

UC Santa Cruz

UC Santa Cruz Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title

Twenty-four Hour Party People: A Transnational History of Communist Bodies, 1919-1943

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7x88044m>

Author

Jackson, Lisa Michelle

Publication Date

2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
SANTA CRUZ

**TWENTY-FOUR HOUR PARTY PEOPLE:
A TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF COMMUNIST BODIES, 1919-1943**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

HISTORY
with an emphasis in FEMINIST STUDIES

by

Lisa M. Jackson

December 2022

The Dissertation of Lisa M. Jackson is
approved:

Professor David Brundage, chair

Professor Marc Matera

Associate Professor Alma Rachel Heckman

Peter Biehl
Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

Copyright © by

Lisa M. Jackson

2022

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| List of Abbreviations | iv |
| List of Figures | vii |
| Abstract | ix |
| Acknowledgements | xi |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Chapter 1 Bodies of Work: A Brief History of The Communist International and the Communist Parties of Great Britain and the United States | 46 |
| Chapter 2 Disciplined Bodies | 100 |
| Chapter 3 Performing Bodies | 147 |
| Chapter 4 Laboring Bodies | 207 |
| Chapter 5 Suffering Bodies | 262 |
| Conclusion | 320 |
| Bibliography | 324 |

List of Abbreviations

AAS—Anglo-American Secretariat

ABB—African Blood Brotherhood

AFL—American Federation of Labor

ANLC—American Negro Labor Congress

BOI—Bureau of Investigation

BSP—British Socialist Party

CCC—Civilian Conservation Corps/Clarion Cycling Club

CEC—Central Executive Committee

CIA—Central Intelligence Agency

CIO—Congress of Industrial Organizations

CLP—Communist Labor Party

Comintern (CI)—Communist International

CPA—Communist Party of America (before the 1921 merger); Communist Political Association (1944-1945)

CPGB—Communist Party of Great Britain

CPSU—Communist Party of the Soviet Union

CPUSA—Communist Party of the United States

DEC—District Executive Committee

ECCI—Executive Committee of the Communist International

FBI—Federal Bureau of Investigation

GC&CS—Government Code and Cipher School

HOW—Home Office Warrant

HUAC—Select Committee on Un-American Activities

IB—International Brigade

ILD—International Labor Defense

ILS—International Lenin School

ITUCNW—International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers

LAI—League Against Imperialism

LP—Labour Party (UK)

MOPR—International Red Aid

NAACP—National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NMM—National Minority Movement

NUWM—National Unemployed Workers Movement

NWA—Negro Welfare Association

OMS— *Otdyel Mezhdunarodnoi Svyazi*, International Liaison Section or Foreign Relations Department of the Comintern

RILU—Red International of Labor Unions

SIS—Secret Intelligence Service (AKA MI6)

SSB—Secret Service Bureau

TUC—Trades Union Council

TUEL—Trade Union Education League

TUUL—Trade Union Unity League

UC—Unemployed Councils

W(C)P—Workers (Communist) Party

YCI—Young Communist International

YCL—Young Communist League

List of Figures

| | |
|--|-----|
| Figure 1: Photo Montage—The Mirror is Right | 49 |
| Figure 2: Sketch of Herb Lerner | 100 |
| Figure 3: International Brigade soldiers reading in the Socorro Rojo Internacional (International Red Aid) library | 111 |
| Figure 4: Florence Birchenough | 165 |
| Figure 5: Bill Duff | 167 |
| Figure 6: <i>New Sport and Play</i> , April 1932 | 176 |
| Figure 7: Marjorie Pollitt | 182 |
| Figure 8: “Gestures” | 188 |
| Figure 9: “Good Speakers” | 190 |
| Figure 10: David Low, “Common Sense” | 196 |
| Figure 11: Bob Graves | 198 |
| Figure 12: “Will You Roll Up Your Sleeves?” | 200 |
| Figure 13: Ida Rothstein | 201 |
| Figure 14: Caroline Decker | 226 |
| Figure 15: CPUSA Group Registration Form | 234 |
| Figure 16: “There is no unemployment” | 250 |
| Figure 17: Women Fight Police at New York City Hall | 252 |
| Figure 18: Birth Control advertisements | 254 |
| Figure 19: Birth Control advertisement | 255 |
| Figure 20: “Capitalism” | 270 |
| Figure 21: “They’re Starved, General, But They Can Still Stop a Bullet” | 273 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 22: “The Hall is Decorated” | 274 |
| Figure 23: “Unemployment Insurance—Not Fake Charity” | 275 |
| Figure 24: “Mr. Bumble” | 276 |
| Figure 25: “He Maketh Me to Lie Down in Green Pastures” | 277 |
| Figure 26: “The Agricultural Workers Answer!” | 278 |
| Figure 27: “Neither Lions, Rats, Nor Skunks” | 279 |
| Figure 28: “Boss Tricks Cannot Break Workers Ranks” | 280 |
| Figure 29: “Smash the Barriers!” | 281 |
| Figure 30: “The Tide of Revolution is Rising” | 283 |
| Figure 31: “Indian Election” | 284 |
| Figure 32: “Spread the Strike! Build the Union!” | 286 |
| Figure 33: “Cable Street” | 287 |
| Figure 34: “To Win—Fight and Organize!” | 288 |
| Figure 35: “Strike Leaders Beaten, Jailed” | 300 |
| Figure 36: “They Asked for Food—And Got This!” | 302 |
| Figure 37: “Gallagher and Others Beaten by ‘Red Squad’” | 303 |
| Figure 38: “Fascist Politics!” | 304 |
| Figure 39: “ILD Winter Dance” | 310 |

Abstract

Lisa M. Jackson

TWENTY-FOUR HOUR PARTY PEOPLE: A TRANSNATIONAL HISTORY OF COMMUNIST BODIES, 1919-1943

This dissertation examines the ways that Soviet ideas about gender and the body were articulated, practiced, subverted, and altered to accommodate local conditions or personal circumstances among Communist operatives in the United States and Great Britain during the life of the Communist International (Comintern). Founded in 1919 to promote the formation of Communist parties outside of the new Soviet state, the Comintern also played a role in the international dissemination of literature and other cultural materials central to this study. Moreover, the twenty-four years of its existence represent the period of greatest experimentation in Soviet family policy and concomitant rhetorical constructions of proper Bolshevik corporeality. How did membership in the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) affect heterosexual intimacies, gender identities, and the ways that men and women thought about, related to, and interacted with their bodies and those of their comrades? Did British and American Communists adhere to local social norms, or did they attempt to emulate those promoted if not practiced in the emerging Soviet state?

Through analysis of literature, correspondence, and visual culture produced by members of Communist Parties in the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union, this dissertation shows how the commitment to this radical political

organization shaped members' bodies, both rhetorically and materially. Often emaciated from poverty and sometimes battered by anti-communist forces, the Communist body became the site for demonstrating one's belief in socialism and its Bolshevik iteration at the most basic level. I argue that Communists disciplined their bodies through self-study and self-criticism, physically performed Communism through public speaking and participation in radical sports leagues, made reproductive choices that privileged the collective over individual desires, and labored for little or no pay with the expectation that they would physically suffer for their beliefs. Critical gender theories inform this analysis, especially the ways that Communist disciplinary regimens interacted with gender hierarchies in the early 20th century. While most studies of international Communism focus on its relative failures or successes in electoral politics, this study takes a transnational and social approach and posits that Communists embodied their dedication to the class struggle in ways distinct from mainstream and other radical political organizations.

Acknowledgements

When I returned to school after working in the entertainment industry for twenty-five years, little did I realize how many people would be involved in what appeared to be a solitary endeavor. Because I chose to write about Communists from a transnational perspective, I have had the pleasure of doing research at archives in California, New York, Manchester, and London. I wish to thank the librarians and archivists at the Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, Bancroft Library, California State Archives, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, Marx Memorial Library, and London Metropolitan Archives for their kindness, patience, and support for my research. During the summer of 2019, the National Archives at Kew became my second home, where I read countless surveillance files on the Communist Party of Great Britain that helped this dissertation take shape. I cannot thank them enough for making those files available to download for free when the pandemic made it impossible to return.

On research trips to Manchester, I had the good fortune to meet Lynette Cawthra and the staff of the Working-Class Movement Library who welcomed me into the kitchen of this former nurses' home, offered me tea and biscuits, and regaled me with stories of past and current radical activism in the region. Their knowledge of Manchester's working-class history is only surpassed by their warmth and generosity. Finally, this dissertation would not have been possible without the support of Catherine Powell and her staff at the Labor Archives and Research Center at San Francisco State University. Catherine not only introduced me to the California

Communist women in this volume; she also became a trusted advisor and steadfast advocate of my work.

This journey was made more enjoyable through the support of advisors at San Francisco State University and the University of California, Santa Cruz. I would like to thank Robert Cherny and Bettina Aptheker, who have forgotten more about American Communism than I will ever know, for graciously consenting to be on several of my committees even as they neared retirement. Thanks to Lynn Westerkamp for introducing me to the body as an analytic tool, serving as chair of my qualifying examination committee, and sharing her love of theater with this old stagehand. Grace Delgado's energy has no limits, and I cannot thank her enough for taking on yet another junior scholar. I am especially grateful to Sherry Katz for encouraging me to pursue this second career and continuing to be a mentor long after my time at San Francisco State University had ended. My heartfelt appreciation goes out to Marc Matera for maintaining his boundless enthusiasm during an exceptionally difficult period for his graduate students and the UCSC history department. When I needed someone to fill a spot on my committee, Alma Heckman kindly stepped in and made insightful comments that greatly improved this dissertation. Finally, David Brundage has been a wonderful advisor and cheerleader, knowing exactly when I needed encouragement and when I needed a good kick in the rear. I will miss our discussions about US labor history, radicalism, politics, and, of course, rambling.

I am equally grateful for the many colleagues I met along the way who have become dear friends. When I needed to stay the night in Santa Cruz, Taylor Kirsch

and Paul Mangasarian took me into their home, sharing their cozy cottage and the neighborhood cat who had adopted them. My hikes with Taylor and Kiran Garcha along coastal cliffs and in the redwood forests around campus provided warm companionship and much-needed breaks from course work. When the pandemic made it impossible to meet with other graduate students and discuss our research, Bristol Cave-LaCoste and Priscilla Martinez organized a virtual writing group that not only helped me maintain focus but also gave me some critical human interaction during a period of extreme isolation. I am also thankful for Marc Matera's writing group and colleagues Dan Joesten, Leonard Butingan, Linda Ulbrich, Crystal Smith, and Christian Alvarado, who read early drafts of several chapters, pointed out significant errors in my scholarship, and shared their knowledge of British historiography with this trained Americanist. Crystal's sudden death while conducting research in London devastated a collective already reeling from the loss of Maya K. Peterson, the distinguished scholar and environmental historian who taught me everything I know about the Soviet period of Russian history. We miss them both terribly.

I would never have embarked on this journey were it not for the goading of my friend Lewis S. Davis. Beside many a backcountry campfire, as we enjoyed the fruits of our (mostly his) fishing expeditions, Lewis encouraged me to return to school and pursue a degree in history. Nearly ten years passed before I dared to accept his advice, though I have no idea now why I ever questioned his sagacity. I am eternally grateful for his friendship.

Finally, this would not have been possible without the support of my wife Shari and daughter Emma. Graduate school is an emotional rollercoaster, and I am so glad they came along for the ride. With their love, all things are possible. This dissertation is dedicated to them.

Introduction

And there were many who felt their first sympathy for communism stirred when they saw the *Daily Worker* sellers standing outside the Tube stations in London's West End, selling the paper as usual no matter how hot the blitz. And when it became known that no trace had been found of the familiar figure outside Tottenham Court Road Tube after the high-explosive bomb had fallen exactly on the spot where he had so often stood, that sympathy was likely to crystallise into something more positive. I said then, and I believe even more strongly today that it was true, that you will never understand communism unless and until you understand such communists as these.¹

Douglas Hyde, former editor of the *Daily Worker*, never names the “little East End Jewish clothing worker” and father of seven who gave his life selling newspapers during the Blitz, but this story, more than any other, demonstrates the kind of bodily commitment that some made to the Communist cause. No manual on organization or treatise on Marxist theories can do justice to this level of commitment and dedication. Hyde describes two examples of those rank-and-file activists that he calls the “salt of the earth,” this working-class Jewish husband and father and Jimmie, a young man who lost his leg in a train accident and who modified his bicycle so he could “[cycle] at night through the blitz,” “right down the Thames waterfront, which was a regular target for the Nazi bombers,” and get his bundle of the latest *Daily Worker* to sell in the East End.² Both men demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice life and limb in pursuit of, what, a few more pence for the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB)

¹ Douglas Hyde, *I Believed: The Autobiography of a former British Communist* (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1951), 83-84. The *London Times* appears to have carried no coverage of this event, which is not surprising given the almost nightly bombing runs that occurred between September 1940 and December 1941. In efforts to avert panic, the government told first responders, doctors, witnesses, and reporters to refrain from sharing information about such events, and British papers did not cover deaths at Balham station in 1943 and Bethnal Green the next year.

² Hyde, *I Believed*, 82-83.

coffers? No, each man willingly put their bodies in harm's way because they believed, as Hyde once had, that the answer to society's problems lay in the teachings of Karl Marx, Fredrick Engels, Vladimir Lenin, and Joseph Stalin.

This is the story of Jimmie and that Jewish clothing worker, or at least men and women very much like them. It is about a "commitment made freely" by people who believed they were "tapped by history to fulfill [Soviet Russia's] mission for humanity's liberation from exploitation and oppression."³ It seeks to explain how the body, often emaciated from poverty, and sometimes battered by anti-communist forces, became the site for demonstrating one's belief in socialism and its Bolshevik iteration at the most basic level. When Hyde wrote these words, he was no longer in the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), and he often displayed outright hostility toward those he deemed "careerists," reserving his praise for those salt-of-the-earth activists. The latter he seemed to hold in the highest esteem, recalling their dedication with affection despite believing them misguided. Hyde believed these volunteer activists should be lauded for putting their beliefs before bodily comfort and safety, but he should not have been so dismissive of those paid employees who made sacrifices as well, sacrifices that guaranteed economic insecurity and often resulted in physical debilitation.

This dissertation examines the ways that Soviet ideas about gender and the body were articulated, practiced, subverted, and altered to accommodate local

³ Stuart MacIntyre, *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality* (St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998), 3-4; and Peggy Dennis, *The Autobiography of an American Communist: A Personal View of a Political Life, 1925-1975* (Berkeley: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1977), 26.

conditions or personal circumstances among Communist operatives in the United States and Great Britain during the life of the Communist International (Comintern). Founded in 1919 to promote the formation of Communist parties outside of the new Soviet state, until its demise in 1943, the Comintern also played a role in the international dissemination of literature and other cultural materials central to this study. Moreover, the twenty-four years of its existence represent the period of greatest experimentation in Soviet family policy and concomitant rhetorical constructions of proper Bolshevik corporeality. How did membership in the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) and the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) affect heterosexual intimacies, gender identities, and the ways that men and women thought about, related to, and interacted with their bodies and those of their comrades? Did British and American Communists adhere to local social norms, or did they attempt to emulate those promoted if not practiced in the emerging Soviet state? Because Bolshevik, and later Soviet, Communism required a physical demonstration of dedication, I argue that the most devoted members in the UK and US made some effort to model themselves after idealized visions of embodied Bolshevism.

I begin with the understanding that the body has a history, one that can be delineated through an examination of the ways that people talked about them, interacted with them, and related to the personalities that inhabited them in different time periods and locations. Moreover, the body is the medium through which social and political forces establish and maintain hierarchies of difference that in turn serve

as guidelines for social organization. This is evident in racial segregation and coverture laws that at different times and in different contexts constituted the bodies of women and people of color as legally distinct from and inferior to white male bodies. Judith Butler made this point when she argued that queer individuals who have not experienced violence are still “constituted politically in part by virtue of the social vulnerability of [their] bodies.”⁴ So too did Sander Gilman when he noted that every self-identified Jew, whether practicing or not, fell victim to powerful anti-Jewish images and rhetoric.⁵ I argue that an understanding of how Communists and non-Communists constituted the radical body is essential to understanding the history of international Communism. Through the lens of the body—discursive, material, and social—this study demonstrates the inextricable links that bound politics with culture in the CPUSA and CPGB.

I focus on the United States and Great Britain for several reasons. While neither party made significant inroads in electoral politics, the CPGB had more success than the CPUSA during this period, evidenced by the elections of Shapurji Saklatvala and William Gallacher to the House of Commons. British and American Communists alike endured harassment from governmental and institutional organizations that made the decision to join the CPUSA or the CPGB a professional, if not personal, risk. Both parties suffered losses in membership with changes in the party line, but a more pronounced tradition of working-class political activism in the UK, its historic significance as the birthplace of Marxism, and the very existence of a

⁴ Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 18.

⁵ Sander Gilman, *The Jew's Body* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 3.

Labour Party made it possible for the CPGB to withstand fluctuations in membership more so than the CPUSA. Examined in tandem, the CPGB and CPUSA offer examples of international communism's limited success in both parliamentary and republican political systems with divergent levels of working-class consciousness and radicalism.

