

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN FRANCE, ITALY, AND SPAIN

28 September 1955

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Publication No. L56-32

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Washington, D. C.

Mr. Daniel Benedict, Associate Director, Department of International Relations, Congress of Industrial Organizations, was born in New York City, on 20 September 1917. He attended the college of the City of New York and graduated in 1939. After serving as an employee in a printing company, he became a lathe man and then inspector at the General Electric Company, Lynn, Mass. He helped to organize a local union and later served as shop steward. Joining the Air Corps in 1942, he was flight engineer and gunner in North Africa and, subsequently, in Italy and France. He did language research work in the University of Paris beginning in 1946. Late in that year, he became the assistant to the Mission Chief of C. A. R. E. Later was appointed as Mission Chief in Czechoslovakia and then Mission Chief in France, and finally Regional Director for C. A. R. E. for all of Western Europe. Since 1954, he has been working at the National Headquarters of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

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COLONEL O'NEIL: Gentlemen: Last week we had a lecture on Industrial Relations of Germany, Austria, and Yugoslavia. This morning we continue with the same subject, as we will consider France, Spain, and Italy--with the same objective in mind--to gain an appreciation of labor-management relationships, and to become acquainted with the implications of the manpower factors as they relate to our concepts and our security position.

Our speaker has spent considerable time in Europe. He was with the Air Force during World War II, and subsequently he was at the University of Paris, where he did language research. He also served in various missions of CARE and finally assumed the regional directorship of that organization for all of Western Europe. He is presently associated with, and is the Associate Director of, the Department of International Affairs of the Congress of Industrial Organizations.

In that capacity he spends considerable time at conferences in this country and in other countries in which we are interested. As a matter of fact, he may be classified as an international commuter.

I take great pleasure in welcoming to the platform and introducing to the class Mr. Daniel Benedict from CIO.

Mr. Benedict.

MR. BENEDICT: Being an "international commuter," as Colonel O'Neil put it, is a rather different sort of job when you are working for an organization like CIO, from the normal sort of tourist when the average American gets to go around the world.

Now, I gather that some of the things I have come across in this "commuting" around the world can be of some interest to you in forming your own understanding of manpower and industrial-relations problems in the countries we are going to talk about today.

I would like to give a few introductory remarks about each country and then go into the labor situation as I see it in each of those countries.

First of all, about France: Most of us know, one way or another, that there are 40-odd million Frenchmen. There's the old business about "40 million Frenchmen can't be wrong" and it might be of interest to know that since the war the population of France has reversed its old trend and is going up again. Today it is close to 43 million.

One of the factors, undoubtedly, in the increase of population in France, is a factor that also plays a great role in considering the labor situation. That is the system of family allowances. Some 20-odd percent of French workers, thanks to the family allowances system, are actually better off today than they were in 1938. This is known as "damning with faint praise." In other words, despite all the effort that has gone into the French economy over the past ten years, despite the very sizable funds advanced by the United States, despite the very serious contribution of the average Frenchman through pulling in his belt in the early years after the war, more than three-fourths of the French working people are virtually no better off today than they were back in 1938.

When anyone comes to consider the possibility of achieving voluntary cooperation on the part of workers in France in any emergency situation, he has to take into consideration the economic status of these people. Generally, that economic status is pretty closely linked to the political and trade-union reactions on the part of the people involved.

There has been, I believe, adequate publicity about the fact that in France more than one-fourth of the votes go Communist. As far as the trade union is concerned, the situation is actually worse. France has a badly split labor movement--not just split the way the AFofL and the CIO have been split in the past in the United States--but split by a separation that is far deeper and far more important.

The major trade-union movement in French history has been the CGT--Confederation General du Travail--The General Federation of Labor. This historically has been the main stream of union organization in France.

During the war, the Communists, very well organized in the resistance, better organized than the other elements of the resistance, were able to get control of the machinery of the CGT. They used that machinery for their political purposes, for getting rid of their opponents or putting their opponents into impossible situations. By the end

of 1947, many of the non-Communists within the CGT, that is, the active ones, had given up hope of taking back control. They split away and formed an organization known as Force Ouvrière Worker's Force. It, like the American Federation of Labor and the CIO, is affiliated to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.

