 700 of which are held by two Soviet state banks, the National Bank and the Bank for Foreign Trade, while the 300 others are distributed among a number of Russian or French communists.

Thus, the façade of a French limited company hides a purely Soviet reality. The chairman of the board of directors is a naturalised Russian. Of the three directors around him, one is a Russian, the second is a Frenchman, who the *Confédération Générale du Travail* wanted a short while ago to impose on André Philip as chairman of the *Société générale* — he is still on its board of directors, but not as chairman — (*Cries from the right*) — and the third is the husband of one of our communist colleagues, who is thus able to combine the joy of defending her ideals with the satisfaction of a comfortable material life. (*Loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*)

It is therefore no longer surprising to see the overdrafts that this bank grants to the Communist Party, its press, its subsidiaries and communist-run cooperatives.

Fortunately — in accordance with our strictest duty — we have a few secret contacts in this bank. (*Laughter*) So we know that the Communist Party has been in debt to the tune of up to 15 million francs at some times and that the communist newspapers have also owed considerable sums.

Perhaps it could be contended that some of these newspapers were in debt and others in credit and that they were offset through reciprocal guarantees. But not so: such an explanation would be inadequate in itself. The communist press has a considerable debit balance with this bank: 17 million francs in July, 27 million francs in August, nothing in September — I will explain this — and 30 million francs in October.

The huge repayments made in September by all the communist press, whether it be *Humanité*, *Ce Soir* or any of the other papers, which were quickly nullified by new overdrafts, are highly suspect. They were made in a holiday period, a period of lower revenue for the press, but also during a month when our services got wind of sizeable illicit remittances of cash and currency in France, and in particular quite substantial cash and gold remittances from Bulgaria to the bank in question, the *Banque commerciale pour l'Europe du Nord*. Is this not food for thought, I ask you?

All these accounts of the Communist Party, its men of straw, its subsidiaries — I would point out to Mr Duclos that the Communist Party's account bears two names, Oswald and Gosnat, one feeding the other; incidentally, I have had a photocopy for some time and, therefore, have no fear of being contradicted (*Applause and loud laughter from the left, the centre and the right*) — all these accounts, I tell you, have large deficit balances each month.

Even though the deficit for all the communist organisations' accounts, this immense machine with a hundred different names, was as much as 68 million francs in August, this kind Soviet banker with a French façade did not seem to be concerned in the least.

André Le Troquer — He does not pay dividends!

The Minister for the Interior — I think so! (*Loud laughter*)

Other transfers of funds have also been reported. Some diplomatic bags are used in ways that, I need hardly say, seem a little suspect. Our services are carrying out constant surveillance in this form of cold war being waged against the western democracies by the Cominform.

I would ask the Assembly to remember from this lengthy exposition, for which I apologise (*No! No! from various quarters*), that we are certain that sizeable transfers have been made from eastern Europe to France and to Belgium by a wide variety of means and that it is highly likely that these transfers, some which predate considerably the onset of the current strikes, may now be legitimised, if I can put it in that way, and seen by their perpetrators as solidarity payments.

And this is only a small proportion of the sums that have come into France. My staff have recently arrested a number of people, including a former Polish diplomat who smuggled gold into France from eastern Europe — from Bulgaria this time — through Switzerland, with a value, by his own admission, much higher than one thousand million francs. We are currently investigating who the gold was intended for.

I will say this again: the Communist Party has received formal directives: to wipe out the US aid at any price. France must not play a significant role in the organisation of western Europe. The French must be imbued with the desire never to take up arms against the ‘homeland of the proletariat’.

The Communist Party is risking its future in this fearsome game which it is playing because the Cominform deems it to be essential for the future of communism in Europe and because the Cominform provides it with the means to play it.

7. Policy of national firmness

I was keen to make this general statement to the Assembly. It is evident that the situation is serious. There is, at present, a certain desire to destroy our economy. It is as clear as the desire, expressed by Mr Thorez or by Mr Cachin, to continue producing coal when the communists were in power.

On 21 July 1945, Maurice Thorez told communist officials from Nord and Pas-de-Calais:

‘To produce, to make coal, is the highest expression of your class duty, your duty as a Frenchman.’

At the same time, Henri Martel, a member for Nord, said:

‘A miners’ strike at the present time cannot serve our demands. We cannot get anything from a disorganised country, a crushed economy. It is time to work. This is the current form of combat against the enemy we defeated using a strike when it was time to strike.’