A study of the Party in the United States entails some decision-making regarding scale and the potential of finding archival evidence of Communist activity in a region. The CPUSA never attained membership levels equal to the CPGB, and paid operatives were frequently transferred from district to district when local activism seemed to warrant it. I focus primarily on Party activism in New York and California, not because they are necessarily representative of CPUSA, but because both District 1 (New York) and District 13 (mostly California) left substantial and rich archival material, including locally produced radical newspapers. Moreover, both regions were homes to large immigrant communities, active labor movements, and organized, violent anti-union/anti-Communist forces. Both the CPUSA and CPGB have garnered significant attention from scholars, but the majority has focused on these groups as political rather than social institutions. And while Communists' political activism is certainly an important aspect of the history of Left politics, their status as social institutions should not be overlooked.

Neither the CPUSA nor the CPGB established a significant foothold in electoral politics, but many scholars have demonstrated that Communists and former Communists exerted a great deal of influence on other movements during the period

of this study and beyond, including the American civil rights, gay, peace, and women's movements and anti-colonial and anti-racist movements in the UK. Early studies of international communism, especially those in the UK and US, focused on the relationship between the Comintern and national leadership, seeking evidence of foreign control of these organizations. Adherence to this notion of a monolithic foreign entity controlling the men in charge of the American and British parties caused most of these scholars to overlook many examples of individual and group disregard for orders from the national office and the Comintern.⁶

The availability of new archival material after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s gave researchers the opportunity to reexamine this contention and to broaden the scope of their enquiries. Scholars have begun to nuance these arguments by looking at local activism independent of Comintern or national office directives. The CPGB never maintained the support of most working-class Britons, Keith Laybourn and Dylan Murphy argue, because early Marxist groups did not organize within trade unions, leaving a power vacuum that the nascent Labour Party was only too ready to fill. This put the CPGB at a disadvantage when it formed in 1920-1921, causing it to rely on Soviet financial support from the outset. As a result, the CPGB never could shake the perception that the Soviet Union controlled Communists in the

⁶ See, for example, Theodore Draper, *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period* (New York: The Viking Press, 1960); Theodore Draper, *Roots of American Communism* (New York: Routledge, 2017); Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American Communism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1961); Harvey Klehr, *Communist Cadre: The Social Background of the American Communist Elite* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978); and Harvey Klehr, *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984).

UK.⁷ Andrew Thorpe found their relationship to be more of a partnership, however unequal, than usually “alleged” and that CPGB leaders often exploited loopholes in the party line and made decisions based on multiple factors, not just Comintern directives.⁸ Though the CPGB took money from Moscow, their actions indicate that this financial assistance did little to compel them to follow Comintern orders.⁹

Studies of Communist activism in the American and British Empires emphasize relations with the Comintern as well, but they also focus on interactions with nationalist groups and parties in the metropolises. They often characterize the latter as imperialistic paternalism whether the Comintern established direct contact or instructed the CPUSA or CPGB to “oversee” activities in those areas.¹⁰ Margaret Stevens reveals that when Navares Sager formed his Communist group in Puerto Rico without the approval of General Secretary Charles E. Ruthenberg, he was told by Ruthenberg that any party on the island would have to be a district of the CPUSA and not an independent organization.¹¹ Though members of various radical Irish groups attended several Comintern World Congresses, from 1922 onwards, the Executive Committee (ECCI) asked the CPGB to help them organize, as Emmet O’Connor

⁷ Keith Laybourn and Dylan Murphy, *Under the Red Flag: A History of Communism in Britain, 1849-1991* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing, 1999). The CPGB was not alone in this regard. Most Communist parties were accused of being controlled by Moscow.

⁸ Andrew Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-1943* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); Andrew Thorpe, “Comintern ‘Control’ of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1943,” *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 452 (June 1998): 637-662; and Andrew Thorpe, “The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945,” *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 3 (September 2000): 777-800.

⁹ Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, 277-278.

¹⁰ Margaret Stevens, *Red International and Black Caribbean: Communists in New York City, Mexico, and the West Indies, 1919-1939* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 48. In 1924, the Political Secretariat of the Comintern directed the W(C)P to make connections with Communist groups in American colonies and Latin America as well as young Black radicals in the US.

¹¹ Stevens, *Red International*, 100-101.

attests.¹² The Communist Party of India (CPI) had some difficulty getting organized, but Satyabrata Chowdhuri argues some of the blame rests with CPGB theorist Rajani Palme Dutt, former British MP Shapurji Saklatvala, and M.N. Roy, who disagreed on the issue of cooperation with Indian nationalist movements.¹³ After a period of autonomy, the Anglo-American Secretariat ordered the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) to develop a closer relationship with the CPGB, as Oleksa Drachewych illustrates, but parties in the white settler colonies of Canada, New Zealand, and Australia remained largely independent of the CPGB.¹⁴ Such interference could explain why radicals in Jamaica, Trinidad, and British Guiana chose to follow Comintern policy, create nationalist organizations, and establish contact with Pan-Africanists like George Padmore without seeking official affiliation with the International.¹⁵

In recent years many US scholars have concentrated on radical activity at the local level and have shown that Communist policies and practices varied according to the needs of specific radical communities. The unique “social and cultural atmosphere of [depression-era] Harlem” affected the nature of party activism, Mark Naison argues, simultaneously “creating problems and opportunities” for organizers and theorists alike. But for certain activist Harlemites—CP members, fellow

¹² Emmet O’Connor, *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia, and the Communist Internationals, 1919-1943* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004), 3-12.

¹³ Satyabrata Rai Chowdhuri, *Leftism in India, 1917-1947* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 52-70.

¹⁴ Oleksa Drachewych, *The Communist International, Anti-Imperialism, and Racial Equality in British Dominions* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 75-87; and Hakim Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa, and the Diaspora, 1919-1939* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013), 252.

¹⁵ Stevens, *Red International*, 190-193.

travelers, competing leftists, or staunch opponents—“the Party helped to define a generational experience.”¹⁶ Taking up this mantle, Robin D.G. Kelley examined the campaign to organize Black sharecroppers in Alabama during the 1930s, noting that the Party’s egalitarian relief activism appealed to Black women’s maternalism and CPUSA advocacy for Black self-determination appealed to Black manhood. When these concerns became less important to Communists at the institutional level, African American Alabamans turned away from the Party.¹⁷ Robert Cherny and Randi Storch posit that during the early 1930s, Communists in California and Chicago demonstrated a measure of autonomy by ignoring some Comintern directives and amending others to suit the organizational needs of their districts.¹⁸ All four complicate the notion of outside influence and control, while Storch and Kelley demonstrate that, contrary to Harvey Klehr’s contention that the American Party remained an organization of immigrant Jewish and white men, in certain localities women and people of color attained significant influence over policies and practices.

Apart from William Kenefick’s work on eastern Scotland and Neil Rafeek’s study of Glasgow’s Communist women, there are few community studies of the CPGB. Through the use of oral histories, many of which he conducted, Rafeek sought to demonstrate the importance of women’s activism in Glasgow and their

¹⁶ Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), xix.

¹⁷ Robin D.G. Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 13 and 20-21.

¹⁸ Robert Cherny, “Prelude to the Popular Front: The Communist Party in California,” *American Communist History* 1, no. 1 (2002): 5-42; and Randi Storch, *Red Chicago: American Communism at Its Roots, 1928-1935* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 2-8.

contributions to its reputation as the “Red Clydeside.”¹⁹ Written to counter the prevailing notion that Scottish radicalism existed mainly in Glasgow, Kenefick argues that the area between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, including the Fife and Lothians coalfields, was more “red” than Clydeside in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁰ He reveals increasing radical activism in the region following the 1917 Russian revolution, particularly in the areas of trade unionism, unemployment councils, Marxist education, and the “Hands off Russia” campaign.²¹ For the most part a demographic analysis of radicalism in eastern Scotland, this work adds to a historiography dominated by studies of Glasgow’s “Red Clydeside” and suggests different avenues of inquiry to expand our understanding of the early twentieth century Scottish Left.

While some historians use community studies to develop new threads in the fabric of US Communist history, others broaden their definition of what constituted Communist activity to include CP-affiliated unions. This approach not only enriches the historiography of American radicalism, but it also joins local studies in deemphasizing the significance of the male-dominated New York power structure. As did Kelley in his analysis of Communist Alabama, Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin demonstrate the difficulty of maintaining a cohesive organizational strategy in places where race, gender, and class interests often clashed. They determined which affiliates of the Congress of Industrial Unions (CIO) most closely

¹⁹ Neil Rafeek, *Communist Women in Scotland: Red Clydeside from the Russian Revolution to the end of the Soviet Union* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008).

²⁰ Clydeside refers to the area around the Clyde River in the Glasgow region of Scotland.

²¹ William Kenefick, *Red Scotland! The Rise and Fall of the Radical Left, 1872-1932* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), chapters 6 and 7.

aligned themselves with Communist Party doctrine and conclude that radical unions within the CIO offered women more access to education, increased potential for economic growth, and the opportunity to become trade union leaders.²² Erik MacDuffie uses Left activism to link interwar radicalism with the mainstream civil rights movement of the 1950s. He contends that mass organizations offered African American women alternate sites to “agitate for Black freedom and Black women’s dignity outside women’s clubs, the church, and civil rights and Black Nationalist groups.”²³ Dayo F. Gore makes similar assertions, but argues that African American women radicals also challenged left organizations to “embrace an intersecting analysis” of the struggles for “black liberation, women’s equality, and workers’ rights.”²⁴ Each of these books bridges the gap between the Old and New Left and sheds light on the radicals who functioned in spaces adjacent to but not within the Communist Party.

Historians of the feminist movement sometimes use Communist women’s activism to complicate the wave paradigm. Kate Weigand reveals the legacy for the second wave of feminism in the writings of 1940s and 50s women activists in the US. Radical women, she posits, worked for women’s liberation inside the CP during arguably the most repressive period in US history. Mary Triece concurs and notes that radical women writers combined the needs of the domestic sphere with those of

²² Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out: Reds and America’s Industrial Unions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 12-15 and 189-211.

²³ Erik S. McDuffie, *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 3.

²⁴ Dayo F. Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 4-5.

production, and, in doing so, brought a “new understanding of solidarity into the 1930s labor movement.”²⁵ Recent biographies prove that radical women also employed Marxist rhetoric to articulate unique perspectives on women’s emancipation and civil rights. Claudia Jones looked beyond the limitations of class analysis, asserts Carol Boyce Davies, and formulated a political philosophy that embraced gender, transnationalism, and culture as equally important to revolutionary struggles.²⁶ Moreover, she framed black women’s exploitation within the context of race, gender, and class, or what scholars now call the intersectionality of oppression.²⁷ All reveal that the Party created a space for women to reach beyond the confines of bourgeois middle class respectability, or some working class version of that decidedly White Anglo-Saxon Protestant concept, and occupy the public sphere as few women had before.

Weigand ends her study in 1956, the year Khrushchev revealed to the world the extent of Stalinist brutality and the flood of defections from the Communist Party began in earnest. Studies of the ensuing period in the United States typically center on the prevailing anti-communist sentiment fueled by Cold War rhetoric and the campaigns waged by governmental bodies like the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Robbie Lieberman maintains that although American Communists actively participated in the burgeoning peace movement, their devotion

²⁵ Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and Mary E. Triece, *On the Picket Line: Strategies of Working-Class Women During the Depression* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 1.

²⁶ Carol Boyce Davies, *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 27.

²⁷ Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*, 2.

to the Soviet Union forever tainted their discourse and negatively impacted their contributions, while Landon Storrs argues that the Federal Employee Loyalty Program and concomitant investigations caused many government workers to move to the political center and sometimes to hide past leftist activity.²⁸ The inherent anti-feminist and repressive ideological base of the Federal Employee Loyalty Program, she contends, succeeded in upholding white male supremacy by driving women and people of color out of civil service jobs.²⁹ These studies continue the current trend of utilizing expansive definitions of Communism and radical activism to showcase left-leaning influence on American politics and culture.

Michael Denning also employs an expansive notion of Communism, or “communisms” as he put it. Published in 1996 when scholars were just beginning to compose histories of the body, this work features some aspects of that emerging framework, especially in Denning’s focus on the “laboring of American culture.” For him, the phrase highlights the persistent use of the word “labor” and its synonyms in cultural products, the growing number of artists from working class backgrounds, and the birth of what he describes as a “new American culture, a second American Renaissance.” Most important for the historian interested in radical bodies, however, is his contention that the 1930s marked a period of increasing awareness of the “labor of cultural production,” as writers, composers, musicians, and other artists began

²⁸ Robbie Lieberman, *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the U.S. Peace Movement, 1945-1963* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 1.

²⁹ Landon R. Y. Storrs, *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013), 14-15.

seeing themselves as industrial workers with the need to organize.³⁰ Practitioners of various “communisms,” he contends, made the work of cultural production a key component in their artistic endeavors, and in doing so, ignited a “deep and lasting transformation of American modernism and culture.”³¹

Other historians focus not on radical influence on American and British culture, but on radical socializing and the cultural products created by and for Communists. Paul Mishler argues that the failures and successes of the American Communist Party matter less than the social system its members created.³² Programs, songs, and activities of the Communist youth groups he examines demonstrate that American Communists struggled between their wish to maintain ethnic identities grounded in cultural practices and the need to embrace America and American culture.³³ Analysis of oral histories of CPGB activists provide, according to Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, and Andrew Flinn, a window into the “wide divergences in...character and degrees of effectiveness” of Communist communities in Great Britain—this despite the attempt by the Comintern to coordinate and promote homogeneity across national boundaries.³⁴ They argue that CPGB members were

³⁰ Michael Denning, *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1996), xvi-xvii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, xvi.

³² Paul C. Mishler, *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

³³ *Ibid.*, 10.

³⁴ Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen, and Andrew Flinn, *Communists and British Society, 1920-1991* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007), ix.

never isolated and insular, but maintained connections outside the party and remained activists after leaving it or after its demise in 1991.³⁵

There is a growing body of work on internationalism, international connections, and transnational movements of Communist cadres. In the US, a number of biographies on notable radicals have by default been transnational, such as those of Pan-Africanists Claudia Jones and Max Yergan, CPUSA trade union organizer Louisa Moreno, and Russian White Army officer turned Communist muralist Victor Arnautoff.³⁶ So too is the biography of British Labour MP Ellen Wilkinson, whose lifelong campaign for social justice for the least fortunate included fights for decolonization, female emancipation, and the end to war, all waged in the name of internationalism.³⁷ While not explicitly written within a transnational framework, these works present individual radicals as part of a community in motion.

Like the Black internationalism evident in the Jones and Yergan biographies, race figures prominently in transnational radical histories, particularly in debates about the so-called “Negro Question” and the anti-imperialism work of the Comintern and its affiliates in the US and UK. The CPGB ignored Comintern directives to cleanse itself of racist people and practices, Marika Sherwood posits, and offered no help to the Seamen’s Minority Movement and International Labor Defense when both

³⁵ Ibid., 10.

³⁶ David Henry Anthony III, *Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Robert W. Cherny, *Victor Arnautoff and the Politics of Art* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Davies, *Left of Karl Marx*; and Vicki L. Ruiz, “Una Mujer sin Fronteras: Louisa Moreno and Latina Labor Activism.” *Pacific Historical Review* 73, no. 1 (2004): 1-20.

³⁷ Laura Beers, *Red Ellen: The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016).

groups tried to engage in anticolonialism.³⁸ Hakim Adi looks at the relationship between Pan-Africanism and Communism in the 1920s and 1930s, arguing that the Comintern, in both words and deeds, placed too much emphasis on the African American and Black South African experience in their early efforts, virtually ignoring the plight of Black colonial subjects in the Caribbean and in Europe.³⁹ Though a Negro Bureau was created at the Sixth Congress in 1930, the Comintern stressed the need for Blacks to “be their own liberators,” inadvertently making anti-racism the special problem of Blacks in Africa and the diaspora and causing the mostly white national leadership in the UK and US to do little to organize Blacks in their own backyards.⁴⁰ Evan Smith demonstrates the persistence of this inactivity in his examination of the CPGB’s spotty record in anti-racist work for its entire existence, agreeing with Adi that the Comintern often criticized British radicals for failing to make inroads in Black communities, but he maintains that the CPGB struggled to overcome entrenched racism in the white working class population and failed to defend the primacy of class over race to Black Britons.⁴¹ Despite these failings, Margaret Stevens contends, Communists played outsized roles in anti-colonial and worker uprisings in the Caribbean, “[pushing] Communists and their vision of world revolution to the left.”⁴²

³⁸ Marika Sherwood, “The Comintern, the CPGB, Colonies, and Black Britons, 1920-1938,” *Science & Society* 60, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 155-159.

³⁹ Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 53.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

⁴¹ Evan Smith, *British Communism and the Politics of Race* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 14.

⁴² Stevens, *Red International*, 2.

The entangled relationship between Jim Crow racism and anti-colonialism is highlighted in the transnational fight to free the so-called Scottsboro Boys, nine young men falsely accused of rape in Alabama in the early 1930s. Susan D. Pennybacker examines this case through the involvement of five activists, including Ada Wright, mother of defendants Roy and Andy, who traveled the world eliciting support for her sons.⁴³ Pennybacker not only demonstrates transatlantic connections in the struggles against racism and colonialism, but also shows how activists like George Padmore and Willi Münzenberg increased awareness of the Meerut conspiracy trial in British India by linking it to the more heavily publicized Scottsboro case.⁴⁴

It is the internationalism of Communism that creates problems for the historian who operates within a nationalist framework, Brigitte Studer contends.⁴⁵ This brings up the question of space and scale, in that the Comintern, though based in Moscow, was not the centralized authority depicted in other studies. Studer grounds her examination of the Comintern's representatives to member organizations on the idea of "commitment to Communism" as a "collective experience," one that she argues has left its mark on modern Western societies.⁴⁶ This dissertation examines that collective experience through an investigation of Communists in Great Britain

⁴³ Susan D. Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 4-5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴⁵ Brigitte Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, trans. Dafydd Rees Roberts (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 6.

