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## Ethics of a 'Marshall Plan' to rescue Africa and agriculture

*The speech edited and abridged here below was delivered by Mr. Cheminade, president of the Schiller Institute of France, at the Institute's international agriculture conference on May 28, 1988 in Nancy, France.*

Mesdames and Messieurs producers:

Allow me to class all of you here under this lovely name. We are gathered today in Nancy, because we cannot accept what is going on in the world: production at home razed, the Third World annihilated, and everywhere, the inalienable rights of man to moral and material progress flouted. We are here to give birth to a just economic order, and to combat the one in which we live, subjected to the laws of speculation in real estate, stocks, and finance. We are here to say "no" to the Europe of the insurance and banking cartels, to the Europe of the corporate raiders—this Europe of the vultures—which is the travesty of the Europe we have dreamed of for so long.

We are here to declare war against financial usury and to propose a war strategy: This strategy is called a *New Marshall Plan for a just world economic order*. I would like to say from the outset that this is not a technocratic artifice, a "trick," a borrowed miracle-recipe introduced from outside by some administrative authority or cabinet ministry. This is not a "supplement of the soul" of some minister tormented by his bad conscience; it is our war strategy and it is the very soul of the economics that we must build.

We must move to a new economic order in which those in need are able to buy from those who produce, for it is thus—in all human history—that "development" has been implemented and sustained.

There is a precedent to this, the Marshall Plan between the United States and Europe: In 1947, there was an America which had, during the war, accumulated immense increases in productivity, and an impoverished Europe, with no money to pay. The solution was to carry out a transfer of substance and technology—in the mutual interest—the United States feeding and capitalizing Europe in the course of which it satisfied its interest, i.e., markets for its products.

We must do it today, on a world scale, for the South, more and better. Nearing a breaking point, a crossroads of history, we must take hold of the tiller—we, you and me—and change direction.

The Schiller Institute intends to be the catalyst and the "yeast" of all the officers and all the soldiers ready to make this war on usury. We are here gathered—farmers from the Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, France, Denmark, Germany, the United States of America, union and political leaders, men and women of reflection and action, together engaging in combat! Here stand side by side, against the banks of usury and insurance, a Chadian and a farmer from the FNSEA [National Federation of Farmers' Unions], a Compagnon de la Libération and a young student, a farmer from the FFA [French Federation of Farmers] and those who do not wish to let die the Germany of Schiller and Beethoven, the France of Pasteur and Jaurès: It is this amalgam—just as Lazare Carnot made an amalgam of the soldiers of the Year Two—which makes up our forces! For, together, we do not seek scapegoats, we do not let ourselves be buried in "second causes": We are builders of a moral economics, which *constructs*, against the law of usury, which first exploits, and then annihilates.

We will undoubtedly lose several battles, but we know how to lose them to our advantage; we will arise each time stronger, and we will win the war! For we live in a terrible era: Famine and disease kill millions of men, they spread each day, and, worse yet, many of us have grown accustomed to this. Too many of the world's leaders are silenced by the appetite for power, and have renounced giving politics a moral leadership, while their people, manipulated and as if struck by impotence, accept the intolerable. Those who try to "live with it" lose, every day, a bit of their dignity.

The murder, torture, the denial of justice that unroll before our eyes in the world, the wretched men that are thrown against each other, as in Ethiopia and Uganda, the wretched men and women stricken with this modern plague which is AIDS, and those victims of the return of "classical" epidem-

ics, this “calamity” makes our era similar to that wherein St. Augustine raised his voice as the Roman Empire crumbled. Then, as today, a usurious financial system crushed peoples, moral culture appeared to the weak as a lost illusion, and—like today—there was the proliferation of sects and bigotry, of cults of blood, soil, and race, of Oriental despotisms.

Then, as today, pessimism, cynicism, and pettiness grew, each pretending to close his eyes and act as if everything were business as usual, each following his career or cultivating his clientele.

Were we to limit ourselves to looking at things this way, as objective “givens,” we would surely lose hope. And how that would please our enemies, for that is precisely what they seek! On the contrary, what our foes fear is that, like Augustine, and based on the same sources, we should wish to *change* things at this late hour, to find again the order of Beauty, Truth, and the Good.

We still can create a world commensurate with human dignity. But if we wish to succeed in this task, we can only do it from the highest standpoint of politics and morality, fully aware of what we are doing, and sticking together, fighting side by side.

