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Grace E. Wurzer
Ursinus College, grwurzer@ursinus.edu

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**À Propos Decolonization:
The “Affaire D’amour” Between The Renault Factory
Strikes of 1947 and French Malagasy Discrimination**

Grace E. Wurzer
Ursinus College

In 1947, The Monnet Plan was introduced in France to reinvigorate the economy, which was still feeble after World War II. Its high demands of factory workers soon led to strikes, which quickly gained the support of the French Communist Party. Concurrently, the French government was rapidly decolonizing Madagascar. Newly independent Africans found themselves financially strained in the wake of decolonization and were enticed to immigrate to France in the hopes of attaining economic freedom and citizenship in exchange for labor. These laborers, who were employed by the stricken factories, also garnered the support of the PCF, much to the dismay of the Labor Party and the Rally of the French People. While negotiations ended the strikes, the surveillance state instituted to monitor French-African immigrants perpetuated the class divides, xenophobia, and racism that grew out of the original resistance to The Monnet Plan. Thus the complex power and class dynamics that dominated the French Cold War also played a key role in its creation, as the total submission to the nation via the surveillance state came about as a result of much earlier fears of Blackness, immigration, and migrant labor.

Introduction

French economic recovery after World War II created a dichotomy that saw the government attempt to unite French citizens while rejecting others for the same reason: the demand of the labor market. The Monnet Plan, introduced by Jean Monnet in the autumn of 1946 on the heels of the Second World War, aimed to create a financially independent France through a market stimulated by the state's mainland population. However, citizens began to strike due to the demands of the plan. Strikers soon gained support from the French Communist Party (Parti communiste français, or PCF). The burgeoning Cold War meant that this made them enemies of the state, the labor party (Confederation Generale du Travail, or CGT), and the Rally of the French People (Rassemblement du Peuple Français, or RPF), specifically the party's leader and future French President, Charles de Gaulle. The PCF's support extended to Malagasy immigrants who were arriving en masse due to decolonization. Owing to racist, xenophobic, and colonialist ideals compounded by Cold War era fears of communism, French Malagasy immigrants were marginalized and ultimately became victims of the surveillance state. The strikes of 1947, and the Cold War fears undergirded the French reaction against the movement, thus contributing to the discriminatory policies against Malagasy immigrants by the French government in the 1960s and 1970s.

The historical research in this paper requires navigation across two separate events as well as simultaneously occurring timelines, and therefore the guide for this paper will be presented here. Firstly, a brief labor history of France before the strikes will be given, followed by an explanation of the events that occurred during the Strikes of 1947. Then, the paper will discuss the events of French decolonization in Madagascar. Afterward, the two events will be synthesized and analyzed from April 1947 to the conclusion of the strikes in December 1947,

particularly concerning government policy and the role of the PCF. Finally, this paper will investigate the effects that the strikes had on Malagasy laborers in the decades following the strikes.

To properly analyze the history of labor in France, decolonization, and the impacts on Malagasy laborers, both primary and secondary sources were consulted. Academic articles studying the years before, during, and after the strike generally enumerate a great effort by the CGT and RPF to establish France as a global power through economic self-sufficiency or civil unrest in the postcolonial era. While previous research on both topics focuses on their contentious relationship due to the rapid decolonization that took place immediately following World War II, little is found linking the PCF's explicit support to the French state's discrimination of Malagasy laborers. It is also important to acknowledge that much of this literature, while useful in providing context, was manufactured in the United States or Western European nations during the late twentieth century and reflects the author's worldviews, prejudices, and beliefs. While biases are present in all of the sources consulted, great detail has been paid attention to regarding sourcing accounts from various sources. This paper aims to utilize these diverse perspectives to connect the strikes of 1947 to the maltreatment of Malagasy immigrants by arguing that they were due to fears of Communism because of the emerging Cold War.