Unfortunately, however, the average French worker, did not follow these people out of the CGT, so that today it claims--and in Latin countries claims are indicative rather of a comparison than of a reality--some three million members. More realistic estimates run in the neighborhood of 1-1/2 million--someplace between a million and one-quarter and a million and one-half.

On the other hand, our friends of Force Ouvrière claim a million members. I am afraid that that too is just a claim. When it comes to dues-paying members, it is considerably less.

There is a third group in the labor movement known as the CFTC--Confédération Française de Travailleurs Chrétiens or the French Confederation of Christian Workers, which in reality is a Catholic oriented organization, fairly close to the MRP, the Catholic party. It, too, claims a million members, and again the claim is one that tends to include friends, as well as members. I have been looking for a charitable way of saying that, and I think I have found it.

In reality, in the factory elections in France, the Communist CGT gets approximately two-thirds of the votes. It varies. Sometimes it goes down to 65 percent; sometimes up to 70 percent; but as a whole it is in the neighborhood of two-thirds of the votes. So, even if the free, or non-Communist, trade-organization votes are added together, they don't come to more than about one-third.

One of the basic reasons for this has been the inability of the non-Communist unions to do a better job than the Communists in getting decent living conditions for the workers they represent.

Now, most of you probably know that in this country there was a Communist danger in the American trade unions, and the Communists had, in one way or another, sizable influence, and even controlling influence, in certain of the large unions in this country. But it was possible, in the auto-workers' union, for example, which is the largest union in the United States, to beat the Communists, throw them out of the leadership, and render them harmless, as far as the union is

concerned, reducing them to perhaps a one-percent minority by showing the union members that the free and democratic trade unions were able to do a better job of defending the day-to-day practical, economic interests of the workers involved.

Unfortunately, that has not been the case so far in France. This, of course, gives the Communists the possibility to continue their hold over the majority of the working people. One of the reasons that it has been so difficult is that the Government tends to continue a process of discouraging local collective-bargaining agreements.

In France, as in many other countries in Europe, whatever progress is made so far as the working conditions are concerned tends to be made on a national political level where political opposition sometimes pays off better than what we know in this country as the constructive and more reasonable day-to-day union activity. In this you have a measure of unholy, if unwritten, united front between the Communists, who gain from this, and certain short-sighted industrialists, who think they gain from it, too.

Now, a few words on Italy. Much of what I said about France is true in Italy as well. The population is a little more. The number of Communists and fellow travelers is in reality considerably more. In Italy, the CGIL--Confederazione Generale Italiano del Lavoro--the Italian General Federation of Labor, the equivalent of the CGT in France, claims over five million members--close to six million. According to more realistic estimates, it is about three million. That's a lot less, but it is still a lot.

The CISL, or the Catholic oriented trade-union movement, claims two million. The UIL, which is the newest of the three, and which is social-democratic in its orientation, claims one-half million. As in France, these are claims, not statistics. So that, if anything, as you can see, the result, as far as membership is concerned, is even worse than in France.

However, over the past year there has been a shift in the trend. While there is no proof that Communists have lost their voting strength in general elections (in fact, the December 1953 elections in the South of Italy were quite a shock, because the Communist strength went up by ten percent), yet when it has come to the factory elections, particularly in the North of Italy, in the major industrial centers, the Communists have been taking a sizable licking. Now, by "a sizable licking" I

don't mean they have become the smallest of the three. I mean that in a few plants the two non-Communist federations, when added together, have as much or, in a few places, a little bit more than the Communists.

I think almost any newspaper or magazine article or think piece on Italy comments on the fact, perhaps the strange seeming fact, that here is a Catholic country, a country in which the average family has, as a virtually automatic part of its family life, the Catholic sacraments, yet a country in which the same working family goes to Mass--or at least part of the family does--and accepts the basic Church doctrine, which is, of course, a very strongly anti-Communist doctrine; but the average working family then goes out and votes Communist in the factory elections and in many cases votes Communist politically as well.

It may seem to be a contradiction, but it is one of those contradictions which unfortunately is a reality in life and, since the economic conditions in Italy are as bad as they are, and since you have this drive which gets people not only willing to disregard the tenets in which they basically believe, but also as they are continuously ready to cut their ties with their own soil and emigrate, there is tremendous pressure to break loose from their country.