And Mr Cachin concluded one of his articles with these words: ‘Our two comrades — Mr Martel and Mr Frachon — are placing their credibility, which is great among the miners, in the service of production. We ask all decent Frenchmen, all those who are not misled by political passion: are there any better servants of France than men like Henri Martel and Benoît Frachon?’

And now I ask you: does the protection of an economy depend on the ups and downs of politics and the presence or absence of a party in government?

Once again, we see a wide gulf between communism and the Republic. For one, France’s interest is permanent and independent of its political situation. For the other, it depends solely on the policy of Soviet Russia! (*Applause from the left, the centre and the right*)

Since all these facts have been established, can we, like Mr Rollin and Mr Legendre, blame the Government — I am answering their questions — for failing to go further in defending the country?

I have just said that I received an impressive number of letters asking me why the leaders of the Communist

Party have not been arrested, why this party has not been dissolved and its press banned.

Before concluding I would like to make two points in response to these observations. The first is that current laws do not allow such measures to be taken. (*Cries from the right*)

I will leave it to the Minister for Justice to elaborate on this aspect of the issue, analysing the new legislation that he had to lodge this very day with the bureau of this Assembly.

Of course, I will leave it to him, since he is both authorised and empowered to do so, to comment on that legislation, the final versions of which were adopted in the Council of Ministers this morning.

My second response is that the pride, perhaps puerile pride, but pride all the same, of the democracies is that they do not use against totalitarian parties the methods that those parties themselves employ everywhere. (*Loud applause from the left, the centre and certain quarters of the right*)

It would perhaps be possible today to pronounce the dissolution of the Communist Party, but that would be a wrong move, as Rémy Roure said in a recent edition of *Le Monde*. This excellent journalist, who was a fine Resistance worker (*Applause from the left, the centre and the right*) and who has recently suffered another cruel bereavement, rightly stressed that this would produce a counter-reaction. All underground communism would be channelled into the trade unions and would become even more formidable.

Our battle against the communist troublemakers is not a battle against communist doctrine, much less against the working class. (*Applause from the same quarters*)

Certainly, much firmness is required. The nation wants to live and means to be protected. The nation will live and it will be protected by our national laws, strictly applied. (*Applause from the left and the centre*)

Any act of sabotage will be ruthlessly repressed. Any individual offence under the law that is committed by a communist, however high in the party hierarchy, will be subject to legal sanctions and it will undoubtedly be necessary to request the withdrawal of parliamentary immunity, since, in keeping with a decision taken by a twenty-seven or twenty-eight-year-old congress of the Communist International, in our country they follow the order to take advantage of the fact that France is a democracy where members of parliament are still protected by parliamentary immunity, except in cases of *flagrante delicto*, by using them as a shield in all the demonstrations.

I simply wish to stress, because I believe it is important, that in this country of liberty and reason, what we are repressing today, and what we will repress tomorrow, are unlawful acts and not membership of an ideological grouping. (*Applause from the left, the centre and various quarters on the right*)

May I add, in conclusion, that in this country of common sense, this method, which is both firm and democratic, is the best way to distance the masses both from a party bent on sabotage, on ruining the country for the sake of international schemes, and also from all the organisations that, through a change of regime, would seek to satisfy their desire to fight communism.

In this fight, the French Government achieved successes in November and December. It is achieving fresh successes today, such as obtaining coal production equivalent to two-thirds of the country's normal coal production despite the efforts of the communists. (*Applause from the left*)

The Government is therefore convinced that all sound elements of the nation will draw away from those who are threatening our institutions, as they will have clearly seen. That is why this session is so useful.

Republicans who are misled at the moment will understand, some that the communists are sacrificing France for the sake of foreign schemes, others that it is not true that authoritarian regimes are needed as a show of force against the troublemakers. (*Applause from the left, the centre and various quarters on the right*)

We remain a fervently and entirely democratic government. And whatever insults, threats and risks each of us are exposed to, we will be unswerving in our fight to defend national peace and respect for national law. *(Loud applause from the left, the centre and various quarters on the right — in many quarters on the left and in the centre, the members rise to their feet)*

(1) At the session on 19 November, Jules Moch corrected an error of detail: it was from Warsaw and Prague — where the Cominform was formed — that Mr Lallemand was returning, not from Moscow.