French Labor and the Monnet Plan

In the aftermath of World War II, the French economy was in a dire state, having been ravaged by a series of battles and the oppressive Vichy regime. These issues were further exacerbated by ineffective efforts to decolonize, which was happening concurrently as a result of postwar economic ruin.¹ The rapid industrial growth of nations like the U.S.S.R and the United

¹ F.L., "French Economic Recovery: The Monnet Plan," *The World Today* 3, no. 3 (1947): 134.

States, and the physical destruction of the state further compounded the grim condition of French industry.² However, while the dismal prospects for French industry might indicate total economic hopelessness, French economist Jean Monnet proposed a plan that would “enable France, through the full utilization of her man-power and natural resources, to become a highly developed ‘modern’ country which will take a full part in international life while at the same time ensuring her independence by the development of essential production and the lowering of costs.”³ French economic recovery was possible through the recomposition of industry which would entail active participation by the French population as laborers and within French industry. Monnet projected that this new labor force comprised of French citizens would make France a modern nation akin to the Soviet Union and the United States while creating an independent state. The independent state would then be able to protect its economy from future devastation comparable to the postwar period. French citizens who felt exploited by the events both during and into the postwar recovery period quickly took to the Monnet Plan, particularly due to the jobs and new economic activity it would create.⁴ Thus, the Monnet Plan was established and quickly began to transform the French economy. However, while the reception towards the Monnet Plan was initially quite warm, the workforce soon grew agitated by the intense requests it placed on the very laborers who were meant to benefit most from the plan.

The primary issue many French laborers had with the demands of the Monnet Plan was that they were paid very low wages to grow the economy even faster, which led to a series of strikes organized by the PCF. The issues laborers had with the Monnet Plan were due to the large investment it required of them- citizens were expected to utilize their savings to revive the

² F.L., “French Economic Recovery: The Monnet Plan,” 134.

³ F.L., “French Economic Recovery: The Monnet Plan,” 134.

⁴ F.L., “French Economic Recovery: The Monnet Plan,” 140.

economy, as well as to accommodate a higher cost of living.⁵ Many laborers felt that the Monnet Plan depended “on the goodwill... of the French themselves” and that relying on this alone was not sustainable.⁶ Tensions between laborers and employers due to the stress of the demands of the Monnet Plan reached a climax only six months after its implementation when workers began to strike French factories in the spring of 1947.⁷ The largest of these strikes took place in the Renault Factory, which involved nearly 30,000 men and quickly gained the support of The Metal Workers Union and the PCF.⁸ This was significant, as party support meant that the strikers held more leverage against the French government in achieving their demands. The government appealed to strikers by urging them “to realize that the maintenance of purchasing power was far more important than increases in wage rates.”⁹ The government’s strategy was to get workers to agree to stimulate the economy out of this “goodwill,” and to forgo higher wages for the sake of faster industrial recovery. With the two parties at an impasse on how best to handle the wishes of the laborers with the needs of the Monnet Plan, the government turned to immigrant laborers to hopefully assuage the damage done by the industry strikes.

French African Decolonisation and the Malagasy Uprising of 1947

These immigrant laborers were primarily coming from Madagascar, where France was rapidly decolonizing. French government officials were worried that they could not economically support their colonies, but they could also not afford to lose them as they had lost Vietnam to Japan in 1942.¹⁰ To retain power overseas while economically focusing on mainland France, government officials devised a plan to create what they dubbed territorial nation-states. These

⁵ F.L., “French Economic Recovery: The Monnet Plan,” 141.

⁶ F.L., “French Economic Recovery: The Monnet Plan,” 141.

⁷ “Chronological Summary of Events: April 21- May 11, 1947,” *Chronology of International Events and Documents* 3, no. 9 (1947): 240.

⁸ “Chronological Summary of Events: April 21- May 11, 1947,” 240.

⁹ “Chronological Summary of Events: April 21- May 11, 1947,” 240.

¹⁰ Frederick Cooper, “French Africa, 1947-48: Reform, Violence, and Uncertainty in a Colonial Situation,” *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 4 (2014): 468.

territorial-nation states were independent African nations run by French-appointed evoules: French-educated elite from French political institutions.¹¹ Thus, while these nations would be ruled by a separate government, their political system would still be dominated by colonial power via appointee's ideology.