All of these are indications that, unless something is done about the economic situation in Italy, it is going to continue having these and other contradictions.

Part of the big problem of Italy is this whole question of agrarian reform which makes it possible for the Communists to have as much strength as they have among the land workers in the South. For example, to use a fairly common expression, many peasants don't know communism from rheumatism, but they are voting the Communist ticket because they do know they are not being treated decently; they do know their children can't get a decent education. They know, too, that meanwhile the absentee landlords of the big estates in the South of Italy are running from a Venice festival to a Cannes festival and are enjoying themselves. It is not a situation in which democracy can flourish, but a situation in which extremes prosper.

The other part of the picture in Italy is the question of industrial reform. Italy is beset by monopolies, very powerful monopolies, that control not only the economic life of the country but also the newspapers and a great deal of the political life and the social life. Not only do

they control, but they control in a way which impedes the development of industrial progress in Italy. I am sure most of you have heard of this custom, if you call it that, that exists in Italy, as in France, where many many industrialists produce as little as possible with as high a profit margin as possible, and the heck with the mass-consumption market. Of course that means unemployment, under-consumption, and pressure for emigration, and all three together also add to strength for the Communists and weakness for the non-Communists.

Now, a couple of words about Spain. The American labor movement--and this is true of both the American Federation of Labor and the Congress of Industrial Organizations--has no relations and wants no relations with the sindicatos, the so-called trade unions of Spain. That does not stop us from trying to understand what goes on in Spain. I try to keep up with the different things that are going on there. I occasionally thumb through a little of the Spanish press, occasionally talk to someone who has been there, and occasionally have even been there myself.

One of the influential newspapers of Spain is a paper called Ya, in Madrid. It happens to be the major Catholic newspaper in Madrid. In a recent article early this year in that newspaper, the Archbishop of Toledo, who is the Cardinal Primate of Spain, himself took note (--I say "himself" because all of the Church has not distinguished itself by opposition to the present regime--that is, the major part of the Church though some people in the Church have opposed it--) of the disappointment of Spanish workers with the "trade-union" setup in that country. He was very concerned about it. In fact, those people within the Church in Spain who are concerned about labor problems, and a number of them are today, have expressed that concern in even stronger terms than the Cardinal did.

Just a few days before his statement, another one was made by a leading bishop, in which he said that the Spanish "unions" are neither genuine nor are they in conformity with Christian social principles. The American trade-union movement agrees completely, and would add that they are not in conformity with any social principles, Christian or not.

In considering the problem of Spain, I think its geographical location is a very important factor. A few months ago a Lieutenant Colonel Kiefer, who lectured on geopolitics at the War College here, made a very interesting and, in my opinion, a very valid distinction between

what he called primary and secondary space. By secondary space he meant those countries which fall outside the power belt of probability of a hot war. From all present indications, if there is going to be any secondary space anywhere in the world, if we are not going to have another situation in which there is "no hiding place down here," if there is any secondary space, Spain could logically be considered as being in some sort of secondary space, with the Pyrenees, and with the comparative distance away from Russian lines.

Now, the problem of getting a decent situation, as far as the United States is concerned, in a country such as Spain, according to Kiefer-- who did not mention Spain; he was speaking of other areas of secondary space--is, first of all, that of furnishing goods to allies; secondly, of seeing to its own internal security; and thirdly, maintaining enough military force for initial defense in the improbable event of an attack.

Certainly the third condition Spain seems to fulfill completely. Anyone who has been to Spain in recent years gets the impression that every other person he meets in the street is in uniform, and probably an officer. (I don't want the officers' union getting after me for that remark.)

The first category that Kiefer set up in his analysis was furnishing goods. Spain does not have a heck of a lot in that field. The second one is far more important, particularly if the United States is going to construct air bases and naval bases in the country. That is the business of the country's own internal security.