⁴⁶ Studer, *Cominternians*, 3-6.

and the United States, using the body as an analytic tool to demonstrate not only its international nature, but also its ability to shape a uniquely Communist body.

Scholars who write about sex, gender, or the body often take great pains to separate the three but do so with some difficulty and limited success. Since these analytic frameworks inform and are informed by each other, a more useful strategy might be to consider them together, as entangled constructs that define our interpersonal, professional, and social relationships. This notion of entanglement has been effectively used in discussions of cultural exchange in imperial projects, but few scholars have enlisted this framework to illustrate similarities between the colonial encounter and the negotiations and exchanges that took place across national borders between likeminded individuals and communities.⁴⁷ For example, participants in transnational abolition, decolonization, and Pan-African movements navigated the discursive terrain of normative sexuality, gender, and the body, those ideas produced at the local level that frequently came into conflict with beliefs formulated through their understandings of racial, social, and political justice.⁴⁸ The same can be said of early twentieth century international Communism's entanglement with the

⁴⁷ Tony Ballantyne, *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012); and Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015). On cultural exchange across imperial borders, see Kris Manjapra, *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014).

⁴⁸ Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*; Bonnie Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830-1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Sarah Nuttall, *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009); and Andrew W.M. Smith and Chris Jeppesen, editors, *Britain, France and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?* (London: UCL Press, 2017).

Communist International and divergent belief systems about idealized radical embodiment.⁴⁹

Here I propose that a “system of interdependence” can be seen in the “fraught relationship” between sex, gender, and the body and that this entanglement continues to vex historians who insist on extricating one from the others. As Caroline Bynum remarked over twenty years ago, most studies that purported to be about the body were really about sex and gender, and we see this repeated in similar scholarship today.⁵⁰ Thus, it seems reasonable that we should dispense with attempts to segregate these analytics and acknowledge their inseparability, knowing that when we discuss sexuality, we are by necessity addressing the gendered performance of that sexuality and the living flesh doing the performing. What can be delineated, however, are the different lenses through which historians approach the histories of sexed and gendered bodies, namely discourse, materiality, and sociality. Collectively, the scholarship examined below shows that bodies have temporally and spatially specific histories, that societies employed the rhetoric of difference to mark some bodies as civilized and fit for inclusion in the body politic, and that these markers—race, class, sex, and gender—normalized social and political hierarchies.

Most scholars of the history of sexed and gendered bodies focus some of their analysis on its social construction through the production of visual and textual representations of different types of bodies. These works demonstrate the degree to

⁴⁹ Studer, *Cominternians*. Brigitte Studer’s transnational study of the Communist International features some elements of the entanglement analytic, but largely omits relationships and connections between Cominternians and non-Communist governments and people.

⁵⁰ Caroline Bynum, “Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist’s Perspective,” *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995), 5.

which idealized and racialized manhood and womanhood have been deployed in the service of political, religious, and social ideologies, thereby connecting sexed and gendered bodies to conceptualizations of citizenship, piety, labor, and consumption. Discourse alone, however, runs the risk of having real bodies “dissolve into language,” as Bynum noted, and many scholars today do not limit their analysis to the ways in which we think and talk about sexed and gendered bodies, but also address authorial intention, the institutions that might have encouraged production, and/or audience responses to these cultural artifacts.⁵¹

As Philippa Levine argues, photography holds a “particular form of epistemological power” in that the framing, processing, and dissemination of visual material offers the photographer the opportunity quite literally to frame debates about the subjects featured in their works.⁵² Seen in this light, the gaze—gendered, raced, and geopolitically and socially situated—is central to constructions of sex, gender, and the body. The photographer positions bodies in certain ways, adjusts clothing and surroundings, arranges a particular perspective through the height of the tripod and the distance between camera and subject, and adds texture, depth, and atmosphere to the scene through the subtle play of light and shadow. This construction does not end at the door to the dark room, however, as cropping, processing, and choice of photographic paper transforms the image, giving it materiality and changing the ways that viewers see and read the finished product.

⁵¹ Bynum, “Why All the Fuss?” 6.

⁵² Philippa Levine, “States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination,” *Victorian Studies*, 50 (2008): 198.

Levine demonstrates this power in her analysis of British imperial photography wherein scantily clad tribesmen were positioned next to fully clothed white colonizers as a means of establishing and validating racial superiority and civilization through comparisons of bodily size, shape, and apparent modesty. Other historians have demonstrated how photographers, sometimes at the behest of their subjects, created and distributed images to achieve celebrity and wealth or elicit emotional responses from viewers that simultaneously shaped the parameters of citizenship and white manhood as envisioned by nineteenth-century capitalists who participated in their dissemination.⁵³

Like photography, public art has the power to influence opinions about the gendered embodiment of civilization.⁵⁴ Edward Slavishak takes the notion that art can refashion or falsify existing ideologies to accommodate new conditions and argues that civic boosters in Pittsburgh used idealized images of white workers as representations of the city in the wake of the Homestead steel strike to “[assuage] Anglo-American workers’ fears about their compromised position in the local labor

⁵³ John F. Kasson, “Who is the Perfect Man? Eugene Sandow and a New Standard for America,” in *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002); Max Shulman, “Beaten, Battered, and Brawny: American Variety Entertainers and the Working-Class Body,” in *Working in the Wings: New Perspectives on Theatre History and Labor*, eds. Elizabeth A. Osborne and Christine Woodworth (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015): 179-204; Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); and Shelley Streeby, *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013).

⁵⁴ Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Press, 1991); Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux, introduction to *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006).

market.”⁵⁵ The Soviet post-revolution identity crisis and subsequent attempt to “forge the New Man and New Woman in the purportedly classless, gender-equitable order,” Andrea Lanoux argues, never truly abandoned traditional ideas that associated certain characteristics and activities with women and others with men.⁵⁶ For example, idealized depictions of women revolutionaries became tools for the promotion of feminine gender ideologies that varied according to the needs of the state, and Elizabeth Jones Hemenway sees in their memorials a tension between the competing visions of Russian women as “mother-martyrs” and as sisters in the struggle.⁵⁷

Communists in Soviet bloc countries and elsewhere emulated these ideas in statuary and print, elevating Bolsheviks Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin and select homegrown leaders to cult-like status.⁵⁸ Katherine Verdery agrees with Melosh and Slavishak that much of the epistemological power comes from public art’s visibility, as the removal of monuments to Soviet-era leaders in the former Eastern Bloc functioned as a reinscription of temporality on men previously imagined to be timeless icons.⁵⁹ Like Verdery, Kevin Morgan’s central concern is the veneration of these individuals through texts, images, and statuary for explicitly political

⁵⁵ Edward Slavishak, *Bodies of Work: Civic Display and Labor in Industrial Pittsburgh* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 90.

⁵⁶ Goscilo and Lanoux, “Introduction,” 6.

⁵⁷ Elizabeth Jones Hemenway, “Mothers of Communists: Women Revolutionaries and the Construction of Soviet Identity,” in *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006): 76.

⁵⁸ Kevin Morgan, *International Communism and the Cult of the Individual: Leaders, Tribunes, and Martyrs* (London: Palgrave/Macmillan, 2016), 4.

⁵⁹ Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 5-6.

purposes.⁶⁰ More importantly, he explores how the cult phenomenon arose within what he calls a “movement whose guiding principle, even internationally, was one of monolithic integration.”⁶¹

Popular print media and literature produced by medical and government officials offer historians ample source material to discuss different conceptualizations of citizenship and which sexed and gendered bodies could lay claim to it.⁶² In the case of the Russians, what is perhaps most striking are those ideas that persisted after the November Revolution and the often paradoxical messages in them.⁶³ For example, Elizabeth Wood highlights the wide deployment of the concept of the “*baba*” as the binary opposite of the ideal female comrade in campaigns designed to either elicit or prevent Soviet women’s involvement in local and national politics.⁶⁴ Paradoxical representations of the New Soviet Woman in the periodicals *Rabotnitsa* (*The Woman Worker*) and *Krest’yanka* (*The Peasant Woman*), according to Lynne Attwood, suggested that women should be “rational, self-confident, innovative, ambitious, and competitive at work,” and emotional, intuitive, diffident, and

⁶⁰ Morgan, *Cult of the Individual*, 18.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶² Christina S. Jarvis, *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004); and Victoria E. Bonnell, “Peasant Women in Political Posters of the 1930s,” and “The Leader’s Two Bodies: Iconography of the Vozhd” in *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 101-123 and 137-168.

⁶³ This is most obvious in Russian and Soviet ideas about proper sexuality and sexual practices. See Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-De-Siècle Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Sheila Fitzpatrick, “Sex and Revolution,” in *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Frances Lee Bernstein, *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007); and Dan Healey, *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Wood, *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 1.

submissive in the home.⁶⁵ Soviet women, Attwood argues, would recognize this image of the hard-working, self-sacrificing mother/worker as the prototypical peasant woman that Stalin had “[placed] on a pedestal.”⁶⁶

Not to be outdone by the contradictory representations of the New Soviet Woman, Stalinist-era cinema and fiction also offered competing and conflicting images of the New Soviet man as a manly and efficient industrial worker who earned the title Stakhanovite and as a weak and ineffective man broken by his quest to become a model Soviet citizen. These seemingly contradictory visions of Soviet manhood—strong and weak, virile and impotent, whole and broken—existed together to create what Lilya Kaganovsky calls the “ideal Stalinist man,” a man so devoted to socialism that neither disfigurement nor deprivation could prevent him from doing his duty for the state.⁶⁷ Kaganovsky posits that social realist films in particular “[addressed] the question of masculinity obliquely,” focusing “on the production of a circumscribed masculinity, a masculinity that openly acknowledges and privileges its own undoing.”⁶⁸ Some literature reduced the Soviet body even further, fragmenting them for political purposes and creating an “unprecedented fusion of private body parts and state ideology” where arms, legs, and internal organs became sites for the

⁶⁵ Lynne Attwood, “Rationality versus Romanticism: Representations of Women in the Stalinist Press,” in *Gender in Russian History and Culture*, ed. Linda Edmondson (New York: Palgrave, 2001): 160.

⁶⁶ Attwood, “Representations,” 172-173.

⁶⁷ Lilya Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity under Stalin* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2008), 4.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

celebration of the triumph of Stalinism.⁶⁹ As we shall see, writers and visual artists in the US and UK reproduced these dichotomous images of proper Communist gender presentation and corporeality, suggesting that Bolsheviki, through discipline and hard work, had somehow transcended gender conventions.

At the heart of many works on changing concepts of corporeality is the notion that discipline and self-sacrifice assures the creation of the individual not only worthy of inclusion in religious and civic institutions, but deserving of the label “human.”⁷⁰ Warwick Anderson argues that US imperialists hoped that through “somatic control and moral training” they could regulate body care among Filipinos and Americans working in the colony.⁷¹ Much of Anderson’s analysis regarding fears about Anglo- and African American colonists mingling with colonial subjects echoes the work of Anne McClintock, who documented the lamentations of British imperialists who worried that too much contact with the locals led to many of their young men taking up the cultural practices of their racial and social subordinates.⁷²

Not only living bodies, but also the dead could become subject to such measures of control and the maintenance of power relations. British slaveholders and

⁶⁹ Keith Livers, *Constructing the Stalinist Body: Fictional Representations of Corporeality in the Stalinist 1930s* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 2.

⁷⁰ Peter Brown, “The Desert Fathers: Anthony to John Climacus,” in *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 213-240; Kathleen Brown, *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); R. Marie Griffith, *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Michelle T. Moran, *Colonizing Leprosy: Imperialism and the Politics of Public Health in the United States* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

⁷¹ Warwick Anderson, “Only Man is Vile,” in *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 106.

⁷² Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

enslaved Africans in Jamaica “[invoked] the revenants of the departed,” Vincent Brown writes, using dead bodies “for political purposes” in a struggle ostensibly about death rituals but ultimately about bodily autonomy for the living.⁷³ Katherine Verdery sees such “dead body politics” at play in the return of Christianity and the body of a revered and long-dead priest in one former Soviet bloc country.⁷⁴ Unlike Vincent Brown’s knowable dead body, Verdery sites its inherent “ambiguity, its capacity to evoke a variety of understandings” that gives it “symbolic effectiveness.”⁷⁵ Nowhere is this more evident than in the treatment of dead bodies in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Ann Fabian demonstrates in her work on efforts to retrieve fallen Union and Confederate soldiers’ bodies and the concomitant desecration of indigenous burial sites.⁷⁶ As we shall see, the disciplinary regimens that shaped Communist bodies may have contributed to uneven power relations that to an outsider looked like the loss of autonomy, but such measures were in fact self-imposed by those most dedicated to the cause.

Social historians approach the gendered and sexed body as part of a vast network of living, working, fornicating, and fighting entities whose interactions with natural and artificial environments and each other affect how bodies operate in the world. They look at living arrangements and labor practices, romantic intimacies, and racial violence in attempts to answer questions about social organization,

⁷³ Vincent Brown, *The Reaper’s Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 130.

⁷⁴ Verdery, *Political Lives*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 29.

⁷⁶ Ann Fabian, *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America’s Unburied Dead* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2010), 171.

civilization, economic and political citizenship, and normative gender and sexuality. Because their main objective is to personalize the colonial encounter and to give voice to the subaltern, social historians of imperialism make brown and white bodies in proximity a crucial aspect of their analysis.⁷⁷ Lynne Attwood's study of the omnipresent housing crisis after the Bolshevik Revolution sheds light on Soviet concepts of the public and the private and how those ideas aided in the formulation of gendered housing policies throughout the Soviet period. She notes that "the kind of housing that was considered appropriate in a socialist society was inevitably informed by people's attitudes toward the family, gender relations, and what form *byt*, or 'daily life,' should take."⁷⁸ Most of all, Attwood argues, policies regarding housing reflected Bolshevik plans to reorganize society in such a way as to "encourage a collective orientation in its residents, a willingness to put the social good above their own personal interests."⁷⁹ This study pays scant attention to the contradictory policies that privileged Party members over others; nor does Attwood comment on the embodiment of communal living. She does, however, note the vulnerability of women and children in these settings, as they were subject to harassment and violence at the hands of the strange men living among them.⁸⁰

Social histories that focus on masculinity among working-class men, especially men of color, examine the ways those denied access to middle class

⁷⁷ Brown, *Foul Bodies*; Anderson, "Only Man is Vile;" Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*; and Michelle F. Erai, "In the Shadow of Manaia: Colonial Narratives of Violence Against Māori Women, 1820–1870," PhD diss., (University of California, Santa Cruz, 2007).

⁷⁸ Lynne Attwood, *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia: Private Life in a Public Space* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), 1.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 26.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 242.

economic manhood created alternate masculinities through wage labor and sports.⁸¹ As Michael Kimmel argued, the sex-segregated workplace offered men the opportunity to acquire, maintain, and assert their masculinity for the approval of other men, but at various times, and for different groups of men, economic independence and the promise of upward mobility remained an elusive goal.⁸² Linda España-Maram maintains that Filipino men, who began immigrating to the United States in significant numbers in the 1920s, used wage work and the adoption of Pachuco cultural practices as substitute avenues for the creation and affirmation of a uniquely immigrant heterosexual masculinity.⁸³ Because of their exclusion from the dominant economic structure, Filipino men created a hierarchy of wage work wherein they measured manliness based on relative danger in the workplace.⁸⁴

Sport became a site for developing and maintaining masculinity among all social strata and political affiliations in the early twentieth century. Patrick McDevitt examines several instances when colonial and British working-class players defeated elite rugby, cricket, and football teams. As the Empire began to crumble and colonial subjects accepted middle-class values of sportsmanship, he maintains, athletic competitions became sites for contesting English hegemonic conceptions of manhood and nationalism.⁸⁵ After defeat in the First World War, sports became a way for

⁸¹ Linda España-Maram, *Creating Masculinities in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006); and Patrick F. McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

⁸² Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996), 5.

⁸³ España-Maram, *Creating Masculinities*, 7.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁸⁵ McDevitt, *May the Best Man Win*.

citizens of the Weimar Republic to make “entirely new [bodies]” capable of resisting modernity and the devaluation of muscular strength in industry while simultaneously preparing to meet the “demands and expectations of the modern age.” Fascists and German Communists alike participated in this nation-building scheme.⁸⁶ Other Fascist attempts to remake members into idealized visions of manhood, especially in Great Britain, included competitive sports leagues, summer camps, and disciplinary regimens. Whereas Communists who undertook similar endeavors organized them around Bolshevik ideas of revolutionary collectivity and comradeship, the British Union of Fascists emphasized masculinity, physical “hardness,” “violent militarism,” and the primacy of the “physical over the intellectual,” all elements of, as Tony Collins argues, the “masculine warrior patriot” of the Victorian and Edwardian public school system.⁸⁷

The masculine ideal promoted, if not realized, by Germans and Soviets exacerbated concerns about worker vitality and diminished masculinity in the US and Great Britain, as John Field, Matt Perry, and Rachel Louise Moran argue. Politicians, reformers, and clergy pontificated on nationalism in the form of the healthy working body and debated the merits of moving the habitually unemployed or “work-shy” to labor colonies. Whether the farms of rural England or the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, unemployed men in the American Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) or

⁸⁶ Erik N. Jensen, *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4-6 and 141. See also, J.A. Mangan, ed., *Shaping the Superman: Fascist Body as Political Icon—Aryan Fascism* (London: Frank Cass, 1999); and J. A. Mangan, ed., *Superman Supreme: Fascist Body as Political Icon—Global Fascism* (London: Frank Cass, 2000).