The existence of colonial ideology in African governments led to revolutions as citizens were not willing to engage in this ideology in the supposed "postcolonial" Africa, evident in the former French colony of Madagascar. Madagascar had struggled with the conception of the nation-state and formed the Democratic Movement for the Renovation of Madagascar (MDRM), a militant party that openly discussed its quest for liberation.¹² The MDRM was a massive network of "educated and uneducated people, of people working within French institutions and Malagasy networks, of different idioms of solidarity and different forms of militancy."¹³ If the population was instead comprised of undercover freedom seekers, French colonial powers no longer had any real control over former colonies and consequently could not monetarily benefit from them. Thus when a violent revolution broke out in Madagascar against remaining French militant forces, the French government was quick to blame the MDRM and brutally punished them, attempting to collapse the party.¹⁴ This worked to quell the party, as well as unaffiliated Malagasy citizens who disliked colonial intervention. However, it came at the expense of weakening all political parties in Madagascar. The French government explicitly dictated who could and could not participate in government to benefit their own imperialist interests. For that reason, the governmental bureaus of Madagascar were rife with corruption and weak with uncertainty.

¹¹ Cooper, "French Africa," 468.

¹² Cooper, "French Africa," 474.

¹³ Cooper, "French Africa," 475.

¹⁴ Cooper, "French Africa," 475.

The weakening of the Malagasy state was occurring nearly simultaneously with the strikes, which gave the French government the unique opportunity to attempt to solve one governmental crisis with another. Dissatisfied Malagasy citizens were more inclined to immigrate to France, as they were “determined to remain linked to France,” according to the head of the Rassemblement du Peuple Français (RPF) Charles de Gaulle.¹⁵ Malagasy citizens knew that maintaining a relationship with France would provide them citizenship. Citizenship would allow them to work in Africa or mainland France, which allowed citizens to provide better economic realities for their families, particularly in the wake of the revolution. France benefitted from this relationship because they were able to project the image of a successful decolonization.¹⁶ France thus was able to lead other countries to believe it to be a strong militant force, supplanting the main goal of the Monnet Plan which was to become a powerful independent nation and major world power. Furthermore, it built confidence in the state from mainland French citizens as they were able to reap the benefits of colonialism while taking pride in no longer being a colonial power. The death of the colonial empire in order to instead create a France that was “enriched, ennobled, and expanded” with “a hundred million citizens and free men” was important to the nation’s projected image of independence.¹⁷ France no longer wanted dependent colonial nations because their existence implied internal weakness and vulnerability; decolonizing allowed France to continue to benefit from their colonies without their explicit dependence.

Despite the fact that both the French state and the Malagasy immigrants were able to benefit from this relationship, it still very much negatively impacted Madagascar. The foremost

¹⁵ Elizabeth Buettner, *Europe After Empire: Decolonization, Society, and Culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 160.

¹⁶ Buettner, *Europe After Empire*, 159.

¹⁷ Buettner, *Europe After Empire*, 124.

reason was the loss of African history, which was forsaken in order to create the narrative of a strong French nation. Malagasy citizens were also still suffering under colonial rule; however, the weakened state of the government made it even more difficult for them to revolt in the wake of the revolution. Furthermore, while Malagasy citizens stood to benefit from French citizenship, they were ultimately still beholden to the former colonial empire. The destruction of the MDRM combined with the internal weakness because of the incompetency of the evoues meant that many Malagasy immigrant laborers were forced to choose between their struggling home nation and their former colonizers. Thus, while the decolonial state of Madagascar benefitted both states, Malagasy immigrants entered into an unbalanced power dynamic that granted them the ability to work in France at the expense of prolonged colonial exploitation.