The facts we have to face are simple and terrible:

1) We are told of agricultural overproduction and the drop in demand for industrial plant, while three out of four persons suffer hunger, undernourishment, and malnutrition, while the average diet is declining in the industrialized countries—becoming less and less rich in proteins—and while the Third World is terribly undercapitalized.

2) The countries of the Third World are overindebted, and do not have or no longer have access to financial resources to buy our industrial and agricultural products.

3) Our natural customers are becoming therefore less and less capable of equipping and feeding themselves in the present financial order, in the usurious order imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the banking, insurance, and food cartels, who hide their dictatorship under a label of free enterprise and “liberalism.”

### **Debt as an instrument of genocide**

The hour is late: Producers of the North, and in particular you farmers, and producers of the South, those we call Third World countries, are stricken by the same evil.

You farmers were told to go into debt to buy machinery, and to produce, with that machinery, the goods that would let you repay the loans and cultivate your farms better than your forefathers. But since you bought the machinery, interest rates have gone up—and hence, the financial burden of your operation. The costs of production have gone up.

And on the other hand, the markets are not there, because the countries of the South cannot eat, and the countries of the North are eating more and more poorly. Therefore, they tell us: *There is overproduction*, since nobody can buy your product! We must share the misery, put quotas on production!

We must freeze land under cultivation—that is what [the European Community bureaucracy in] Brussels exacts. And, at the same time, they block prices above certain limits on production—they are no longer guaranteed—which, on average, entails a drop in prices.

This translates into ruin—above all for the youngest, who made the best effort to modernize their equipment. The farmers’ average age is rising to over 50 years, and this is entirely a policy of agricultural euthanasia, a strangulation by usury.

The countries of the South are victims of the same evil, except their “case” is far more advanced. They were also told to become indebted. They became indebted, and now a great part of the revenues are diverted from production; they also are finding no markets, internal or external, to sell their products to. They “break” prices in desperation, underpaying their labor, and as their currency is devalued, the more they export in quantity, the less they receive in revenues. And they are exporting at the cost of the very substance of their economies, which are thereby delivered over into looting.

Under the International Monetary Fund’s order, their economic substance is being “burned up” without creating the base for future production. That is the politics of looting of resources and genocide of peoples, one hundred times worse in its consequences than the atrocities of Hitler. This is an *accepted, deliberate genocide*.

The proof? Occasionally it surfaces, as in the statements of the *Global 2000 Report*, done under the Carter administration in the United States, but which unfortunately remains timely, which foresaw a “reasonable” reduction in world population by 2 billion inhabitants, by any means. Moreover, we have this Swiss journal *International Wehrrevue*, which, reckoning the inescapable depopulation of Africa thanks to a resurgence of epidemics and AIDS—50% walking dead from AIDS in the tropical belt—envisages repopulating Africa with whites to control access to strategic raw materials.

What the Club of Rome proposed was to “triage” the population between those who will be allowed to eat and those who will not, triage analogous to that done in the trenches during 1914-18, which the Club of Rome proposed *be accomplished before our very eyes*.

Mr. Aurelio Peccei, then president of the Club of Rome, wrote seven years ago: “Any other aberrant comportment by our species would weigh heavily toward guilty in the tribunal of life. It is its exponential growth, which one can only define as cancerous. Except for insects, rare are those species that multiply so blindly and so ferociously as our own. . . .” and then Peccei added: “We are already asking ourselves if, with respect to the majestic flow of evolution, *homo sapiens*, taken as a whole, may not represent a deviant phenomenon, if it is not a caprice of Nature, a miscarried ambitious attempt, a production error, which adjustments that assure the renewal of life will overshadow, intent on destroying or absorbing.” These insane ideas of Mr. Peccei and his malthusian clique—sponsored by the oligarchies of usurious finance—are being

applied today in Africa.

The per capita Gross National Product has dropped 20% throughout the African continent—excepting South Africa—since 1980. For the 20 years between 1962 and 1982, food production dropped 20% in Africa. In the tropics, 20-50% of Africans are seropositive—20-50% walking dead. The life expectancy of the African population, already low, is being depressed: by infant mortality and by the sharp rise in adult mortality due to massive deportations, to famines, and to epidemics. The average life expectancy of an African is about 40 years. Cholera is reappearing in East Africa, gastroenteritis, viral hepatitis, trypanosomes, everywhere malaria, and now AIDS. Yes, AIDS which is striking Africa full force, and whose effects the Soviet criminals of the World Health Organization and the American criminals of the Atlanta Centers for Disease Control have covered up.