⁸⁷ Tony Collins, “Return to Manhood: The Cult of Masculinity and the British Union of Fascists,” in *Superman Supreme: Fascist Body as Political Icon—Global Fascism*, J.A. Mangan ed. (London: Frank Cass, 2000): 159-160.

various British work camps lived regimented lives, their bodies poked and prodded by government officials who catalogued and categorized them by height, weight, and musculature.⁸⁸ Scholarship on the CCC tends toward the celebratory, focusing on the positive economic and environmental impacts of this New Deal program and the homosocial setting that in many ways trained participants for the coming world war.⁸⁹ Two exceptions would be Neil Maher's work on the origins of the environmental movement and Rachel Moran's sweeping history of the US government's role in shaping American physiques. For Moran, the CCC addressed a decades old concern for the health of working-class bodies by offering volunteers advice on proper nutrition, a regimented exercise program, and difficult manual labor. Though criticized by the CPUSA as a militarization scheme, Moran shows that CCC administrators promised, not soldiers for the army, but healthy working bodies for industry.⁹⁰ Less concerned with government intervention and more with the emotional and psychological effects of CCC work on urban and immigrant youth, Mayer reveals that while transforming their bodies, manual labor in CCC woodland

⁸⁸ John Field, *Working Men's Bodies: Work Camps in Britain, 1880-1940* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013); Rachel Louise Moran, *Governing Bodies: American Politics and the Shaping of the Modern Physique* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018); and Matt Perry, *Bread and Work: Social Policy and the Experience of Unemployment, 1918-1939* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

⁸⁹ See, for example, Jerry Apps, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Wisconsin: Nature's Army at Work* (Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2019); Kenneth W. Baldrige, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Utah, 1933-1942: Remembering Nine Years of Achievement* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019); Neil M. Maher, *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); David Nelson, *How the New Deal Built Florida Tourism: The Civilian Conservation Corps and State Parks* (Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2019); Robert Pasquill, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933-1942: A Great and Lasting Good* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008); and Kay Rippelmeyer, *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Southern Illinois, 1933-1942* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015).

⁹⁰ Moran, *Governing Bodies*, Chapter 2.

work camps also made many enrollees into environmentalists and helped Americanize the foreign-born among them.⁹¹

Like Moran, John Field demonstrates a collective anxiety about the health of the British Empire and its workforce that began in the late-nineteenth century, increased significantly after defeat in the Boer Wars, and reached a fevered pitch in the aftermath of World War I. British pundits, among them socialists Sidney and Beatrice Webb, favored compulsion over volunteerism, and by the start of World War II, the various British governments explored both options in their unemployed labor camp schemes. As one would imagine, the CPGB was their most vocal critique. Both Moran and Field illustrate how these work camps and the weekly regimens of manual labor, weigh-ins, and taking of measurements served as forms of surveillance and those statistics evidence of each program's success.⁹²

While examinations of Communist statuary and visual culture make important contributions to the study of international communism and gender, the focus on discourse alone leaves a gaping hole in our understanding of Communist bodies and of Communism as an embodied experience. So too does the separation of the social from the political or the national from the international, for in the minds of leaders and rank-and-file alike, the social was political, the national of international concern. Who participated in the construction of Communist bodies, and how did it differ from that of non-Communist ones? What did it mean to embody Communism?

⁹¹ Maher, *Nature's New Deal*, Chapter 3.

⁹² Field, *Working Men's Bodies*.

Though not specifically about international Communism, Michel Foucault's *Discipline & Punish* nevertheless offers some insights into the ways that the Comintern functioned as the disciplinary authority over Communist bodies. Foucault defines discipline as "docility-utility," or the process of making the body both "intelligible" and "manipulable," one that may be "subjected, used, transformed, and improved." It involves an "infinitesimal power over the active body" exercised through "subtle," yet "constant coercion" and is more concerned with the process than the product of its regimens.⁹³ According to Foucault, this coercion begins with the distribution of bodies, continues with the division of those bodies into units of time, and operates under a "precise system of command" that requires immediate and unquestioning obedience.⁹⁴ As I will demonstrate, the Communist Party, like the military, boarding school, and manufactory, employed the "simple instruments of hierarchical observation, normalizing judgments, and...examination" to discipline its members.⁹⁵ It too created an extrajudicial set of penalties designed, not simply to castigate the rule breaker, but also to correct their behavior.⁹⁶

I posit that Communists in the US and UK willingly participated in disparate but deeply entangled political projects, sharing ideological and cultural bonds that kept them separate from, yet intimately engaged with, the local political and social structures they sought to undermine. If entangled across national and imperial borders, but neither nationalistic nor imperialistic, what did it mean in the interwar

⁹³ Gilman, *The Jew's Body*, 136-137.

⁹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 164-166.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 170.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 179.

period to pledge oneself to Communism outside of the Soviet Union? Sarah Abrevaya Stein and Michael Warner have provided alternate ways to imagine the international Communist community. In her work on diasporic Ottoman Jews, Stein asks readers “to look beyond binary understandings of citizenship or nationality, towards the subtle degrees of belonging.”⁹⁷ She defines their identities as “extraterritorial,” meaning that their protégé status—protected by one state, living in another, and culturally tied to a third—did not fit within the imagined community paradigm insofar as it pertains to nation-states. Who did the Ottoman-born Jew with a French passport support at the outbreak of World War I? To what nation did he owe his allegiance when pressed to take a side? Membership in the Communist Party, I contend, brought with it a similar conundrum, as radicals demonstrated in their reactions to both world wars and the changing policies of the Soviet, American, and British governments. With each political alteration, various ethnic, national, religious, and social identities competed for primacy over their commitment to the Soviet Union and international Communism.

That commitment made Communists part of what Warner called a “counterpublic,” an alternative to the public “constituted through a conflictual relation” with that public that “extends not just to ideas or policy questions but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public.”⁹⁸ Warner borrows the term from Nancy Fraser, who defined a counterpublic as subordinate to the dominant

⁹⁷ Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 8-9.

⁹⁸ Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 117-119.

public, but he nuances her definition in ways pertinent to the study of international Communism. For example, he argues, “The discourse that constitutes it, is not merely a different or alternative idiom but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility or with a sense of indecorousness.”⁹⁹ This speaks to the very particular language of Bolshevism and to their vision for the future. “Participation in such a public is one of the ways by which its members’ identities are formed and transformed,” he continues. “A hierarchy or stigma is the assumed background of practice. One enters at one’s own risk.”¹⁰⁰ While Warner articulates the public and the counterpublic through the lens of strangers’ shared experiences with various forms of media, identity formation through the shared experience of participation in a stigmatized practice would seem to be a fitting description of the construction of the Communist self.

A Note on Sources

Because memory is affected by the passage of time, repetitive narration of events, and changing opinions about colleagues and organizations, I approach oral histories and memoirs with a measure of skepticism and consider the information provided as a starting point for closer examination. As Australian historian Stuart MacIntyre argues, the Party “constructed [an] ideal comrade” in visual and textual products, and many “veterans” reproduced this ideal in their memoirs. These accounts “evoke the world of the communist in a record of constant engagement, a celebration of commitments, beliefs, and hopes set down in a form that leaves little

⁹⁹ Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 119.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 121.

room for doubts or uncertainty.”¹⁰¹ Therefore, it is vital to consider a person’s relationship with the Party at the time of the interview or when writing the memoir. For example, Sam Darcy’s expulsion from the Party most assuredly affected his recollections, but it may also have provided him with enough distance to speak frankly about his disagreements with the CPUSA national leadership. It is also likely that he misremembered his role in some campaigns, exaggerated it in others, and took credit for some things he did not do.

Oral histories and memoirs must be read as artifacts of a particular time and place co-produced by interviewer and interviewee. The California women in this study were interviewed in the late 1970s at the height of the second wave of feminism and in the wake of the Supreme Court decision decriminalizing abortion, *Roe v. Wade*. Their critiques about the Party’s lip service to the woman question seem especially influenced by 1960s and 1970s social movements, which probably also contributed to the ease with which many of them spoke about their own reproductive practices in the 1930s. The fact that women historians conducted these interviews as part of a series on women in the labor movement explains in part the reason these questions were asked at all. Personal manuscript collections will also be examined with the knowledge that subjects and/or their relatives would want them to be represented in the best possible light and most likely will have removed material that might damage their reputations.

¹⁰¹ MacIntyre, *The Reds*, 5.

Party documents present different challenges for the historian and must be understood as having been produced in an atmosphere where an incorrect statement (however defined) could lead to a member's persecution and possible expulsion from the Party. Once that happened, there was little hope of rejoining or regaining the leadership's trust. Mainstream accounts of Communists and Communist activities must also be treated with a measure of skepticism. Secret Service and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agents submitted reports tailored to fit into an anti-Communist framework, including stereotypes of radicals as unkempt, foreign, and dangerous. Non-communist newspapers typically followed suit, describing encounters between law enforcement and Communists as battles between good and evil, the righteous triumphant over alien interlopers. These examples illustrate the importance of considering the circumstances that surrounded the production and preservation of these sources with the same scrutiny as the information contained within in them.

Each of these sources will be analyzed through the lens of the body, noting the ways that they demonstrate the Communist body as performing, laboring, suffering, and disciplined. These are not separate but overlapping and sometimes conflicting aspects of embodied Communism. What did it mean to be a disciplined Communist? How was Communism performed? What is "labor" in relation to Communist bodies? What does the suffering Communist body look like? Self-narrations required by Party officials, applications for admittance to Party schools, and oral histories conducted many years later will not be read as factual representations of these individuals, but as performances of disciplined Communist bodies. These historical

actors wrote biographies based on their perceptions of Party expectations, presented themselves as capable and enthusiastic students of Marxism, and did not disappoint interviewers looking for evidence of an active radical population in Britain or the US. Subjects emphasized (and possibly exaggerated) their personal engagement in Communist activities, including arrests and time spent in jail, confrontations with members of the British Union of Fascists, street work (soapbox speaking and sidewalk chalking), trade union organizing, and physical and material support of the International Brigade fighting in the Spanish Civil War. As such, these sources will be read for what they can tell us about ideal embodied Communism as conceived by these informants at different periods in their lives.

Organization

The first chapter provides a genealogy of international Communism, from the ascendance of Marxism's Bolshevik iteration following the October 1917 coup in Moscow to the formulation of the Communist International and Communist Parties in Great Britain, the United States, and, to a lesser extent, in their respective colonies. This is followed by an examination of member demographics and some analysis of leading figures in the CPGB and CPUSA. Finally, I provide short histories of CP-affiliated organizations important to this study. I will also introduce the Soviet policies and practices that influenced the embodiment of Communism in the United States and Great Britain, most notably the 1918 Family Code that, for a time, decriminalized abortion and birth control and made divorce and marriage more accessible to Soviet citizens. Though I briefly analyze the transnational transmission

of these ideas in the radical press in the United States and Great Britain here as well, the bulk of this information will be embedded in relevant later chapters.

Chapter Two focuses on the disciplined Communist body through examination of correspondence wherein CPGB and CPUSA activists demonstrated their commitment to self-education and Bolshevik criticism. Key to this process was adherence to the central tenet of Communist Party organization—democratic centralism. J. Peters, in *The Communist Party: A Manual on Organisation*, describes democratic centralism as a “complete inner unity of outlook and...[the] combination of the strictest discipline with the widest initiative and independent activity of the Party membership.”¹⁰² Under this system, “leading committees” made decisions after careful deliberation between themselves, lower committees, and individual Party members. Once a policy or direction had been determined, members were required to “unreservedly [carry] out” that decision even if they disagreed with it.¹⁰³ Shifts in Comintern doctrine and policy required members to remain vigilant in their studies, justifying these changes for themselves through reexamination of Marxist classics, as we shall see.

To establish the presence of a disciplinary regime, I will focus on Party literature aimed at members—the pamphlets, newspapers, curricula, and other ephemera that described in detail the requirements of inclusion—and put these in conversation with memoirs, oral histories, and correspondence of Party members and

¹⁰² J. Peters, *The Communist Party: A Manual on Organisation* (New York: Workers Library Publishers, 1935), transcribed by Brian Baggins for Marxists Internet Archive; <https://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/cpusa/1935/07/organisers-manual/index.htm>, accessed 2 August 2020.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

former members. Perhaps the most important demonstration of Communist discipline, however, were the periodic self-criticisms, or “situated self-narrations,” required of all professional revolutionaries, as were critiques of their comrades.¹⁰⁴ Letters between comrades, correspondence to local party offices, and the minutes from Central Committee meetings reveal not only what members thought of their own performance, but those of their comrades as well.

Dovetailing with the disciplined radical body, Chapter Three looks at the gendered performance of radicalism, with analysis of public speaking, dress and deportment, and participation in left sports leagues. Party literature, especially newspapers and educational materials, show that Communists encouraged every member to engage in soapbox oration, to take their knowledge of political economies, both capitalist and Marxist, and share it with anyone who would listen. As one informant told their MI5 handler, “the average Communist can not only talk the hind legs off a donkey, but he can very often get the better of much more educated men in a political argument owing to the amount of time he has spent in studying his own particular subject.”¹⁰⁵ The Communist-affiliated British Workers Sports Federation and Labor Sports Union promoted working class camaraderie through sport as well as the notion that the coming socialist revolution needed fit working-class bodies. More importantly, these organizations differentiated themselves from socialist leagues by

¹⁰⁴ Studer, *Cominternians*, 17.

¹⁰⁵ Special Branch Report (5 July 1941), Records of the Security Service, KV3/397, The National Archives of the United Kingdom (hereafter cited as TNA).

privileging direct action over fellowship in demonstrations against a variety of social injustices.

Chapter Four examines the labor of radicalism in two distinct ways. First, I analyze Communists as workers, as paid employees of a minor political party whose position as members of the working class is often overlooked in histories of the CPUSA and CPGB. Like their mainstream counterparts, Communist operatives sometimes disagreed with their bosses, often struggled to make a living wage, and occasionally quit in frustration. Unlike most working-class people, Communists endured considerable harassment by law enforcement and often had to go to extreme measures to avoid arrest. For Communist couples, those efforts included not only the emotional labor of maintaining relationships while frequently separated because of party directive or incarceration but also in choosing whether and when to have children.

This chapter required an expansion of my periodization because it relies on surveillance reports by the British Secret Intelligence Services (SIS) and the American Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Files of known and suspected Communists in the UK are easily obtained and examined at the British National Archives, but not so their American counterparts. FBI files must be requested from the National Archives and Records Administration, and though the Freedom of Information Act guarantees access to these materials, it does not designate a timeline for responses to those requests. Therefore, I have relied on FBI files acquired by other researchers and extended periodization according to their availability. I am

grateful to Ernie Lazar and the Internet Archive for making these accessible to the public.

For paid employees especially, commitment to the Party often meant a life of physical and economic deprivation as well as mental and physical harassment from law enforcement and vigilantes. In Chapter Five, I discuss the Party's use of depleted, injured, and dead bodies as rhetorical political devices in photographs, stories, and political cartoons in the radical press and put these in conversation with the realities of life as a Communist functionary. Examined in isolation, this rhetorical strategy could be perceived as an attempt by the Communist press to romanticize suffering, to make martyrs of damaged radical bodies, but it served a greater purpose for those on the front lines. As Stuart MacIntyre noted in his history of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA), "official repression...the constant surveillance, censorship, and prosecution...[strengthened] the conviction of communists that their class war was just and their sacrifices worthwhile."¹⁰⁶ With the juxtaposition of radical discourse and the very real physical harassment endured by Communist operatives, this chapter avoids romanticization of the suffering radical body and demonstrates the reality of life as a professional (though not always paid) revolutionary in two repressive countries.

This study contributes to the historiographies of international Communism, transnationalism, gender, and the body, offering a view of embodied radicalism from the perspective of rank-and-file activists. Informed by Brigitte Studer, Hakim Adi,

¹⁰⁶ MacIntyre, *The Reds*, 103.

and Kevin Morgan, I demonstrate not just political activism that transcended national borders, but also, through an examination of British and American Communists, the transnational transmission of people and ideas, and the articulation and alteration of Soviet gender, sexuality, and corporeal ideologies and practices among members of the CPUSA and CPGB. Because of its portability, Robert Wiebe argues, class “replaced...outworn local [identities]” of family, ethnicity, and nationality. No matter where they landed, wage-earning immigrants found communities of people who, like them, had little control over their livelihoods.¹⁰⁷ Brigitte Studer made a similar observation when, in defense of the transnational approach to Communist history, she proclaimed the history of the Comintern the story of a transnational organization and a transnational people, of folk on the move whose membership in the Party gave them a common social identity that transcended geographic or familial restraints.¹⁰⁸

Of the connection she felt with English Communists at her mother Ruth First’s funeral, South African Gillian Slovo recalled that growing up in the Party “gave [her] a sense of belonging to a group of conspirators who were so close it was like belonging to an extended family.”¹⁰⁹ And Phil Cohen noted that he and other “red diaper babies” were “reared on internationalism. It was part of the air [they]

¹⁰⁷ Robert Wiebe, “Framing U.S. History: Democracy, Nationalism, and Socialism,” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 238.