Malagasy immigrants thus came en masse to France at the urging of French officials in order to mitigate the effects of the strike. French officials retained wartime immigration policies that enticed Malagasy citizens to immigrate to France with the promise of citizenship and work opportunities.¹⁸ However, these promises were not all of an improved life- due to the mounting pressure to suppress revolutionaries in Madagascar, labor immigration was a result of the French government utilizing a “firm hand” in their decolonial policies.¹⁹ Essentially, many Malagasy immigrants felt that they had no choice but to immigrate due to the governmental weakness they were experiencing at home. It was thought that in mainland France, they would be better supported by a stronger central government that would be able to look out for their best interests. Therefore, while Malagasy immigration to France in 1947 was not entirely due to solving the strikes, it undoubtedly contributed both directly and indirectly. The French government utilized

¹⁸ Catherine Collomp, “Immigrants, Labor Markets, and the State, a Comparative Approach: France and the United States, 1880-1930,” *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 1 (1999).

¹⁹ Tony Smith, “A Comparative Study of French and British Decolonization,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 20, no. 1 (1978): 86.

decolonial weakness and remaining colonial power in order to incentivize Malagasy immigrants to labor in France during the strikes of 1947 in order to serve their own economic motives.

The PCF, The CGT, and The RPF: Cold War Complications

Decolonization, the strikes of 1947, and the economic tensions between the PCF and the government ultimately came to a head during the Renault strikes when the nation was forced to confront its divided state. As discussed, the Monnet Plan depended on an incredible output of manpower, which was not met in the wake of the strikes. The government decided to rectify the lack of laborers by recruiting immigrants, who would fill the factory positions that strikers had vacated.²⁰ While appearing to solve the labor shortage, the French government was soon at the mercy of the PCF. The PCF had previously supported Malagasy laborers, and now demanded that “they would not take part in any coalition Government of which the Communists were not members or in the majority supporting it.”²¹ The PCF’s support of the Malagasy people was mostly political, as they wanted to publicly condemn the failure of French decolonization in Madagascar and point out the failures of the independent state due to the Monnet Plan. However, their support of foreign laborers who were intended to break down the very movement they were working so hard to support made it incredibly significant. Malagasy laborers were supported by the opposing party and were thus enticed to join the strikes. With these new strikers and a rapidly expanding party by the day, the PCF was in a position to make demands to the government regarding the involvement of their party. Thus, while the PCF could have solely protected their “own” workers, their movement to forge a relationship with the immigrant laborers created what

²⁰F.L., “French Economic Recovery,” 139.

²¹ “Chronological Summary of Events: April 21- May 11, 1947,” 241.

the CGT and the RPF feared the most; Communist solidarity against the government. This created tension, as France's complicated relationship with socialism led them to fear the impact of the PCF on their weak postwar government and in relation, the impact of those the PCF supported like the strikers and the Malagasy immigrants.

Thus the worker's strikes of 1947 were not concerning to France only because it meant a wrench in the Monnet Plan; it indicated a very real threat of losing control of their nation, whose independence and internal strength meant everything in terms of postwar recovery. The PCF's support of the workers was sufficiently concerning, as their storied history of union and labor activism meant that laborers would be more inclined to support the PCF. While the reason for support for the strikes from the PCF "was salary claims in the Renault car factories, the Communists had dissented from the government's colonial policy concerning" Madagascar and the treatment of Malagasy immigrants.²² The PCF's declaration of support for Madagascar threatened the French government for a host of reasons. Firstly, they feared that the Malagasy immigrant laborers who were meant to intervene in the strike might become strikers themselves, as their position as workers meant that they were likely also experiencing economic hardship under the Monnet Plan. Secondly, the public condemnation of French decolonization directly contrasted with De Gaulle's declaration that France had a peaceful and successful decolonization process. Acknowledging the harm done in Madagascar both internally due to French interference with the MDRM, and externally due to the revolution, meant that the catastrophe of French decolonization would be brought to the attention of the populace. This would not do well to support France in the postwar era. Citizens would likely lose faith in the French government, and this loss of faith could mean greater losses of worker participation and economic stimulation. It