For lack of prevention, the locusts today are in the process of descending on the Sahel and threaten to swarm over the entire continent, as far as the Mediterranean coast of Italy, Spain, and even France.

Why are there between 20 and 100 million carriers of the AIDS virus in Africa? Because there was a *deliberate* collapsing of the environment—the basic conditions of health, hygiene, and work. The number of sick is growing not only because of the weakening of organisms taken one by one, but of specific, aggravated forms of disease spreading throughout an altogether weakened environment.

It is like the Nazi or Stalinist concentration camps, or the trenches in 1914-18 of the French Army and especially the Russian Army: In the ignoble and inhuman conditions of the Nazi camps, periodic waves of typhus would kill some of the prisoners; under the conditions of collapse in Europe at the end of World War I, Spanish influenza took more victims than the war itself, over 30 million dead, 500,000 of them in the United States!

Today AIDS is the new sign of collapse, taking its departure from the most vulnerable place, where human immune systems are the most feeble, and spreading everywhere. There are already several million under death sentence, walking dead, in our industrialized countries, the same way Spanish influenza disembarked in the United States, far from the scene of the war, in 1914-18.

Yes, Africa is dying, and we must extirpate this evil at its roots. The conditionalities of the IMF—in Africa as well as Latin America, in Mali as well as in Argentina—impose the *destruction of the substance of economies and the capacity to feed the population* in order to collect the funds to allow the payment of debt.

### **Illegitimate debt**

A usurious system causes the death of entire peoples, while *three-quarters of their debt is illegitimate*, because this debt is not a consequence of the flow of money having stoked the production of goods in the physical economy. Three-

quarters of this debt was extorted, stolen in three ways: hikes in real interest rates, as in the case of our farmers; hikes in the prices of industrial products or imported capital goods, and rises in the cost of cultivation, as in the case of our farmers; drops in the price of imported raw materials and drops in the price of products sold, again as in the case of our farmers, except that the size of the drop is far greater. For example, for the same volume of cotton sold, Mali, Chad, and Central African Republic receive 50% less in dollar terms than in 1984! The price drop in cacao and coffee alone has ruined Ivory Coast.

Three elements have reinforced this entanglement, this new debt slavery: 1) capital flight, legal or otherwise, toward the financial markets of the North, encouraged by all the major banks; 2) the absorption of more and more funds into organized crime and drug trafficking, which brings back 100 times more than food production (drugs amount to \$50-100 billion in profits each year); 3) prestige spending, agreed to by certain regimes inspired by the financier interests in the North.

The Third World countries' debt must therefore be analyzed, not as legitimate debt contracted by states for economic development, but as an organized criminal transfer of funds to totally unproductive interests. Liberals call this the "Invisible Hand," perhaps because they don't see that the emperor has no clothes.

But, as we have seen with AIDS, debt strangulation affects not only Third World countries. Is it the "rich" North that loots a "poor" South? No. For, how would we explain the "looters" becoming the "unemployed," that the productive economies of the North are collapsing too, that agriculture, machine tools, steel, and capital goods in general are collapsing? A multinational, malthusian oligarchy organizes the looting of production everywhere.

The United States is far more indebted than the Third World, comparatively. There is no "recovery" in the United States, or "recovery" in Europe. The world economy is totally bankrupt in the present system. The first financial crash, Oct. 19, 1987, sounded the alarm. But nothing, nothing was done to recreate a sane economy.

The ethics of the Marshall Plan are the opposite of this crisis management, this constant adaptation to the worst case. The New Marshall Plan starts with the idea of the economy, that it is people who produce goods and useful services, and in order to do this they must receive long-term, low interest credits.

The New Marshall Plan starts with the idea that a "normal" world obeying the laws that govern the development of the universe, is a world built—as written in Genesis—for humanity to increase and multiply. A world in which ever more productive new technologies allow us to feed and educate more people, and produce more creators.

The idea of the fund is simple—it was the initial idea of what was called the Guillaume Plan [after former Agriculture

Minister François Guillaume]: There is an agricultural surplus in the countries of the North; all right, let us feed the countries of the South. With what resources? By demanding a “fair price”—a price in line with the costs of production—from buyers “in the black” (U.S.S.R., Japan, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, South Korea). Today, these buyers are underpaying for farm products, with which the Russians, in particular, make up their strategic stockpiles. The surplus obtained thanks to this “fair price,” will then allow the Third World to be fed and capitalized.