Every indication we have of the labor situation in Spain leads us to believe that any reliance on the security of the present system is building on sand, and a very dangerous quicksand at that. Every one is in the government-controlled "union;" so, from the point of view of figures, it is about as if we were to talk about how many people belong to Russian "unions." It is in the same class--with a special twist that has been added; namely, the employers are members of the union as well. How anyone calls that a union after that, I don't know. But words can't protest very effectively against their use or misuse.

Perhaps at this point, Colonel, we might stop for some questions.

COLONEL O'NEIL: Let's take a ten-minute break.

COLONEL O'NEIL: All set for questions.

QUESTION: What assistance is CIO giving to the non-Communist unions in France and Italy? Are they working directly with them, or through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions?

MR. BENEDICT: The CIO is working through the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions to help the free trade unions in France and Italy, and has been for several years. This question makes me feel like taking an extra minute to give you some of the background of American aid in the labor field. Right after the war American trade unions were of considerable material assistance to the free trade unions of Europe. Every type of material--food packages to free trade unionists who had just come through, perhaps, concentration camps, or just the simple every day lack of food that existed in Europe; mimeograph machines; typewriters; in some cases, jeeps; loud speaker equipment, and so forth--was sent to free trade unions that were lacking these things.

As time went on, it became apparent, at least to CIO, that American intervention, if it can be called that, in the activities of a European trade-union movement, was not as welcome as a cooperative effort, undertaken under the heading of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and so CIO shifted its emphasis more and more in the direction of working with and through the international movement rather than running direct programs of its own.

That did not stop the French or Italian unions from knowing that CIO had contributed to a program of this international movement. I must say that the allied trade-union members also contributed great shares. As a matter of fact, voluntary contributions were made over the past three or four years to the International's Regional Activities Fund, which is basically aimed at the under-developed countries. The largest contributor was the British TUC; the next largest was the CIO; and the Canadians, Germans, and Scandinavians, etc., also chipped in.

We think that is a much more effective way of working than if we ourselves were to go in and choose some individual or group of individuals and give them money. The general feeling in CIO on this thing is, we want allies who are proud enough and able enough to stand on their own feet, rather than puppets. Generally, in life, people that we can buy, somebody else can buy, too.

QUESTION: Mr. Benedict, have I understood you correctly? You inferred that the reason the Communists failed in their movement within the American trade union was because they had nothing to offer. Isn't it something far more basic than that, namely--

MR. BENEDICT: Go ahead.

STUDENT: No, I will stop there. Isn't it something much more basic than that?

MR. BENEDICT: Well, there are a lot of reasons why the Communists failed in the American trade-union movement. I don't know how much we want to get off into a discussion of the American scene; but certainly, in a number of specific unions, in a number of specific industries, where they had succeeded in getting hold of the administrative apparatus of the unions, it was possible to break that hold. Walter Reuther's auto workers are a perfect example of that, on the basis of showing that the Communists did not act in the interests of the auto workers. In other industries in other circumstances a number of other factors come into play, but, if the opposition to the Communists is not able to show that it is capable of defending the workers' interests, then it does not have much chance of overthrowing a Communist strangle hold on the administrative apparatus of the union.

That was the point I made.

QUESTION: Mr. Benedict, I am not quite sure of my facts on this question. You can stop me quickly if I am wrong. I believe Ambassador Luce in Italy organized something she called machinery to award contracts to Italian industry by way of an offshore procurement program. Our ambassador and the Chief of MAAG were in on this. Am I right so far?

MR. BENEDICT. Yes.

STUDENT: What influence has that action had in the trend away from Communist dominated labor movement? If it has had an influence, would the same system work in France, maybe?

MR. BENEDICT: You have hit upon a source of considerable argument within the State Department and its International Cooperation Administration, which is the new name of the Marshall Plan successor agency. In Italy offshore procurement is a very definite factor--that

is, the handling of offshore procurement is a very definite factor affecting the entire development of election returns in the shop-committee elections of the country.

In France, for one reason or another, the people responsible have not seen fit to worry about these problems. There is considerable criticism of that lack of interest in France.

The whole question of offshore procurement contracts is one which is on the lips of everyone in Italy who is concerned with the Communist problem in the factory aspects. Certainly it has played a role in the defeat, or even the comparative defeat, of the Communists in a number of factories. Like so many things in life, though, it tends to have another side to it.