²² Yves Beigbeder, *Judging War Crimes and Torture: French Justice and International Criminal Tribunals and Commissions (1940-2005)*, (Leiden: Brill Nijhoff, 2006), 83.

could also have international repercussions, with nations like Britain and the United States becoming aware of French weakness in the postwar period. They would likely be inclined to intervene, thus decimating the ultimate intention of the Monnet Plan, which was to create an independent and internally strong France. The strikes, therefore, symbolized much more than the internal failure of the Monnet Plan. The moment that the PCF lent their support to the Renault laborers and Malagasy immigrants was the moment that the French government was forced to reckon with the fact that both internal and external loss of governmental control was likely on the horizon if the strikes did not end.

France's complex relationship with socialism greatly contributed to the fears surrounding the growing PCF and ultimately contributed to their anxieties about the Cold War as a country that employed capitalism. While socialist ideals had roots in France before Karl Marx's landmark political pamphlet *The Communist Manifesto*, this point is often seen as the beginning of the formal French Socialist Party.²³ It first gained popularity with the peasantry before spreading to industrial workers, ultimately spurring a massive workers' strike that greatly frightened the French bourgeoisie in 1868.²⁴ The party continued to gain power, eventually forming The Commune, a revolutionary socialist government that seized control of Paris in 1871.²⁵ While they did not implement many reforms, The Commune did grant more power to workers' unions and in some cases, turned factory control over to them.²⁶ By the time the army of Versailles ousted The Commune in May of 1871, attitudes of the bourgeoisie became "more conservative and less sympathetic to the workers" while workers became "more extremist."²⁷ More workers joined the Socialist party after The Commune, encouraged by the victories achieved for laborers

²³ Alan Bullock and F.W.D. Deakin, "Socialism" in *France 1848-1945: Politics and Anger*, edited by Theodore Zelkin (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 725.

²⁴ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 740.

²⁵ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 744.

²⁶ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 745.

²⁷ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 747.

and disillusioned towards the bourgeoisie. However, tensions arose within the party and by the late nineteenth century, members were divided as to whether capitalist reform was a better solution than a complete economic overhaul.²⁸ While eventually unified by French Socialist leader Jean Juares, the fractured nature meant that they had lost a majority of the support of both unions and the peasantry and thus a majority of their power.²⁹ However, moving into the twentieth century the party slowly began to gain more power in rural territories, as a compromise between radical anarchists and centrist Socialists meant that they slowly gained power again within their previous constituencies.³⁰ While cities that were traditionally anti-Socialist remained so, the influence of many cities voting Socialist meant that the party regained a great deal of support in the twentieth century.³¹ Therefore, while Socialism was not consistently the dominant political party in France, it indeed held a great deal of power. Furthermore, it showed a potential to usurp the French government in power which greatly scared the bourgeoisie. Ultimately, the Socialist party's greatest strength was not consistency or strength but in numbers- its mass appeal to laborers and rural French citizens meant that it had the capability to gain the intense support it once had.

It was this exact loss of governmental control that the RPF feared, as they believed that the interests of the PCF lay not with French strikers, but with the USSR. De Gaulle believed that a solution to the strike was imminent, although this was complicated once the PCF became involved. He "severely criticized the Communists' tendency to penetrate and gain control of labor organizations."³² The RPF disliked the Communist Party because they saw the

²⁸ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 756.

²⁹ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 766.

³⁰ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 786.

³¹ Bullock and Deakin, "Socialism," 787.

³² Lansing Warren, "DE GAULLE LIKENS AIMS TO TRUMAN'S: Says Their Policies in Present World Crisis Coincide in Defense of Liberties," *The New York Times*, April 24, 1947, 8.

Moscow-aligned movement as “foreign agents and separatists.”³³ Once again, the PCF was seen as attempting to undermine French post-recovery efforts by weakening the government through foreign influence. The RPF believed that the PCF was supporting the strike not to alleviate worker exploitation but to gain control of labor unions and thus generate party support. The RPF and by extension, the French government believed that the foreign influence supposedly within the PCF would further weaken their state. It was therefore in the best interests of the RPF and by extension the French government to conduct negotiations with the strikers as quickly as possible, as they did not want to risk a further weakening of the state.