### Beyond the ‘Guillaume Plan’

We support this Plan as a first step, and we will explain why. However, here, we pose the problem on an entirely different scale.

First of all, it should not be a question of an “artifice,” to rob Peter to pay Paul, but of the heart of economics: That means an open struggle, face to face, between the neo-liberal ethic, the IMF’s financier ethic, and ours, the Judeo-Christian ethic, that of the Book of Genesis. Either the conception of the IMF wins, or ours does; there is no place for compromise.

We are dealing with two opposite poles in human thought. On one side is financial exploitation, management of a world of limited resources, of a “finite” world exploited by an elite caste of predators. On the other is the ethic of *human labor*, which transforms and elevates the order of nature, human labor willfully mastered to constantly engender new technologies, ever more productive, a world open to the infinite.

The big problem with the Guillaume Plan was not only that its friends did not get into the ring and fight for it, and that the last government did not make a New Marshall Plan a pivot of its policy. The major problem was—and is—that they did not stand up to the IMF, and the insurance, banking, and food cartels. Mr. Guillaume and his friends pretended to “make do,” and it is on this fundamental ethical point that our paths diverge.

The decisive stakes, without which the rest is babbling, is to create a new financial system capable of halting the law of financial looting in order to permit the takeoff of the Marshall Plan.

To those who say, “But where are you going to find the money, the credit? What can you do with these countries, already so indebted?” we must reply, “Do you want to let both the Third World countries and our farmers die? Whom does it profit?”

A first element of response was given by the papal encyclicals which reject both the destructive and totalitarian Russian model and the “liberal” model, which masks the equally destructive financial dictatorship. The encyclicals *Populorum Progressio* and *Laborem Exercens* underline the incompatibility between the justice of growth and these opposite conceptions.

Paul VI in *Populorum Progressio* called “development”

the new name for peace. John Paul II, in *Laborem Exercens*, takes off from the fundamental idea that man must perfect the universe in perfecting himself. His allies in this task are science and technology, which are elaborated by the intellectual labor and material of preceding generations, and which today “free man from the fatigue of his hands and his muscles” in becoming realized in the form of machines and mechanical devices of greater and greater productivity. John Paul II writes in *Laborem Exercens*: “In attaining ever more mastery over the earth thanks to his labor and in affirming, again through labor, his domination over the visible world, man remains, in each case and in each phase of this process, in line with the original plan of the Creator, and this plan is necessarily and indisputably tied to the fact that the human being was created, in the quality of man and woman, *in the image of God*.”

“Man, created in the image of God, participates through his labor in the world of the Creator, and *continues* in a certain sense, to the extent of his abilities, *to develop it and complete it* . . . above all in developing technology, that is to say in realizing an assembly of instruments of labor ever more perfect.”

It is the proper task of man, the most exalting task, to *create*, that is to accomplish, to radiate “charity” in St. Paul’s meaning, *agapē*. *Agapē*, this beautiful Greek word, is divine love—love for the word of the Creator—realized, accomplished through love for each human being—in a common word that builds the universe.

This common word is what defines the ethic of the Marshall Plan between farmers here at home and in the Third World countries: to build together *great projects which uplift those who take part in them*, which makes them “great,” seeing seeing farther and higher than they could ever have imagined themselves doing.

The financial looting cannot be arrested until it is denounced, pointed out, and attacked by an alliance organized by producers and consumers.

Look at the Pasteurians who went into Africa, Indochina, and Brazil to conquer epidemic disease. It is shameful that in the 19th century, the engineer Duponchel, a friend of Eiffel, had already conceived the project for trans-Saharan and trans-Siberian railroads, and that nothing had been done since. It is shameful that Lake Chad was allowed to evaporate, depriving the center of Africa of a breath of moisture. It is shameful that the engineer Rendaire had conceived, a bit later, an irrigation project in the south of Tunisia and Algeria by an inland sea occupying the salt flats, but nothing ever came of it since. Closer to us, King Hassan II of Morocco conceived a Saharan green belt, a vast irrigated band fed by nuclear plants, a project of “peace through economic development,” benefiting all of North Africa. And no one responded to him.

I am saying here that the mission of France, above all, and of Europe and the United States, is to *respond*.