One of the things that worried me this summer when I visited Livorno (Leghorn)--one of the most important points for the Americans--was the fact that in one of the most important metal plants in Leghorn, the Whitehead Moto-Fides Plant, the Communists were licked last year in the factory elections while there was an offshore procurement program in that factory. The contract was finished. This year there was no procurement program at Moto-Fides, and this year the Communists took back the majority. That worries me. It worries a lot of other people, too, and it should.

Unless the free forces in the Italian labor movement are able to follow up on these election victories with intensive educational work at the factory level and with intensive organizational work, including fighting with the very employer who perhaps looks with favor on their victory, unless they are able to do that, their victory is going to be short lived. Certainly that example in Livorno, while I hope it does not indicate what is going to be a general trend on the other hand is important enough to cause a number of us to discuss this at great length with the Italian free-trade-union leaders and to encourage them to react against any such possible trend.

There have also been some places where offshore procurements were not largely involved, in which the Communists were beaten, and there have also been a few places in which offshore procurement was not involved in which the Communists were beaten and then managed to creep back in.

So this problem is a general one of what happens after our friends lick them in the elections. Certainly the use of offshore procurement contracts has made it easier for the initial licking to be given the Communists. But that is not enough.

QUESTION: Mr. Benedict, I realize that this is a loaded question, but I think it must be asked. In the event of hostilities between ourselves and the Russians, what is your reaction on the attitude of French labor? I am speaking of industrial labor now, specifically with the CGT in mind.

MR. BENEDICT: Oh, well, I would say that by and large French labor--and this is true of Italian labor too--thinks with horror of any outbreak of hostilities and would not be enthusiastic about whoever started it. Now, modern propaganda machines being what they are; nobody is likely to know who started it, even after it gets started; so that the average person working in shop down at Fiat is likely to hear only when the nearest propaganda machine blares into his ears as to who started it. I feel sure he will react against whomever he thinks started it. This is leaving aside who really started it, and I don't think he is going to make a very reliable source of assistance.

QUESTION: Mr. Benedict, I assume that the rank and file of labor normally join the union for the betterment of their own position and, having a central bargaining authority and so on, they pay their dues and the money goes into the treasury. I wonder what the feeling of the rank and file is about the use of union monies to better the conditions of the workers, say, in France. I can't quite imagine that the rank and file of the labor movement---

MR. BENEDICT: You mean in this country?

STUDENT: Yes, in this country--is contributing funds to the central agency to prevent Frenchmen from working 50 hours a week.

MR. BENEDICT: Well, you have hit on what is one of my own toughest problems and that of my opposite number in the AFofL. No program of international activities can be undertaken on a long-range basis unless we have some sort of educational program alongside of it in the American labor movement. You might be surprised--I know I was--the times I have been to local union schools or conventions and have seen the voluntary contributions over and above what the union organization was giving to some particular overseas program that they were interested in.

One such voluntary contribution was made last Christmas and to our surprise we found that American trade unionists, who at Christmas time like every other American, are beset with all the giving programs ranging from the Community Chest, which has just started, up and down the line, through all the heart funds and everything else there is, topped off by all the personal gift problems that occur around Christmas time, despite that, gave tens of thousands of contributions for gift packages to trade unions in other countries, over and above what they knew the union was doing as a regular operation.

So there is some understanding on the part of American workers, just as I think there is some understanding on the part of American people in general, of the ties that we have with the people in other parts of the world. I know that during my years of work with CARE, which Colonel O'Neil mentioned, I was constantly surprised by the fact that American people kept on giving. Some of it is just pure philanthropy, I suppose, on the part of people. Another part is perhaps this business of enlightened self-interest.

In addition to our membership in the International Federation of Free Trade Unions, most of the CIO unions are affiliated with something special that exists in the world labor movement. That is the International Trade Secretariat. For example, there is the International Federation of Metal Workers, the International Federation of Transport Workers--right up and down the line, through all the major trades and industries. There has been virtually no trouble at all explaining to the auto workers in Detroit that the living standards and the organizational standards of the workers in the General Motors assembly plant in Mexico City, or the General Motors Opel plant in Dusseldorf, affect his standards too.