What ensued were several violent months of negotiations that eventually came to a close in December 1947. While De Gaulle declared that he felt that “by the people within all forms of national activity that French internal divisions could be overcome,” what actually occurred was the strict exclusion of the Communist party from French political office.³⁴ On May 5, 1947, two weeks after the Renault strikes, the PCF was banned from governmental participation by President Paul Ramadier.³⁵ However, this did not quell insurrectional strikes, which reached another height in November of that year after the victory of the RPF in the municipal election.³⁶ These violent strikes were followed by aggressive discussions, wherein the National Assembly sided with the RPF and the CGT (French labor party)- workers were told to return to the factory.³⁷ The CGT and the RPF appeared to be victorious in the immediate aftermath of the negotiations. The strikes had ended and the workers were forced to return to the factories, which the CGT and RPF believed would once again create a unified France.

³³ Robert G. Neumann, “Formation and Transformation of Gaullism in France,” *The Western Political Quarterly* 6, no. 2 (1953), 252.

³⁴ Warren, “DE GAULLE LIKENS AIMS TO TRUMAN’S,” 8.

³⁵ Pierre Bois, “The Renault Strike of April and May 1947,” *Lutte Ouvriere*, no. 143 (1971).

³⁶ Francois Tarrant, “The Stalinist Apparatus and the Renault Strike of 1947,” *Jeune Revolutionnaire*, no. 26 (1971).

³⁷ Tarrant, “The Stalinist Apparatus and the Renault Strike of 1947.”

However, the strikes only left France more divided and internally unstable, even shortly after the negotiations. Only two weeks after the discussions concluded, the CGT split and a majority of ex-party members joined the PCF.³⁸ This was troubling for the government not only because of the clear lack of support for the labor party and thus the Monnet Plan but also because of the increasing size of the PCF. Secondly, the PCF's outright support of the Malagasy people in the wake of French decolonization encouraged more frequent and more violent uprisings against French evoules.³⁹ This destabilized the territorial nation-state and had grave implications for the future of French economic and political success within their former colonies. It also meant that the French government was weakened politically and financially in the wake of negotiations, and had to dedicate the few resources they had to fight the counter-insurgencies. Thus in an attempt to grow stronger, firstly by implementing the Monnet Plan, secondly by decolonizing, and third by fighting the strikes, the French government had severely weakened its power.

Yet, rather than attempting to forge more peaceful relationships with members of the PCF and aligned parties, the French government only heightened its aggression towards members of the party. This strategy was remarkably similar to what they employed in Madagascar, which ultimately ended up resulting in harsher counter-rebellions in the wake of the strike. In order to retain a modicum of power, the French government needed a group to exercise power over. The PCF was at the height of its power, with over half a million members, and had just achieved its best polling results in history.⁴⁰ However, the French government was not deterred from alienating members of the PCF, specifically Malagasy immigrants. While racism and xenophobia certainly played no small role in the discrimination against Malagasy immigrant laborers, the

³⁸ Tarrant, "The Stalinist Apparatus and the Renault Strike of 1947."

³⁹ Beigbeder, *Judging War Crimes and Torture: French Justice and International Criminal tribunals and Commission*, 82.

⁴⁰ "November 1946 French legislative election," *Wikipedia*, MediaWiki, June 22, 2022. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/November_1946_French_legislative_election

result of the strike can not be overlooked as playing a key role as well. The acts perpetrated against Malagasy immigrant laborers in France in the years following the December discussions were in part a direct result of the labor strikes of 1947.