¹⁰⁸ Studer, *Cominternians*, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Gillian Slovo, forward to *Children of the Revolution: Communist Childhood in Cold War Britain*, ed. Phil Cohen (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997): 7.

breathed.”¹¹⁰ All of this is to say that with internationalism at the core of Communist philosophy, its history, no matter how localized, should always be viewed from a transnational perspective. Whether looking to the Soviet Union for guidelines, promoting anti-racism in the United States, or advocating for decolonization in India, the Philippines, or South Africa, Communists in the United States and Great Britain expressed solidarity with the workers of the world and felt kinship with the Communists among them. But, like the disparate fascist movements examined in the anthology *Fascism Without Borders*, international Communism also should be thought of as a “transnational movement rooted in national communities,” for while British and American Communists envisioned socialist futures, they did so within a nationalist framework no matter the ideological period or party line.¹¹¹

Because the central concern of this dissertation is the embodiment of Communism, the focus is on those men and women who devoted their bodies to the transformation of British and American society through membership in the Communist Party. Dayo Gore, Erik MacDuffie, and others have produced important studies of radicalism and the Left writ large, but actual committed Communists should not be overlooked in the quest to expand the definition of radicalism. In fact, during the isolationist Third Period (1928-1935), these non-Communist activists would have been characterized as indecisive, cowardly traitors to the struggle.

¹¹⁰ Phil Cohen, *Children of the Revolution: Communist Childhood in Cold War Britain* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997), 17.

¹¹¹ Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe, introduction to *Fascism Without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation Between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918 to 1945*, eds. Arnd Bauerkämper and Grzegorz Rossolinski-Liebe (New York: Bergahn Books, 2017), 2.

Moreover, this study does not focus on those who joined the Communist Party as a lark, as a temporary act of class rebellion, or in the wave of enthusiasm for Anglo-Soviet relations following the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. It takes a special kind of person to risk personal and professional harassment for the sake of social change, and both the CPUSA and CPGB required that kind of dedication from its operatives.

Andrew Thorpe criticized those that would “take the politics out of political history,” arguing that while “social and cultural history are important...merely to focus on what Communists did on the ground will not suffice to explain how power was negotiated and shared out in the Communist movement during the Comintern period.”¹¹² This contention falls flat when one considers the entangled nature of the personal and the political in the history of international Communism. Regardless of the theoretical framework, any study of international Communism will be inherently political, and it is only by taking a social, cultural, or gendered approach that we can determine how politics and political beliefs affected Communist bodies. Therefore, following Paul Mishler and Kevin Morgan, I am less interested in the political successes or failures of the CPUSA and CPGB and instead look to the social aspects of membership in the Communist Party for insights into the making of the Communist body. I establish differences and similarities in the embodiment of Communism in Great Britain and the United States, employing a transnational

¹¹² Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and the Moscow*, 3.

approach through which to disclose the connections and divergences across national and imperial borders.

Finally, a study of international Communism reveals that idealistic and youthful enthusiasm for alternatives to dominant social and political structures is not confined to a specific time and place. These young activists, it must be acknowledged, were the communards, Wall Street occupiers, and Black Lives Matter activists of their generation. For them, membership in the Party signified their rejection of American and British social norms, yes, but it also indicated their sincerity in believing that Communism held the answers to social and political inequalities. They were so sincere in fact that they were willing to dedicate their lives to the struggle. This project illustrates the totality of that commitment through an examination of embodied Communism in the early twentieth century.

Chapter One

Bodies of Work: A Brief History of The Communist International and the Communist Parties of Great Britain and the United States

Introduction

Because this study takes a thematic approach to the history of British and American communism, it does not necessarily follow political struggles in a linear fashion. Indeed, an argument of this project is that changes in Communist International policies and practices and those of the CPGB and CPUSA did not fundamentally alter aspects of embodied Communism examined in subsequent chapters. Nor did it matter who sat atop the Communist hierarchy, and, to a lesser extent, which political or social issue drove Communist activity at any given moment. Those policies and practices do serve as guideposts, however, as do changes in leadership and the activities of CP-affiliated organizations, so it is necessary to set the scene as it were, to provide some chronological and organizational background to support the analysis that follows.

To that end, this chapter begins with a short examination of the Russian Revolutions followed by a second section on the establishment of the Communist International, including its organizational structure, major policies, and several “questions” that occupied the minds of Comintern theorists. Section three, on Communist parties in the United States and Great Britain focuses on origin stories, the social backgrounds of members, and how they organized themselves into revolutionary political parties. Though this study concentrates on the CPGB and

CPUSA, there were instances of communication and shared campaigns between those parties and CPs in the American and British Empires, so this section will also include relevant background information on those parties as well. Along with the creation of the Comintern, Vladimir Lenin's call for world revolution and the formation of CPs in the US and UK exacerbated preexisting anti-radical sentiments, lending credence to arguments about the need to surveil and prosecute those who allegedly preached violent revolution. Therefore, the third section ends with an overview of efforts by the Federal Bureau of Investigation in the US and the British Secret Services to monitor and prosecute spies and would-be revolutionaries. Finally, the Comintern directed parties to establish separate organizations that provided specific services to working-class people and campaigns. The fourth section introduces those institutions relevant to this study.

Revolutions

When the women of Petrograd used International Women's Day to stage a protest over bread shortages in 1917, few realized this would mark the start of a revolution that would bring about the end of tsarist rule of Russia. Nevertheless, that is exactly what occurred. Over the next few months, workers in Petrograd and Moscow established Soviets; Vladimir Lenin returned from exile; and his new Bolshevik Party won majorities in those Soviets, setting the scene for the coming civil war between his supporters and the Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) (along with various nationalist groups assisted by Western powers). In November, the Bolsheviks seized power and called for elections to the Constituent Assembly, to be held the

following month. When the SRs won a majority of seats, the Bolsheviks created the Extraordinary Commission to Combat Counterrevolution and Sabotage (Cheka, or Secret Police), disbanded the Assembly, and seized control of the government. On 3 March 1918, the new Bolshevik government signed a peace treaty with the Central powers at Brest-Litovsk, ending Russian participation in World War I. Socialist Revolutionaries revolted beginning in July, and members of one faction attempted to assassinate Lenin. These events mark the beginning of the Russian Civil War and what historian S.A. Smith calls the Red Terror, the mass arrests and executions through which Lenin and the Bolsheviks consolidated power.¹¹³

Socialists in the United States, Great Britain, and other countries observed these events with some interest, discussing and debating the implications in pubs and coffeehouses, at Socialist Sunday Schools, and around kitchen tables.¹¹⁴ As CPUSA activist Peggy Dennis recalled,

Not all radicals embraced the Russian Revolution, and the immediate months and years after 1917 that erupted into sharp clashes within the Socialist Party and its Jewish Arbeiter Ring fraternal order also tore our family apart. Aunts, uncles, and friends fought bitterly, dividing into Rights and Lefts; Kerensky versus Lenin; Brest Litovsk peace compromises versus permanent revolution; proletarian dictatorship versus social democratic parliamentarianism. Marriages floundered, lifetime friendships were destroyed, and our Sunday family gatherings became embittered explosions. The road to socialism apparently was a

¹¹³ S.A. Smith, *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹¹⁴ Frieda Truhar Brewster, "A Personal View of the Early Left in Pittsburgh, 1907-1923," *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 69, no. 4 (October 1986): 357-360. Frieda Truhar Brewster, formerly Devine, recalled that news of the revolution was "greeted with fervor by foreign-born socialists who welcomed what appeared to them as 'the dawn of socialism' and a promise of their own future," but her Croatian federation family became divided over the question of remaining in the Socialist Party or creating a new Bolshevik (Communist) one.

single, narrow one for these oldtime (sic) revolutionaries; only their own path was the correct one.¹¹⁵

Socialists like Dennis's family read original and translated essays by Lenin and other Bolshevik/Marxist theorists and scanned mainstream newspapers, looking for any reports on the civil war, British and American involvement in the naval blockade and invasion of Russia, and possible international recognition of the Bolshevik government. Eager to see socialism in action, some individuals secured illegal passage to Russia, hiding in cargo holds to avoid capture by the White Army or their Western allies, and many Russian immigrants returned to their homelands as soon as the blockade ended.¹¹⁶

While civil war raged, the Bolsheviks began the process of state-building, organizing the government and enacting a constitution and laws that awarded

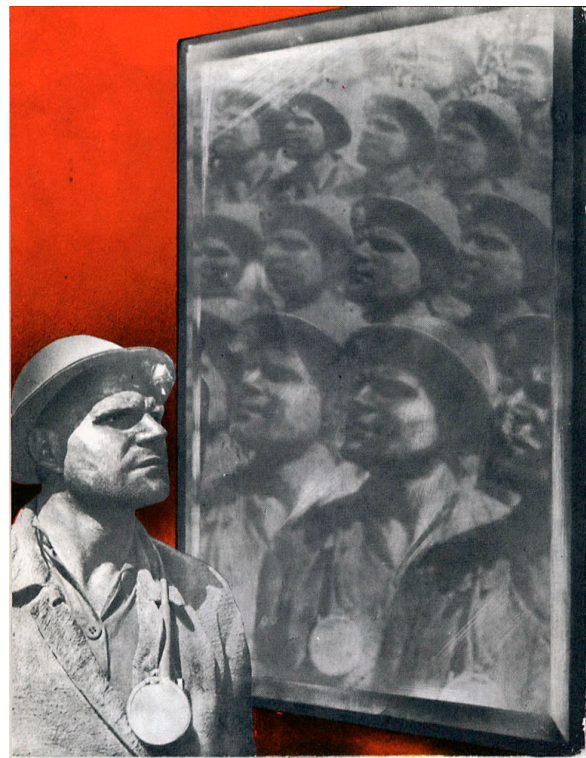


Figure 1: B. Klinch: Photomontage--the Mirror Is Right, 1934. Based on a quote by Stakhanovite Nikita Izotov: "When I looked recently, I was alone, and now there are so many Izotovs." *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History*. Permission not yet granted.

¹¹⁵ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 20.

¹¹⁶ Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 80-87. According to Theodore Draper, when news of the February Revolution arrived, Leon Trotsky and Nikolai Bukharin were in New York City meeting with Left Wing Socialists and had to stow away on ships to get back to Russia. On visitors to the Soviet Union, see Michael David-Fox, *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

the franchise to women and workers, established universal education, and made divorce cheaper and easier to obtain. Theorists like Alexandra Kollontai and Leon Trotsky promised families, especially mothers, that the Bolshevik reorganization of Russian society would lessen their “triple load” of wage work, housework, and childcare through the establishment of communal kitchens, creches, and sewing shops. Along with the decriminalization of birth control and abortion, these measures would ostensibly “democratize the family” and, in so doing, remove the family as the chief mode of social organization.¹¹⁷ Though the new family code appeared to herald a relaxation of sexual mores, the Party also endorsed “self-discipline, abstinence, fidelity to one partner, and sublimation of sexual energies at work,” and upheld Lenin as the model of socialist self-abnegation.¹¹⁸ Subsequent family codes in 1926, 1936, and 1944 rolled back some of these, including the recriminalization of abortion in 1936, as the Soviets began promoting and rewarding monogamy, motherhood, and the nuclear family.¹¹⁹ While acknowledging these reversals, Communist women in the US and UK nevertheless applauded the Soviet resolution of the “woman question” from soap boxes and stages throughout this period.

¹¹⁷ Alexandra Kollontai, “Communism and the Family,” *The Worker* (1920), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/communism-family.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022; Leon Trotsky, “From the Old Family to the New,” *Pravda*, 13 July 1923, https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/women/life/23_07_13.htm, accessed 12 November 2022; Barbara Alpern Engel, *Women in Russia, 1700-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 142; Sergei Kukhterin, “Fathers and Patriarch in Communist and Post-Communist Russia,” in *Gender, State, and Society*, Sarah Ashwin, ed. (London: Routledge, 2000): 71; and Christina Kaier and Eric Naiman, introduction to *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*, eds. Christina Kaier and Eric Naiman (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2006), 4-5.

¹¹⁸ Fitzpatrick, “Sex and Revolution,” 68-69.

¹¹⁹ Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women at the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin’s Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 244-245; Engel, *Women in Russia*, 178-179; and Olga Issoupova, “From Duty to Pleasure: Motherhood in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia,” in *Gender, State, and Society*, ed. Sarah Ashwin (London: Routledge, 2000), 32.

Several aspects of the early Soviet era had implications for the making of the Communist body. The new family code was part of the Bolshevik plan to remake Soviet society from the ground up, to change the *byt*, the Russian “customs and conditions” that, according to Trotsky, stunted progress and prevented the creation of the workers’ republic.¹²⁰ To that end, the government enacted a law removing class from the Russian language, declaring the masculine-gendered noun “comrade” (*tovarishch*) the only acceptable term of address, and created agencies that monitored all cultural production, inserting themes of self-discipline, self-abnegation, and collectivism into any novel or film lacking proper Soviet ideologies.¹²¹ British and American Communists embraced these thoroughly vetted Russian cultural products by sponsoring Soviet film festivals, supporting companies that published Marxist and Soviet literature, and engaging with likeminded enthusiasts in branches of the Left Book Club and Film and Foto (sic) Society.

In the Soviet Union, literacy programs and greater access to education assured that these ideologies reached the next generation, as did worker sports leagues and youth programs, all of which would be emulated in communist parties across the globe. Soviet cultural products, including propaganda posters, celebrated the productivity of certain industrial workers and collectivized farmers who were given

¹²⁰ Leon Trotsky, “Habit and Custom,” *Pravda*, 13 July 1923, https://www.marxists.org/archive/trotsky/women/life/23_07_11.htm, accessed 12 November 2022.

¹²¹ Valentina Zaitseva, “National, Cultural, and Gender Identity in the Russian Language,” in *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture*, eds. Helena Goscilo and Andrea Lanoux (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006), 39. Lilya Kaganovsky touches on this in her analysis of *The Party Card*, a film whose script was denied approval until such time as it’s rhetorical message could be changed to better reflect Stalinist gender ideologies. Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade*, 43.

the sobriquet “Stakhanovite.” The Stakhanovite movement began with the story of Aleksei Stakhanov, a Donbass collier said to have mined five times the amount of coal expected in a single six-hour shift. *Pravda* broadcast this achievement, as did the Soviet government and the Comintern, lauding Stakhanov and those like him who gave their all to achieve the government’s productivity goals. “These are new people, people of a new type,” Stalin declared in a speech before the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites. They are “simple, modest people, without the slightest ambition” who “completely mastered the technique of their jobs,” and started a movement “almost spontaneously, from below, without any pressure whatsoever from the administrators.”¹²² In other words, in contrast to efforts by the Fords and Taylors of industry who introduced efficiency techniques to speed up production, this movement originated from below, from those workers who internalized Soviet ideologies and put those ideas into practice.

The government began rewarding Stakhanovites in industry and agriculture with banquets, medals, and material goods, and this image of the selfless, disciplined, hardworking Soviet citizen made its way into Communist media around the world, including the frontlines of the Spanish Civil War.¹²³ And these ideas would migrate

¹²² Josef Stalin, Speech at the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites, 17 November 1935, *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History*, <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/?s=Stakhanovite>, accessed 12 November 2022. The Co-operative Publishing Society of Foreign Workers in the U.S.S.R. published all the “main speeches” given at this conference. In a book review, the writer “W.G.S.” argued that the speeches “blow sky high all the talk about the Stakhanovite movement being a speed-up movement objected to by workers in this and other countries.” W.G.S., “Labour in the U.S.S.R.,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 3 March 1937.

¹²³ “Stakhanovite’s Story: Only Socialism Gives Youth a Better Life,” *Young Worker* (US), January 1936; “News Shorts from Russia: New Inventions,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 October 1936; “Here Freedom is Real—And Equality True,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 8 March 1937; Frank Pitcairn, “Spanish Communists Propose United Workers’ Party,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 22 June, 1937; and R.W. Davies,

from the factory floor, the coal mine, and agricultural field to become enmeshed with the concept of building the Communist International and Communist parties and the ideal Communist operative. Like the Stakhanovite, the model Communist was disciplined in body and mind, performed Communism in their everyday lives, and willingly exposed themselves to deprivation and physical suffering in pursuit of a socialist future.

Communist International

The party, self-critical, democratic, and disciplined, must fight in the vanguard of the struggle, yet be most intimately interwoven with every fiber of the proletariat. It is a party which does not substitute wishful thinking and empty slogans for the real situation, objectively or subjectively. The party of the new type stays with the working class and the people at every stage of their struggle, providing the best solutions for all the problems of a given period, leading to the final stage where the toiling masses find it necessary to change the basic social relations.¹²⁴

In January 1919, Lenin sent out invitations to various left wing “parties, groups, and tendencies,” asking them to send delegates to a Congress in Moscow. Among those invited were four American groups, five British, and one each from Ireland and Australia. Though historians do not speculate about the reason that Lenin chose to invite the latter two over other British colonies, Bolshevik support for the Easter Rising and Australian anti-war activism may have contributed to this

Oleg V. Khlevnyuk, and Stephen G. Wheatcroft, *The Years of Progress: The Soviet Economy, 1934-1936*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), Chapters 7 and 11.