So there is not too strong an opposition or an obstacle to overcome when it comes to getting some cooperation. As far as I am concerned, there is not enough of the cooperation and of the contribution. Probably there never is to a specialist in any field enough interest in his field on the part of other people. But I would say that, trying to look at it from an objective or outside point of view, there is a surprising amount of interest and cooperation.

QUESTION: Can you tell us a little bit about what a union is like in Spain, or in one of the Iron Curtain countries?

MR. BENEDICT: First of all, as I mentioned, in Spain the employer is a member of the union. Not only is he a member of the union, but he is a sort of leader. In the Iron Curtain countries his place is taken by one or two people, depending on the local situation--the trade-union secretary, whose first problem is: how do we get more production out of these guys?--or the party secretary, whose first problem is pretty much the same thing, complicated with perhaps some political overtones that he has a tendency to be more interested in than the trade-union secretary is. By and large, though, there is not too much difference between them.

In Spain the factory owner is usually flanked by the political party leader, just the same as the factory manager or trade-union secretary in Iron Curtain countries is flanked by the Communist secretary. These people have as part of their task the necessity for keeping up the framework or front of a union setup at the same time that they must do everything to avoid any real pro-labor function on the part of that union.

Sometimes these things run away with them. We have seen it happen, particularly in East Germany, in 1953. The same thing happened at the same time in several other countries in Eastern Europe. The Skoda workers in Czechoslovakia overran this union framework which was set up not just as a front but also as a sort of hurdle or obstacle. They overran this and struck anyway. In a few places they even carried along local functionaries. I have seen any number of reports from the Czech Communist press attacking this, that, or the other local functionary for letting himself be used as an "instrument of the enemies of the Czechoslovak People's Republic."

In other words, he acted as a transmission belt for the workers' protest about the setup. Every once in a while you will find workers, even after many years of Communist domination in Eastern Europe, with the strange idea that they should complain to the union about speed-ups. One other thing they do sometimes is to find some poor benighted union secretary who does not know his job and imagines he is supposed to pass on the complaints instead of squelching them. It happens.

QUESTION: Mr. Benedict, my question follows right in line with that one. With Spain in the picture, what is the story as far as leadership and management and labor in the other two countries are concerned? With large Communist membership, how can management continue to operate?

MR. BENEDICT: One of the strangest things about management in this world is that it manages to continue to operate under the strangest circumstances. As a boy I ran a lathe in a General Electric plant. There has come to be in the labor movement, not just in this country, but in the free-labor movement in general, an expression known as "The General Electric tactic," which consisted, in this country, over a period of several years, of favoring the Communist-controlled union as a stick with which to beat the anti-Communist union; the theory evidently being that the Communists would be so grateful that they would lie down and do whatever General Electric told them to do, as the first part, and, as the second part, General Electric's thinking, that "we can always crack down on the Communists with outside help if we need to, but we can't very well call in the FBI against Jim Carey, (who is the head of the CIO electrical workers); it will be much easier to call in the FBI when necessary against the UE (which is the Communist-dominated union in the electrical field.)"

The same thing has happened in any number of other countries, but GE was the place where the thing first became a scandal, and CIO people started using the expression "GE tactic." Other unions in other parts of the world, facing similar tactics, use the same expression. Any number of big concerns in Europe have consistently worked with Communist-controlled unions and even used them as a means of keeping out, or keeping down, or keeping weak the free-trade unions, which perhaps to those employers represent a greater long-term danger.

Not only employers but governments have used this tactic. The French Government in North Africa--I realize North Africa is not part of this field, but if I may be permitted to say one word about it--in Morocco the Moroccan workers were not allowed, until the week before last, to form unions of their own choosing. The only unions to which they could belong were the so-called European unions, meaning the French unions. Meaning what? The number of Arabs who are Catholics is pretty small, so that the Catholic Federation of Labor is pretty small in Morocco. The Force Ouvrière, which is the non-sectarian free trade union in France, is unfortunately in Morocco composed mostly of French colonial functionaries. Therefore, the number of Arabs going to join Force Ouvrière in Morocco is highly limited.