French Malagasy Laborers and the Surveillance State: Aftermath of the Strikes of 1947

The French government excised control over Malagasy immigrants with the creation of a surveillance state, which mimicked the ways that French colonial rule had monitored Malagasy citizens prior to decolonization. Despite the transition to territorial nation-states, and then independent nations, France remained in control of “their foreign affairs, defense, currency, media, and communications.”⁴¹ French intervention in Malagasy affairs remained long after the two nations had technically decolonized. Thus when Malagasy citizens immigrated to France, the French state still saw them as members of the decolonized nation. The French state wanted to retain its control over Malagasy citizens while also monitoring their behavior with foreign forces. The xenophobic fear of Malagasy people was rooted in two causes. Firstly, the foreign-born status of many Malagasy immigrants created suspicion within the government, and this “intersected with the state’s capacity to monitor... and control them.”⁴² Secondly, the notion that the Malagasy immigrants were intrinsically tied to the PCF and thus foreign influence from the Soviet Union motivated the French government to survey Malagasy immigrants, particularly as the Cold War reached a fever pitch. The conception of the Malagasy population as being influenced by foreign powers combined with racism and xenophobia created an air of suspicion from the French government that created a Malagasy surveillance state.

⁴¹ Buettner, *Europe After Empire*, 160.

⁴² Gillian Glaes, “Policing the post-colonial order: surveillance and the African Immigrant Community in France, 1960-1979,” *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques* 36, no. 2 (2010).

The surveillance state served another purpose, which was to track immigrants in order to better implement discriminatory policies. The primary focus was the residences and workplaces of Malagasy immigrants in order to understand how to better influence African immigrants to “conform to the values, standards, and norms of French society.”⁴³ By focusing on the ways that Malagasy immigrants lived their lives, they could understand how to get them to assimilate. Assimilation was a solution for the Malagasy immigrants in the eyes of the French government, as by forcing them to conform to French culture they would have to give up the cultures they previously engaged with. This meant that they were no longer threats to the French state from either the colonial or communist perspective. French officials felt that full engagement with French culture was only achievable through total submission attained via the surveillance state.

The strategy of assimilation was rooted in Cold War anxieties and ultimately endeavored to destroy a fundamental part of Malagasy immigrants. Malagasy immigrants suffered under policies of assimilation. One such example was housing policies that discriminated against laborers in unions. The French government would exclude Malagasy immigrants from housing if they were in unions, incentivizing citizens to stay away from unionizing.⁴⁴ This was rooted in the fear of strikes created during the Renault strikes of 1947 and ensured that they would not happen again. Worker exploitation was common due to these discriminatory policies, yet Malagasy laborers risked this because they could not unionize. The state hoped that by conforming and not unionizing, Malagasy immigrants would assimilate and separate from both their African and communist identities.

The discrimination that Malagasy laborers faced can not be examined in a vacuum, and while it is certainly true that racism, xenophobia, and imperialist notions contributed to the

⁴³ Glaes, “Policing the post-colonial order.”

⁴⁴ Abdou Aram Sy, “Les travailleurs africains et le logement,” *Esprit*, no. 441 (1974), 1007.

formation of the surveillance state the nuances of the Cold War can not be discounted. Rather, the intense discrimination that Malagasy laborers faced was the result of numerous factors. The significance of the Strikes of 1947, therefore, is beyond that of a particular labor movement or even of a burgeoning governmental coup. The Strikes of 1947 demonstrate the severe lengths that the fears that eventually exploded into the Cold War penetrated the ideology of French citizens. In the immediate postwar era, French government officials were intensely fearful of Communism despite the fact that the Cold War had not yet materialized. Their fear gave way to a complex interplay of power and control within the governmental bureaus that manifested in discriminatory policies decades after the initial strikes. Historical moments, therefore, are never isolated affairs. Instead, they are comprised of a series of prejudices, fears, thoughts, opinions, and ideas, many of which have not yet been expressed in the global arena. The significance of the effects of the Cold War on Malagasy discrimination is that ideas that created a war existed decades prior, serving as justification for the French government to manipulate laborers in order to gain power. When a government takes action it is not acting alone: Governments act on, and depend on, the ideas of the collective. It is these ideas of the collective that allow us to trace the exchange of power, and the ideas that undergird it, as they could very well constitute the political decisions of tomorrow.

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