¹²⁴ William Z. Foster, *History of the Communist Party of the United States*, Chapter 19, <http://williamzfoster.blogspot.com/2013/01/chapter-nineteen-building-party-of-new.html>; accessed 12 November 2022.

decision.¹²⁵ Held in Moscow on 2-4 March 1919, this Congress founded the (Third) Communist International (Comintern or CI), the body that would promote Bolshevism and oversee the creation and operation of Communist Parties throughout the world.¹²⁶ Delegates appointed Grigori Zinoviev first General Secretary and chair of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI). An Allied blockade of Russian ports made it difficult for some to attend this meeting, so most delegates came from Russia and neighboring countries such as Germany, Holland, and Finland.¹²⁷ Two men from the United States attended—Boris Rothstein and S.J. Rutgers—though neither man represented American socialism in any official capacity, as did British-Russian socialist J. Fineberg.

At the Second World Congress held July-August 1920, delegates ratified, with several amendments, Lenin's "Conditions for Acceptance into the Communist International," a document whose purpose was, as S.A. Smith argues, to "split the international labour movement by making a decisive break with social democratic parties."¹²⁸ Potential affiliates had to hold conventions as soon as possible, change their name to include the word "communist," establish a party press, pledge to support "any Soviet republic," and work within existing labor unions while still supporting the new Red International of Labor Unions (RILU). Though he acknowledged the "diversity of conditions" in different countries, Lenin said the

¹²⁵ Leon Trotsky, "Letter of Invitation to the Congress," *Pravda and Izvestia*, 24 January 1919. Over the next month, this invitation was published in several Hungarian and German newspapers. On Ireland and Australia, see O'Connor, *Reds and the Green*, 14 and 31-33; and MacIntyre, *The Reds*, 47.

¹²⁶ Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, 303.

¹²⁷ Silvio Pons, *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism*, trans. Allan Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 12; and Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 151.

¹²⁸ Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, 304.

Comintern would be the final word on policies and programs.¹²⁹ Delegates voted on several amendments that further solidified Comintern authority, including one that required all party newspapers to publish reports of the Executive Committee and another stipulating that at least sixty-six percent of committee members had to have “made an open and definite declaration” about their desire to affiliate with the Comintern. Only the ECCI had the authority to grant exceptions to this rule.¹³⁰

Several conditions offer insight into the embodiment of Communism. When Lenin wrote, “every Communist proletarian should subordinate all his activities to the interests of truly revolutionary propaganda and agitation,” he meant this literally. Any Communist worth her salt privileged the needs of the collective over individual desires and willingly sacrificed her own wellbeing for the sake of the revolutionary struggle. This concept, foreign to those raised to believe in the myths of meritocracy and individualism, could be transformed into practice through education, an “iron discipline bordering on military discipline,” and adherence to the tenets of democratic centralism. Lenin did not elaborate on the latter in his “Conditions,” but as practiced by the Bolshevik Party, “democratic” meant open discussion and debate between individual party members and among representatives to select committees and “centralism” the binding nature of decisions made by those committees. In other words, once a decision had been reached by the ECCI, the Comintern expected all

¹²⁹ V.I. Lenin, “Terms of Admission into Communist International,” in *Collected Works*, Volume 31, 4th English Edition, trans. Julius Katzer (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), 206-211, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1920/jul/x01.htm>; accessed 12 November 2022.

¹³⁰ Second Congress of the Communist International, “Conditions for Joining Communist International,” 4 August 1920, *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History*, <https://soviethistory.msu.edu/1921-2/comintern/comintern-texts/conditions-for-joining-communist-international/>; accessed 12 November 2022.

affiliates and their members to adhere to it. To eliminate or at least discourage dissension within the ranks, the CI occasionally required parties to purge themselves of undesirable elements by having members prove their worthiness in written autobiographies of their radical activism. Finally, the national leadership of affiliates had the power to expel anyone they believed had acted against the best interests of the party, but, again, the CI had the final say and could instigate expulsions as well.¹³¹

The years 1919 to 1943 are typically delineated by major policy shifts coming out of each World Congress. When the Third Congress of the CI met in June-July 1921, communist parties had been formed in forty-eight countries. That December, realizing that revolutionary fervor was on the wane and post-war capitalism seemed to have stabilized, the ECCI called on member parties to cooperate with social democratic and labor movements in their home countries, a tactic known as the “united front.”¹³² This could either mean united from above—cooperation with social-democratic leaders and institutions—or united from below—a strategy of cooperation at the rank-and-file level that is sometimes derogatorily referred to as boring from within.¹³³ By the Fourth World Congress, the CI had more than fifty affiliates, with new communist parties from several colonized spaces, notably British India, China, Turkey, and Persia.¹³⁴ Here, the Comintern reiterated its commitment to

¹³¹ Lenin, “Terms of Admission;” Second Congress, “Conditions for Joining;” and Peters, “A Manual on Organization.”

¹³² Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, 304.

¹³³ Martin J. Ryle, “International Red Aid and Comintern Strategy, 1922-1926,” *International Review of Socialist History* 15, no. 1 (1970): 48 and 53-54; and Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 28-29.

¹³⁴ J.T. Murphy, “A Special Report on the Recent World Congress of the Comintern,” *The Communist Review* 3, no. 11 (March 1923), https://www.marxists.org/archive/murphy-jt/1923/03/fourth_congress.htm; accessed 12 November 2022.

united front tactics and chastised those member parties who refused to cooperate with social democrats or “bourgeois” trade unions.

Lenin’s death on 21 January 1924 led to an intense power struggle for control of the Bolshevik Party, Comintern, and Soviet Union, a battle eventually won by Joseph Stalin. During this tumultuous period, the Soviet government ratified a new constitution, and the Comintern convened its Fifth World Congress. Resolutions passed by the Congress directed CPs to focus on anti-war, trade union, and parliamentary work while “organizing solidarity campaigns with colonial peoples.”¹³⁵ Stalin’s drive to consolidate power accelerated between the Fifth and Sixth Congresses, and many Bolshevik leaders who opposed him soon found themselves in prison and/or facing a firing squad. An early victim was Zinoviev, whom Stalin removed from the Comintern in 1926, installing Nikolai Bukharin as general secretary.

That same year, the Bolshevik Party cemented Soviet control of the Comintern and its policies by installing a permanent delegation in the ECCI and establishing the International Lenin School (ILS) to train English-speaking students from Britain, Ireland, India, Canada, Australia, and the US.¹³⁶ Students at the ILS learned Marxist/Leninist/Stalinist theory, agitation/propaganda (agitprop), and, secretly, the skills necessary to do undercover work. After three to six months of classroom instruction, the very best qualified for military or intelligence training.

¹³⁵ Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, 305.

¹³⁶ Foster, *History*, Chapter 19; and Nigel West, *MASK: MI5’s Penetration of the Communist Party of Great Britain* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1.

This, along with the Comintern's International Liaison Section or Foreign Relations Department, *Otdyel Mezhdunarodnoi Svyazi* (OMS), enabled the CI to control political education and activities of communist parties abroad. The OMS oversaw discipline and finances of the member communist parties and operated an autonomous courier system and secret radio network. Jakob Mirov (alias Abramoff or Abraham), an experienced undercover agent who figures in one of the following chapters, led communication efforts for the OMS, establishing the Wilson School where undercover Comintern agents learned how to maintain and operate secret radio stations. The OMS also sent a CI representative to work with the Executive Committee of each Communist Party. While these Cominternians served as advisors to CP leaders and as organizers of covert activities, they also kept tabs on those officials for the Comintern, and, by extension, the Bolshevik Party.¹³⁷

The Sixth and Seventh World Congresses brought the most dramatic shifts in Comintern policy, the latter being the final one before its dissolution in 1943. Bukharin authored much of the program for the Sixth, held 17 July to 1 September 1928, which declared the end of capitalism's temporary stability, its "imminent collapse," and the beginning of its "Third Period" of development and the likelihood of war between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries.¹³⁸ In his report on the draft program of the Comintern delivered prior to the Sixth Congress, Stalin repeated the phrase "danger of new imperialist wars and intervention" several times,

¹³⁷ West, *MASK*, 289-292. This information is from defector Walter Krivitsky's interviews with British Intelligence.

¹³⁸ Foster, *History*, Chapter 19; and Cherny, "Prelude to the Popular Front," 9.

demonstrating his belief in that coming war. He also repeatedly blamed Social-Democracy and its anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist variations for being “capitalism’s main support among the working class.”¹³⁹ The final program stated that communist parties should no longer work with these reformist socialists. Instead, they should follow the tactic of “class against class” and split with mainstream trade union movements to form separate “red trade unions.” This move resulted in much turmoil in parties around the world, especially in the United States, with expulsions, fractional disputes, and some open defiance.¹⁴⁰

By the 1935 Seventh Congress, Bukharin had fallen out of favor, and Georgi Dimitrov replaced him as secretary, retaining that position until the Comintern’s dissolution in 1943. At this Congress, the CI adopted the policy of the Popular Front (or People’s Front), again exhorting its members to work within bourgeois trade unions and to support bourgeois nationalist movements in colonial spaces. Most importantly, the Comintern wanted affiliates to join forces with anyone fighting fascism.¹⁴¹ Authoritarian regimes in Germany and Italy had crushed Communist parties in those countries. Their geographic proximity to Russia and growing concerns about their expansionist tendencies propelled anti-fascism to the top of the Soviet list of priorities, and, by extension, the Comintern and its affiliated parties. When Francisco Franco led a coup against the democratically elected Spanish

¹³⁹ Joseph Stalin, “Report to a Meeting of the Active of the Leningrad Organization of the C.P.S.U. (B.), 13 July 1928, first published in *Pravda*, 26 June 1928; https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1928/07_13.htm, accessed 12 November 2022.

¹⁴⁰ Cherny, “Prelude to the Popular Front,” 9.

¹⁴¹ Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 78.

government in 1936, the Comintern raised a volunteer army to help Republicans in their war against fascist aggression. Unsurprisingly, when the Soviet government signed the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-aggression Pact with Nazi Germany only a year after the International Brigade's withdrawal from Spain, international Communism went into a tailspin. It destroyed the Popular Front, as many Jewish Communists left the party and liberals abandoned Communist-dominated organizations, while the CP press tried in vain to recharacterize the war as imperialist.¹⁴² R. Palme Dutt may have inadvertently summarized the conundrum Communists faced when, in 1940, he wrote,

The pace of events, the sharp turns and surprises, the many contradictions, the complicated character of the situation, confuse and bewilder many, and leave them at the mercy of charlatans and tricksters. The questions which events pose are not easy to answer; the awakening lags behind the urgency of events.¹⁴³

Within the year, of course, Dutt and others would reverse their anti-war stance. After the German army invaded the Soviet Union on 22 June 1941 and the Red Army joined in the fight against Nazi aggression, the Popular Front experienced a resurgence, as CPUSA and CPGB members enlisted by the hundreds and others took jobs in the defense industry and volunteered in wartime charitable organizations.¹⁴⁴ Dissolution of the Comintern in 1943 came two years after Stalin called for it (as a gesture to his new allies) and amid changes in foreign policy and the adoption of the "national fronts" line. Stalin said this new line would allow

¹⁴² Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson, "Chronology of American Communism," in *The Secret World of American Communism*, xxxii (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

¹⁴³ R. Palme Dutt, "Marxism is the Weapon: Learn to Use It," *Daily Worker* (UK), 5 September 1940.

¹⁴⁴ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, xxxii;" and Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, 1.

communist parties to become national workers parties and would signal the end of criticisms that they were controlled by a foreign power. This did not mean that the institutions within the Comintern disappeared. In fact, Dmitrov remained in charge of the department that inherited the functions of the Comintern—propaganda, cadre training, and clandestine communication continued unabated, as did Moscow’s financial support of Communist Parties and CP campaigns, especially resistance movements in Nazi-occupied areas.¹⁴⁵

Organizational Structure

Attendees at the Second World Congress of the Communist International determined the organizational structure of the Comintern, which in many ways mirrored that of the Bolshevik party. This consisted of an Executive Committee (ECCI) with representatives from member countries. While the ECCI ostensibly had authority between congresses, it often proved impossible to gather all members together, so, beginning in 1922, a smaller “enlarged plenum” began meeting. At either a World Congress or plenary session, delegates elected a presidium to handle the day-to-day operations of the CI. Members of the presidium appointed people to serve on the secretariat, the body that oversaw policy application, and chose others to supervise the national sections in the organizational bureau. They restructured Comintern bureaucracy in the late 1920s, renaming the secretariat the political secretariat and creating regional secretariats to supervise the national sections.¹⁴⁶ The Anglo-American Secretariat (AAS) covered the United States, South Africa,

¹⁴⁵ Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 116-119.

¹⁴⁶ O’Connor, *Reds and the Green*, 7-8.

Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom.¹⁴⁷ With only twelve staff members in 1932, the AAS had some difficulty maintaining strict control over these disparate and widespread parties.¹⁴⁸

At its largest, the Communist International employed some 500 people in nineteen departments, including administrative staff for the ECCI and regional secretariats and employees at the Comintern publishing house, Hotel Lux, International Lenin School, and the Department for International Liaison, or OMS.¹⁴⁹ Several people in the study that follows worked for the Comintern as couriers and radio operators for the OMS, as members of the ECCI and its commissions, or as administrative staff. Many more attended the ILS or Wilson School and joined District and National staffs upon returning to their home countries.

Members of the ECCI formed working groups or commissions that concentrated on specific issues, usually formulated as “questions,” such as the Negro Question, Woman Question, and Colonial Question. There were also commissions to liaise with the OMS regarding clandestine activities and internal Comintern matters.¹⁵⁰ Finally, the Second Congress established parallel organizations that would concentrate on specific aspects of working-class organizing while maintaining ties to the Comintern. The Worker’s International Relief (WIR) focused on trade union activism, especially in the realm of financial and material support for striking workers. Closely related to the WIR was the Red International of Labor Unions

¹⁴⁷ Thorpe, “Comintern ‘Control,’” 644.

¹⁴⁸ Matthew Worley, “Reflections on Recent British Communist Party History,” *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* 4, no. 1 (1999): 245, n19.

¹⁴⁹ O’Connor, *Reds and the Green*, 8-9.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

(RILU or Profintern), the international governing body for radical trade unions. Finally, the Comintern created the Young Communist International (YCI), an organization for young radicals roughly aged fourteen to twenty-four that, in its social aspect, resembled the Young People's Socialist League (YPSL) but, like the Communist Party, was more revolutionary in its character and aims.¹⁵¹

On the Colonial Question

Though probably not intended to segregate, the Comintern nevertheless separated colonial peoples, people of African descent, and women from white male bodies when they created those commissions and bureaus, allowing affiliate CPs to make these issues the purview of people from those communities instead of, as Margaret Stevens argues, “threading the anti-racist and anti-colonial struggles into the fabric of every aspect of the world socialist project.”¹⁵² In his original “Conditions,” Lenin wrote that parties in imperialist countries “must ruthlessly expose...colonial machinations” and “must support—in deed, not merely in word—every colonial liberation movement.”¹⁵³ Thus, the final version of “Conditions” ordered members in the metropole to educate the working class about conditions for workers in the colonies and to elicit soldiers’ support for anti-colonialism.¹⁵⁴ To get input from radicals in imperial spaces, the Comintern organized the Congress of the Peoples of the East in September, with some 2000 delegates from the Caucasus, Central Asia,

¹⁵¹ Ben Harker, *The Chronology of Revolution, 1920-1940: Communism, Culture, and Civil Society in Twentieth Century Britain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021), 16.

¹⁵² Stevens, *Red International*, 2.

¹⁵³ V.I. Lenin, “Report of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions,” *Collected Works*, vol. 31, 241-242, quoted in Duncan Hallas, *The Comintern* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 50.

¹⁵⁴ Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 85; and Second Congress, “Conditions for Joining.”

Iran, and Turkey. Most represented former tsarist territories and those from Turkey “simply nationalists opposed to...British and Greek intervention,” so it is little wonder that they agreed with Lenin’s contention that Communist parties in colonies and semi-colonies should ally with nationalist movements while maintaining their political independence.¹⁵⁵ In a written appeal to the workers of Europe, America, and Japan, delegates reminded readers that imperialist wars like the one just concluded had not been fought by the boss class but by regiments of colonial subjects and working-class men whose “blood and sweat merged in a single stream.” For too long white workers had allowed racism and nativism to keep them from uniting with their black and brown comrades, allowing imperialists the world over to “subdue” workers of all races and colors and prevent the “victory for the world proletariat over world capital.”¹⁵⁶

The Congress of the Peoples of the East never met again, and subsequent reports on the “Eastern Question” or “Colonial Question” showed that few CPs in imperial countries were following Lenin’s dictates and the conditions for joining the Third International, nor were CI policies sufficient to battle colonialism in all places. In the two years between the Fourth and Fifth World Congresses, little had been done by European Communist parties to establish a “really progressive policy” or to make “contact with colonial peoples,” according to Southeast Asian independence movement leader Ho Chi Minh.

¹⁵⁵ Hallas, *The Comintern*, 51.

¹⁵⁶ “Appeal of the Congress of the Peoples of the East to the Workers of Europe, America, and Japan,” 20 December 1920, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/to-workers.htm>; accessed 12 November 2022.