What is left? The CGT. So, if a Moslem dock worker in Casablanca wanted union representation, what did he do? He ended up in the CGT; which made it perfectly easy for the Resident General when he wanted to crack down on the Moroccan nationalists to say that this,

that, and the other one are members of the Communist-dominated CGT which is run from Moscow, as everyone knows. He says, "Let me have American dollars so that I can crack down on them."

It is an old story. The French have used it over and over again; so much so, that in one Moroccan city an Arab group started to take a page from Bolshevik tactics and organized itself into cells in the union and started throwing out the Communists. The French imposed a regulation that at every level there must be a majority of Europeans to form an executive committee. Well, as the number of Europeans, meaning Frenchmen, who are members of the Communist CGT in Morocco, is very limited, and the number of those Europeans who are not Communists is even more limited, you are almost automatically securing the Communist majority.

This is quite an extension of the GE tactic.

QUESTION: May I ask you to differentiate between the membership of the CGT and the Communist party card holders?

MR. BENEDICT: Sure. There is no very accurate set of figures. I mentioned earlier the trouble you have in even finding out how many members there are of a union organization, since dues paying is not a very popular practice. The same thing is true of party dues paying. However, of the probable million and one-half real members of the CGT, perhaps 20 percent of them are Communist party members.

What about the other 80 percent? A surprisingly great number of them believe simply that this is to them the house of labor. Their fathers belonged to it. They have not been able to make the psychological break necessary to understand that it is no longer under the same control. It is like people who go to a restaurant sometimes even after it has changed hands ten times. They keep on going there every day because they have always gone there, or their parents have gone there. People vote for a party in America sometimes because their dads did.

That accounts for a surprisingly large number of people who remain in the CGT, plus the fact that it is the only organization which is large enough to be effective in some parts of France. So people say, "This is the union." It is the only union they see in their area. There are many places where you don't see free trade unions. They don't have the money in many quarters in France. The Communists do.

One thing happened this spring, though, that is very interesting. For the first time in many many years--well, certainly, for the first time since the Communists took complete control of CGT--there was an opposition. The Communists at the beginning played up the opposition and gave it all the space it wanted in the CGT papers. But at the convention they hammered down at it, thinking they would reduce it to a very insignificant two or three percent. They thought that afterward they could say, "We were perfectly democratic in this thing. Even the opposition was able to speak in articles in our press, etc., yet the rank and file repudiated them." They put on real pressure. Despite the real pressure, almost 30 percent of the delegates to the CGT convention went to the opposition against the program put forth by the Communist leadership. The opposition is a very loose one, and I don't have any illusions about its taking over the CGT from Communist hands, or even resulting in any large-size split.

But it is important that such an opposition came into being. It came into being from people who are not party members, but who had gone along with the Communists all through the years, but who had gotten fed up with the constant shift of tactics.

QUESTION: Mr. Benedict, we have been led to believe by a former speaker that unions were not too successful in Germany, at least since the war, largely because over a period of time German employers have handled the employees by looking out for their benefits, and so forth, quite well. Is there really a great disparity between the way German employers look out after their employees and the way they look out after them in France, Italy, and Spain?

MR. BENEDICT: I would have to agree with your thesis in order to answer that that way. I would say that one of the reasons that communists are not so strong in Germany is that you have a large number of seasoned democratic anti-Communist fighters in the German labor movement and that these people are capable at the same time of making sure that they lead the fight for reduction in the working week--not the Communists.

One of the big troubles in France right now is the fact that wages have not kept up with the increases in productivity, and everybody sees it all around him. They are having strikes, particularly in the metal field, that are breaking out in various parts of France, including violence. While the free-trade unionists in Paris have been unable to take the leadership in these movements, in Germany they have managed, more or less.

There are many things wrong with the German trade-union, there are many things wrong with the American ones, too. But German trade unionism has managed to keep the leadership in every big important step forward thus far. That is one of the reasons that the Communists have not been able to make sizable headway in West Germany.

I don't think it is a question of intelligent paternalism on the part of the German manufacturers.

COLONEL O'NEIL: Mr. Benedict, I think the enthusiasm demonstrated by the number of questions speaks very well for thanking you for coming over and giving us the morning. We enjoyed your lecture very much and also this very beneficial question period. Thank you very much.

(29 Nov 1955--250)O/dcp