What have [CPs in imperialist countries] done to cope with the colonial invasions perpetrated by the bourgeois class of their countries? What have they done from the day they accepted Lenin's political program to educate the working class of their countries in the spirit of just internationalism, and that of close contact with the working masses in the colonies? What our Parties have done is almost worthless.¹⁵⁷

The "Theses on the Revolutionary Movement in the Colonies and Semi-colonies," passed at the Sixth Congress, said little to help resolve this issue. It stated that parties in the colonies could keep their ties to national-bourgeois groups if local conditions warranted it, but they should try to maintain autonomy when possible. This included the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA), directed by the Congress in its thesis on the South Africa question to work with the African National Congress and transform it into a revolutionary movement.¹⁵⁸ These, along with the Negro Commission's report "[calling] for those in Africa and throughout the Diaspora to be their own liberators, while struggling alongside all working and oppressed people to reclaim their lands and determine their own affairs" gave the CPUSA and CPGB permission to leave much of the anti-racist and anti-colonial work to the colonized and racialized.¹⁵⁹

On the Negro Question

¹⁵⁷ Ho Chi Minh, "Report on the National and Colonial Questions," Fifth World Congress of the Communist International, 8 July 1924, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/ho-chi-minh/works/1924/07/08.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022.

¹⁵⁸ Drachewych, *British Dominions*, 28-29; Harry Haywood, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), 144-149; and Executive Committee of the Communist International, "The South Africa Question," <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/sacp/1928/comintern.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022.

¹⁵⁹ Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 85.

The CI had established the Negro Commission at its Third Congress, and those outside the US criticized this group for focusing almost exclusively on the American situation.¹⁶⁰ And that may have been the case because the Comintern had invited members of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), a Harlem-based liberation organization, to participate on the Commission and send delegates to the Fourth World Congress. In his discussion there on the Black liberation struggle, Otto Huiswoud explicitly tied it to chattel slavery and US racism when he reminded attendees that “Blacks still [bore] the mark of bondage” and that the “antagonism of white workers against Black workers [took] a special form.”¹⁶¹ Despite, or perhaps because of the presence of Pan-Africanist Americans on the Commission, the final thesis on the Black question called on workers of all races to unite in the fight against capitalism and imperialism and for the creation of an international movement of the Black working class in the US, Africa, Central America, and the Caribbean. Because the Comintern represented all oppressed people regardless of race, it concluded, Communists must apply the “Theses on the Colonial Question” to Blacks everywhere while also working to bring them into the organized labor movement.¹⁶²

Black radicals followed the directives of the Fourth Congress, along with their white allies, in the formation of the American Negro Labor Congress (ANLC) in 1925 (renamed the League for Struggle for Negro Rights in 1930), the League

¹⁶⁰ Drachewych, *British Dominions*, 51.

¹⁶¹ Otto Huiswoud, “Discussion on Black Liberation at the Fourth World Congress of the Communist International,” 1922, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/black-struggle.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022.

¹⁶² “The Black Question,” Fourth World Congress of the Comintern, 30 November 1922, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/blacks.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022.

Against Imperialism (LAI) in 1927, and the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers (ITUCNW) in 1930. Under the leadership of Lovett Fort-Whiteman and Harry Haywood, the ANLC served as a training ground for Black radicals in the US, especially James Ford, who joined the Workers (Communist) Party in 1926 and rose rapidly through the Communist Party ranks, serving as CP candidate for Vice President, CPUSA representative to the ECCI, and delegate to the RILU Fourth World Congress.¹⁶³ At the Sixth World Congress, Ford drafted a resolution calling for the establishment of an international trade union of Black workers.¹⁶⁴ The First International Congress of Negro Workers met in 1930 in Hamburg, Germany, and a new journal, the *Negro Worker*, was established with George Padmore as editor. A native of Trinidad, Padmore had been radicalized during his time in the United States, first as a medical student and later as he came to know Black Communists in Harlem associated with the African Black Brotherhood.¹⁶⁵ The Congress reflected the Comintern's Pan-Africanist perspective, and it presaged the role that workers would play in anti-colonial struggles in Africa and the Caribbean. Delegates created the ITUCNW and criticized Communist Parties, those in imperial countries especially, for not doing enough work on anti-colonialism in general and the "Negro question" in particular.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶³ Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 41; Foster, *History*, Chapter 19; and Haywood, *Black Communist*, 117-118.

¹⁶⁴ Drachewych, *British Dominions*, 55-58.

¹⁶⁵ Marc Matera, *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 46.

¹⁶⁶ Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 123; and Drachewych, *British Dominions*, 58; and Haywood, *Black Communist*, 155-156.

While a student at Moscow's University of the Toilers of the East, Haywood and brother Otto Huiswoud joined an Anglo-American Secretariat subcommittee on the "Negro question" in the months leading up to the Sixth World Congress, tasked with preparing a draft resolution for the Negro Commission.¹⁶⁷ Though originally skeptical of the oppressed/colonized nation position promoted by YCI representative N. Nasanov, Haywood eventually advocated for the "right of self-determination in the South, with full equality throughout the country" that would be achieved through an alliance with radical white workers.¹⁶⁸ In his explanation of what became the Native Republic and Black Belt Theses in the August 1929 issue of *Negro Worker*, Ford reiterated the call for "an independent South African Republic based upon the workers' and peasants' organisations with full safeguards and equal rights for all national minorities" and for "complete political, economic, and social equality," and for the "right of self-determination" for Blacks in the American South.¹⁶⁹ The W(C)P responded by setting up a Negro Department to direct work among African Americans on a national scale, establishing Negro committees in districts and sections and making sure that Blacks were elected to national, district, and section committees.¹⁷⁰

Work by the CPGB with and on behalf of Blacks in Great Britain can be described as spotty at best, though they did establish an LAI branch within the Colonial Department at Party headquarters on King Street and appointed Reginald

¹⁶⁷ Haywood, *Black Communist*, 138-142.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 143.

¹⁶⁹ James Ford, "The Negro Question: Report to the Second World Congress of the League Against Imperialism," *Negro Worker* 4, no. 2, August 1929.

¹⁷⁰ Haywood, *Black Communist*, 153.

Bridgeman secretary. Bridgeman and LAI activist Chris Braithwaite helped Arnold Ward establish the Negro Welfare Association (NWA) in 1931, an organization designed to assist Africans and other Black residents of Great Britain but especially those seamen stranded in the UK after passage of the 1925 Coloured and Alien Seaman Order and the 1932 Special Certificate of Nationality and Identity. Ward oversaw the CPGB's Scottsboro campaign and served as NWA secretary until 1936, while Braithwaite worked on the NWA executive board and for the CP-affiliated Colonial Seamen's Association. (CSA).¹⁷¹ Still, there were no Black members of the CPGB until 1937, when Desmond Buckle, Gold Coast radical and founding member of the League of Coloured Peoples, joined the Party.¹⁷²

As Hakim Adi and Oleksa Drachewych demonstrate, Black radicals could not agree and sometimes changed their minds about the best approach to both the Colonial and Negro questions, with George Padmore, James Ford, William Patterson, Otto Huiswoud, and other Black activists advocating for a Pan-Africanist approach at times and, at others, for different tactics in different regions.¹⁷³ Regardless, according to Adi, the advent of the Popular Front in 1935 marked a waning of anti-colonial, Pan-Africanist work as the Comintern rejected its characterization of African Americans as a colonized people and the Soviet Union and Comintern shifted their focus to rising fascism in Europe and Asia.¹⁷⁴

On the Woman Question

¹⁷¹ Matera, *Black London*, 22-23 and 46.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 75.

¹⁷³ Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 199 and Drachewych, *British Dominions*, 61.

¹⁷⁴ Adi, *Pan-Africanism and Communism*, 199; and Drachewych, *British Dominions*, 35-36.

As mentioned in the above section on the Bolshevik Party's attempts to remake society from the ground up, much of those efforts centered on the role of women as housewives and mothers. Borrowing ideas from Fredrick Engels's *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*, Marxist theorists like Alexandra Kollontai, Leon Trotsky, and German Communist Clara Zetkin claimed that women's oppression began with the development of private property and social classes. Therefore, they argued, women's emancipation could only come with the "destruction of bourgeois society" and the class system.¹⁷⁵ Once emancipated, women could form relationships with men based on mutual affection rather than economic dependence. Throughout the life of the Communist International, arguments for organizing women and for women's participation in the Communist movement centered on this premise, that women's oppression stemmed from class oppression and elimination of the class system would bring an end to the problem. As Kollontai wrote, "All that is old and outdated and derives from the cursed epoch of servitude and domination, of landed proprietors and capitalists, should be swept aside together with the exploiting class itself and other enemies of the proletariat and the poor."¹⁷⁶

The bourgeois women's movement, with its emphasis on the needs of middle-class and elite women, had no place in a movement that sought to undermine the very structures that gave these women their voice, their education, and their privileges. It

¹⁷⁵ Sue Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 20.

¹⁷⁶ Kollontai, "Communism and the Family."

was for these reasons that women Communists and the Comintern emphasized the differences between bourgeois feminism and work among women Communists. At the Congress of the Peoples of the East, Comrade Nadzhiya emphasized that the women's movement in the East, though not bourgeois, nevertheless would be central to the building of socialism, and she warned the audience that failure to include women in this struggle would mean defeat for the movement. "If you, men of the East, continue now, as in the past, to be indifferent to the fate of women, you can be sure that our countries will perish." She concluded with a call for complete gender equality, educational and employment opportunity for women, and establishment of women's committees in cities, towns, and villages.¹⁷⁷ The Third Congress of the Comintern followed with a resolution on the "Methods and Forms of Work Among Communist Party Women," again differentiating agitation among Communist women from the bourgeois women's movement. "There is no 'special' women's question, nor should there be a special women's movement," the resolution contended, and Communist women should not form alliances with bourgeois feminists. Instead, they should develop Women's Departments in parties that educated women about their class-based oppression, agitated for women's issues, drew women into the struggle, and helped liberate women from traditional gender relations. Moreover, Communist

¹⁷⁷ Comrade Nadzhiya, "Speech before the Congress of the Peoples of the East on the Rights of Women," 7 September 1920, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/baku/ch07.htm#women>, accessed 13 November 2022.

parties in bourgeois countries needed to bring women into leading positions “on equal terms with men.”¹⁷⁸

Clara Zetkin reported to the Fourth World Congress on work among women, reiterating the Women’s Secretariat’s purpose as distinct from that of bourgeois feminism. The Secretariat, as an “auxiliary body of the ECCI,” had two missions: to bring Communist women into leadership positions and to bring other women into the Communist movement. The CI needed women’s departments or divisions in affiliates to carry out this work, Zetkin argued, so that women could participate “in the entire broad, historical life of our party and the Communist International.”¹⁷⁹ She and delegates chastised those parties, the CPGB among them, for failing “partially or completely to carry out our duty to...promote Communist work among women,” and the CI directed them to correct this mistake immediately.¹⁸⁰

Though the Comintern established a Women’s Secretariat during this period, there is little evidence that many Communist parties did much more than create a Women’s Department or install a woman as Women’s Organizer, as the CPGB did with Helen Crawford after the Third Congress. Crawford reported at a 1922 meeting of the CPGB Executive Committee that Women’s Sections in London and Manchester were doing well while others floundered. She noted that efforts to

¹⁷⁸ “Methods and Forms of Work Among Communist Party Women,” Third World Congress of the Communist International, 8 July 1921, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/3rd-congress/women-theses.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022.

¹⁷⁹ Clara Zetkin, “Report on Communist Work Among Women,” Fourth World Congress of the Communist International, 27 November 1922, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1922/zetkin03.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022.

¹⁸⁰ “Work of the International Communist Women’s Secretariat,” Fourth World Congress of the Communist International, 1922, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/4th-congress/women.htm>, accessed 12 November 2022.

establish them in Glasgow and Edinburgh had been vociferously opposed. Sue Bruley argues this reflected the CPGB's lack of enthusiasm for this work, and, as with their work in British colonies, they had to be "edged along by the Comintern."¹⁸¹

Similar lackluster enthusiasm can be seen in the CPUSA, where Benjamin Gitlow's mother Kate worked as secretary of the W(C)P Women's Committee before being expelled in the chaos following the shift to "class against class," after which the committee ceased to exist before being restructured as the Women's Commission in 1945.¹⁸² Dorothy Healey recalled that Elizabeth Gurley Flynn disliked her placement on this commission, not because she did not care about women's issues, but because the very title "commission" marked it as a low priority for the national leadership.¹⁸³ Comrade Nadzhiya, who in her remarks before the Congress of the Peoples of the East noted that they saved women's issues for the last session of the last day, would probably have agreed.¹⁸⁴

The Communist Parties in the United States, Great Britain, and Their Empires Formations

Lenin's call for a Third International signaled a split in the global socialist movement and the creation of Bolshevik (Communist) parties around the world, including in the United States, Great Britain, and many of their colonies. On the eve of the revolution, socialists in the United States were divided into three organizations:

¹⁸¹ Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement*, 70.

¹⁸² John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, "The Leadership of American Communism, 1924-1929: Sketches for a Prosopographical Portrait," *American Communism* 19, nos. 1-2 (2020): 12.

¹⁸³ Van Gosse, "Red Feminism: A Conversation with Dorothy Healey," *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003): 511-518.

¹⁸⁴ Comrade Nadzhiya, "Speech before the Congress of the Peoples of the East on the Rights of Women."

the Socialist Labor Party (SLP), the Socialist Party (SP), and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), each with varying degrees of emphasis on participation in electoral politics, trade unionism, and revolutionary struggle versus reform, including violence as a means of achieving goals. Moreover, “left,” “center,” and “right” factions existed within all three. Foreign language federations—fourteen affiliates in 1915—accounted for about 40% of SP membership.¹⁸⁵

The first meeting of future leaders of the American Communist movement took place in Manhattan on 21 June 1919. Delegates from Michigan and most of the language federations advocated for organizing a Communist Party immediately. After the convention voted this down, Michigan and the federations staged a walkout, while the Left Wing of the Socialist Party pressed on with plans to take over the SP, which they failed to do on 30 August.¹⁸⁶ Two Communist Parties emerged out of this struggle. On 31 August, delegates from twenty-one states met with John Reed, Alfred Wagenknecht, and Benjamin Gitlow and established the Communist Labor Party of America (CLP) with headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio.¹⁸⁷ The next day, delegates from the so-called Michigan-federations group met to establish the second, the Communist Party of America (CPA).¹⁸⁸ At the latter, held in Chicago’s Russian Federation Hall, “at least five government agents attended its birth,” including Confidential Informant No. 121, a Russian native who signed the roster as N.

¹⁸⁵ Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 17-24 and 32.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 166-169.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 178-181.

¹⁸⁸ Foster, *History*, Chapter 12, and Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 181-184.

Nagorowe.¹⁸⁹ Attempts at unity failed until the Comintern, at its Second Congress, gave them an ultimatum—merge or risk expulsion from the CI.¹⁹⁰ The two American Communist parties became one at a May 1921 convention where delegates elected Charles E. Ruthenberg Executive Secretary and made New York City party headquarters.¹⁹¹ After several more mergers, the party changed its name to the Workers (Communist) Party {W(C)P} in 1925 and the Communist Party of the United States of America (CPUSA) in 1930.¹⁹²

The foundation of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) took a similar trajectory, though, as Andrew Thorpe argues, its creation involved less splitting of existing socialist groups and more bringing together revolutionary groups within existing socialist organizations whose members debated affiliation with the Third International over the Second.¹⁹³ As with their counterparts in the United States, divisions within the British socialist movement resulted in, for a time, two or three Communist Parties. In June 1920, Sylvia Pankhurst’s Workers Suffrage Federation and other socialist groups founded the Communist Party (British Section of the Third International), {CP(BSTI)}, followed the next month by the first Communist Unity Conference in London where representatives from the British Socialist Party (BSP) and Arthur MacManus’s “Communist Unity Group” established

¹⁸⁹ Tim Weiner, *Enemies: A History of the FBI* (New York: Random House, 2012), 26.

¹⁹⁰ Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 267-269.

¹⁹¹ Foster, *History*, Chapter 12.

¹⁹² Foster, *History*, Chapter 13.

¹⁹³ Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, 19-20.

the Communist Party of Great Britain.¹⁹⁴ The CP(BSTI) and CPGB merged to become one at a second Unity Conference in Leeds in January 1921.¹⁹⁵

Unlike in the United States, where no national workers or labor party existed, the British Labour Party (LP) posed an interesting dilemma for the Comintern and the question of CPGB participation in electoral politics. Less a party and more a “federal body” consisting of “affiliated constituents” like the BSP, the LP offered British Communists the opportunity to take part in elections without losing political autonomy. At its Second World Congress, the Comintern established its “united front” policy and urged British Communists to affiliate with the LP and agitate among workers until the LP leadership saw fit to expel them. This, Lenin predicted, would reveal the bourgeois-reformist tendencies of the LP, and cause many workers to abandon it for the communist movement. The twelve British delegates in attendance could not agree on this proposal, but their counterparts back in Britain had already voted to do exactly that. When the LP rejected their application, British Communists took the matter to the local LPs, some of whom offered support and others adamant opposition.¹⁹⁶

Organizational Structure

Generally, Communist party organizational structures mirrored those of the Communist International and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union {RKP(b) or CPSU}. This consisted of a General Secretary; Central Executive Committee;

¹⁹⁴ Ian Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution: The Myth of Soviet Democracy and the British Left* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), Timeline; Hallas, *The Comintern*, 43-44; and Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, 26.

¹⁹⁵ Bullock, *Romancing the Revolution*, Timeline.

¹⁹⁶ Hallas, *The Comintern*, 44-45.

Secretariat, Political and Organizational Bureaus; Districts; Branches or Sections; and Units or Fractions. This was true for parties in the United States and Great Britain, as well as Young Communist International (YCI) affiliates. Units could be formed by three or more Communists working in the same shop or factory, or by those living on the same street or block.¹⁹⁷ When Communists cooperated with “bourgeois” trade unions and organizations, they created fractions within those groups, sometimes openly and other times covertly.¹⁹⁸ Sections or branches were composed of several units and districts made up of several sections. Districts in the US during the period under consideration tended to be composed of one or more states, while districts in the UK covered large urban areas and surrounding counties.¹⁹⁹

Unit delegates to section conventions elected members to sit on the Section Committee, who in turn elected a Section Organizer and delegates to the district convention. At the district convention, delegates elected a District Committee who selected a District Organizer and delegates to the national convention, where delegates appointed members to the Central Executive Committee (CEC). However, Section and District Committees and Organizers had to be approved of by higher committees, and they were often appointed by the District or National Office rather than chosen by the Section or District Convention.²⁰⁰ For example, Sam Darcy, Phil Bart, Pat Devine, Eugene Dennis, and Maurice Ferguson were at various times

¹⁹⁷ Peters, “A Manual on Organization.”

¹⁹⁸ Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 304-305; and Foster, *History*, Chapter 13.

¹⁹⁹ For information on the various organizational structures in the United States, see the University of Washington’s *Mapping American Social Movements Project*; https://depts.washington.edu/moves/CP_map-members.shtml.

²⁰⁰ Peters, “A Manual on Organization.”

chosen to be District Organizers by CPUSA and/or CPGB leadership. When lackluster performance or political circumstances dictated it, the leadership had them assigned elsewhere.²⁰¹

The Central Executive Committees ran the CP between national conventions, subject to approval by the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The CEC drew its membership from the national and district level and varied in size. It elected a smaller body, the Political Bureau (Politburo), to handle day-to-day operations of the national office and an Organizational Bureau to oversee membership and party finances.²⁰² Political and Organizational Bureaus usually existed at the district level as well. The CEC elected a General Secretary, the national leader of the party, and they, along with the heads of the national Political and Organizational Bureaus formed the Secretariat, the ultimate governing body of the CPUSA and CPGB.

As with District Committees and Organizers, the General Secretary of the CPUSA or CPGB could be removed by the Comintern, as happened to Jay Lovestone in the US after his election in 1927. At the Sixth World Congress of the CI, Lovestone argued that the Third Period did not apply to the American situation, thus using “American exceptionalism” as justification for his views that American capitalism differed from other versions and was therefore not subject to Marxist analysis of capitalism’s growth and decay. The Comintern objected to this opposition

²⁰¹ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 89; and Secretariat to Birmingham District Party Committee, 3 August 1932, Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

²⁰² Harvey Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, 11.

to the new “class against class” line and directed the CPUSA to remove Lovestone from office, which they did at the Sixth National Convention in March 1929.²⁰³

Lovestone, along with Benjamin Gitlow and 200 of their supporters, were subsequently expelled by the CPUSA and Comintern. Many others left in protest. Lovestone and Gitlow formed opposition parties and eventually became ardent anti-communists, the former as an advisor to the FBI and the latter as a friendly witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee.²⁰⁴

The organizational structure of the CPGB remained the same throughout the early twentieth century, but not the Communist Party in the US. In 1944 Earl Browder dissolved the CPUSA and reorganized it as the Communist Political Association. After French CP leader Jacques Duclos published a letter publicly admonishing the American party for what came to be known as “Browderism,” or the application of American exceptionalism to Communism, the CPUSA was reformed as a political party at its 1945 convention. At that time the structure of the CPA included Clubs organized by city, township, rural areas, and shops. There was a state apparatus that included all clubs, and the State Convention elected a State Committee comprised of regular and alternate members. The Committee elected a State Board, Chairman, and any other officers deemed necessary. District Committees consisted of several State Conventions. The National Committee, the highest governing body, controlled the national treasury and elected a National Review Commission that oversaw charges against members such as dereliction of duty and mishandling of

²⁰³ Foster, *History*, Chapter 19.

²⁰⁴ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, xxxi.

funds. An interesting section in the Constitution said, “Adherence to or participation in the activities of any clique, group, circle, faction, or party which conspires or acts to subvert, undermine, weaken, or overthrow any or all institutions of American democracy...shall be punished by immediate expulsion.”²⁰⁵ This, of course, meant that Soviet spies could not be members of CPUSA.

Demographics

Many historians have done demographic studies of the CPGB and CPUSA, assessing the racial, gender, class, and national origin of those members/operatives for which there is evidence. Overall, Andrew Thorpe found that CPGB membership in the interwar and WWII period was mostly male, young, unemployed, and working class. It was also almost entirely white and native-born. Turnover was high, but membership levels in London, Scotland, the Lancashire textile and coal regions, and the South Wales coal region consistently stayed above that of other areas.²⁰⁶ Though the May 1926 coal and general strikes resulted in an uptick in membership, from around 6000 to 11,000, retention proved to be an issue, and even before the turn to class against class in 1928, the party had shrunk to less than half its 1926 level.²⁰⁷ The CPGB made little effort to recruit migrant workers, instead allowing radicalization to occur through “incorporation into settled work or associational cultures” like cooperatives.²⁰⁸ In places like Scotland and Coventry, the pub operated as the meeting place, and this presented two distinct problems for recruitment and

²⁰⁵ Foster, *History*, Chapter 30.

²⁰⁶ Thorpe, “The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain,” 777, 788-789.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 786-788.

²⁰⁸ Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 37.

retention of members. First, it resulted in or exacerbated preexisting problems with alcohol. Second, because public houses could be very male-centric, many women did not feel comfortable attending meetings.²⁰⁹ Though Morgan does not explore this, it is also possible that people of color felt uncomfortable in these settings as well.

Because of government repression, local branches and districts of the American Communist parties often had their records destroyed, either by vigilantes or by CP officials who worried about the FBI and Hoover getting their hands on these lists. Therefore, it is difficult to assess membership numbers or make detailed assessment of membership demography at certain times.²¹⁰ At their simultaneous creations, the Communist Party of America had about 24,000 members and the Communist Labor Party about 10,000. Of these estimated 34,000 Communists, less than 4,000 spoke English, many of them immigrants/refugees from tsarist Russia and members of Communist language federations affiliated with the CPA. This would not shift until the 1930s.²¹¹ The merger of the CPA and CLP in 1921 saw the beginning of the campaign to dissolve language federations and to “Americanize” and “Bolshevize” the membership. By William Z. Foster’s own admission, these changes contributed somewhat to a drop in membership—he estimates it totaled less than 10,000 by 1929.²¹²

Most Communists in the United States lived in urban centers—New York, Chicago, and other cities with high immigrant populations—though this changed

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 75.

²¹⁰ Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, 6.

²¹¹ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, 5.

²¹² Foster, *History*, Chapter 19.

somewhat during the Americanization campaign and organizing drives among agricultural and cannery workers in the West and sharecroppers in the Southeast.²¹³ Yet, factionalism and Americanization only go so far in explaining the loss of so many members. The US government deported almost one thousand foreign-born radicals between 1919 and 1922, and this must have caused some to abandon the party and others to return to their homelands, especially those Russians anxious to help build the new Soviet republic. Whatever the causes, these patterns of expansion and declension continued in the CPUSA and CPGB throughout the life of the Comintern, as changes in international politics, levels of government repression, and Comintern policy attracted or repelled workers.²¹⁴

Russians, Poles, Finns, Germans, and other immigrants to the United States formed language federations who sought affiliation with and autonomy from the Communist Party. There was also a Yiddish federation and a Jewish Communist movement that combined elements of Marxist universalism and Jewish nationalism and published their own literature in Yiddish, allowing for communication and debate between Jews in the diaspora.²¹⁵ Even when the Party pressured them to abandon their native languages and learn English, many Jewish Communists “fought

²¹³ See Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Kathryn Olmsted, *Right Out of California: The 1930s and the Big Business Roots of Modern Conservatism* (New York: The New Press, 2015); Vicki Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico, 1987); and Ruiz, “Una Mujer sin Fronteras.”

²¹⁴ Thorpe, “The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain,” 780-783; and Thorpe, *The British Communist Party and Moscow*, 1.

²¹⁵ Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik, introduction to *A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century*, Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik, eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016): 1-2; and Tony Michels, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

vigorously to maintain a Yiddish Communist identity with its unique cultural expressions and institutions.”²¹⁶ Similar Yiddish federations existed throughout the English-speaking world, including the UK, yet, according to Kevin Morgan’s analysis, Jews only made up about 10% of CPGB membership, with Manchester, Cheetham, and ethnic unions accounting for most of that number. Manchester and Lancashire County had very active Young Communist League communities in the 1930s, with many members who were second generation Jewish Britons, notably the Ainley brothers, Sam Wild, and Mick Jenkins, who all appear in this dissertation.²¹⁷

As mentioned, the highest authority in either the CPGB or CPUSA was the body variously called the Central Executive Committee, Central Committee, or National Committee. For clarification in this section, the CPGB committee henceforth will be the EC and the CPUSA committee will be the CC. The EC began as a nine-member body but was expanded to seventeen in 1923, while the CC of the Workers (Communist) Party grew from nineteen in 1924 to forty-four in March 1929. Twelve of the March 1929 CC were gone by May, when, in the shake up after the Sixth World Congress, the Comintern expelled a few from the Party and others left in protest. At that time, the Comintern also sent American Commission representative Boris Mikhailov to the US and placed him on the CPUSA secretariat. Mikhailov

²¹⁶ Matthew B. Hoffman, “At What Cost Comrades?” in *A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Matthew B. Hoffman and Henry F. Srebrnik (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016), 21-22.

²¹⁷ Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 188-190.

reorganized the CC, adding twelve members to the remaining thirty-one in October 1929, including Pittsburgh organizer Scotsman Pat Devine.²¹⁸

The demographics of early iterations of the Central Executive Committees of the CPGB and CPUSA reveal certain disparities between the cadre—those disciplined, trained (though not always paid) functionaries Lenin cited as central to the successful building of a socialist future—and the rank and file. Except for Shapurji Saklatvala (Bombay) and Russian émigré Sam Elsbury, the 39 people who served on the CPGB EC in the 1920s were British-born Communists, just over half English, a third Scottish, and a few from Wales. Several, like Rajani Palme Dutt, had international connections or families that hailed from multiple places in the British Isles.²¹⁹ By contrast, 90% of members on 1920s W(C)P Central Committees were either first- or second-generation immigrants with familial ties to Russia, Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Scandinavia, Holland, and Great Britain.²²⁰ Though some in the EC of the CPGB were college-educated or had white collar jobs, most came from working-class families, though not as many as the 93% of members who identified as working class in an internal 1927 survey.²²¹ Many CC members also had experience in white-collar jobs, as trade union organizers, journalists, and educators. Just like the CPGB, this was not reflective of the rank and file, 51% of whom identified as working class.²²²

²¹⁸ McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of American Communism,” 28-29.

²¹⁹ John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, “The Leadership of British Communism, 1923-1928: Pages from a Prosopographical Project,” *Labor History* (2021): 6.

²²⁰ McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of American Communism,” 3-4.

²²¹ McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of British Communism,” 7-8.

²²² McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of American Communism,” 4 and 6.

During this period, the CPGB EC was “overwhelmingly white and male,” as was the W(C)P CC. Women accounted for around 15% of CPGB membership in the mid-1920s, that level rising to as high as 26% in 1945, yet only two, Helen Crawford and Beth Turner (Women’s Organizer), made it to the top of the party hierarchy.²²³ In his analysis of women in the CPGB, Kevin Morgan argued, “Crudely speaking, the greater the authority of a post or committee, the less likely one was to find a woman filling it; and the more we find women holding a particular position, the lower we must assume the priority attached to it.”²²⁴ This is perhaps why working for the Comintern apparatus—as secretaries, couriers, etc.—held such appeal for women like Peggy Dennis, Rose Cohen, Eileen Palmer, Frieda Devine, and Olive Budden.²²⁵ Spotty records make it difficult to assess the number of women in the W(C)P and CPUSA, but McIlroy and Campbell found 150 “housewives” in the New York district in 1926 and speculates that women accounted for a considerable percentage of the 569 garment workers as well.²²⁶ Regardless, three women served on the CC of the united W(C)P from 1919 to 1923, but none between 1924 and 1927. The March 1929 CC included three women, New York garment worker and founding member Lena Chernenko, and trade union organizers Anna David and Ellen Dawson, the latter leaving with the Lovestone faction after his expulsion.²²⁷

²²³ McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of British Communism,” 6; and Thorpe, “The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain,” 784-785.

²²⁴ Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 155 and 160-161.

²²⁵ Dennis, *Autobiography*; and Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 164.

²²⁶ McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of American Communism,” 27.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 28 and 32-33.

No Black Communist or other person of color served on the 1923-1927 CCs, and there were not many African Americans in the Party in 1927.²²⁸ Four new members to the March 1929 CC of the W(C)P were Black, African Black Brotherhood activists Cyril Briggs, Otto Hall, John Henry, and Otto Huiswoud, reflecting the Comintern's interest in the struggle for Black liberation in the United States. James W. Ford joined them in the October 1929 restructured CC.²²⁹ The only two people of color on the EC during the 1920s were Marxist theorist Rajani Palme Dutt and Communist MP Shapurji Saklatvala, representing 5% of the leadership. Though there is no evidence on racial and ethnic origins of CPGB membership, McIlroy and Campbell suggest this percentage went well beyond that of the rank-and-file.²³⁰

Anti-Communism

As we shall see, a study of Communist bodies by necessity must include analysis of confrontations with anti-Communist forces, including vigilante groups and federal law enforcement whose numbers and organization increased significantly alongside the supposed Communist threat. In fact, much of what follows is based on Secret Service and Federal Bureau of Investigation files. Preparation for harassment and surveillance of Communists began well before 1919, however. When he took over as head of the domestic department of the Secret Service Bureau (SSB) in 1909 (later MI5 and then the Security Service), Sir Vernon Kell implemented two

²²⁸ McIlroy and Campbell, "Leadership of American Communism," 8.

²²⁹ Ibid., 30.

²³⁰ McIlroy and Campbell, "Leadership of British Communism," 6 and 20.

counterespionage weapons—the Precautionary Index and the Home Office Warrant (HOW). A HOW granted the British Secret Services the right to open and censor mail and, later, to wiretap telephones and place microphones in residences and offices.²³¹ The Federal Bureau of Investigation had somewhat less auspicious beginnings. When the House of Representatives denied President Theodore Roosevelt’s request for an investigative service within the Department of Justice (DOJ), his Attorney General Charles J. Bonaparte secretly created one anyway, the Bureau of Investigation (BOI, and later the FBI).²³² Both the SSB and BOI monitored suspected enemies of the state, including radicals of all stripes and German nationals suspected of aiding and abetting the enemy during World War I.

That surveillance would take on new forms after the end of the war. Shortly before the Bolshevik Party sent out invitations to the First World Congress of the Communist International, US President Woodrow Wilson appointed A. Mitchell Palmer Attorney General, and the latter placed J. Edgar Hoover in charge the BOI’s Radical Division.²³³ When Congress passed the Espionage Act that same year, the Radical Division launched its first national surveillance program, and Hoover began collecting his own list of subversives. Hoover also sent agents to infiltrate the Socialist Party and Communist Labor Party and began planning the raids that commenced on the second anniversary of the Russian Revolution and continued into

²³¹ Kevin Quinlan, *The Secret War Between the Wars: MI5 in the 1920s and 1930s* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014), 2.

²³² Weiner, *Enemies*, 9-12.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 18-22.

the new year.²³⁴ In the trials that followed, courts issued deportation orders for 591 and convicted 178 under espionage and sedition laws, including Charles E. Ruthenberg and other leaders of the American Communist movement.²³⁵ New York Communists went underground following the first of these mass arrests and prosecutions, and the rest followed after the 2 January 1920 coordinated attack and subsequent deportations of several hundred foreign nationals.²³⁶

The British Official Secrets Act of 1911 (OSA) prohibited taking pictures, making sketches, or making blueprints of “sensitive government premises and installations.” It also gave authorities the power to search anyone on suspicion alone and “shifted the burden of proof to the accused.” Winston Churchill promoted this legislation and approved of the unofficial secret Registry of Aliens made by MI5 with police assistance. This list, much like J. Edgar Hoover’s Security Index, included those deemed worthy of arrest, surveillance, and/or deportation in the event of war. This law was overridden by the more “draconian” Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) in 1914, which included provisions for censoring personal correspondence and the press and detaining anyone suspected of communicating with the enemy.²³⁷

The SSB ramped up their surveillance efforts shortly after the November Revolution, issuing HOWs for pro-Bolshevik socialists like Albert Inkpin, who became first General Secretary of the CPGB upon its founding in 1920. The British

²³⁴ Weiner, *Enemies*, 22-24 and 30.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 45.

²³⁶ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, xxxi; and Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, 197 and 203-204. Frieda Brewster said her father railed against this decision until Charles Ruthenberg’s sentencing and closure of the national office of the CPA, whereupon their farmhouse became the secret headquarters of the Pittsburgh Croatian language federation. Brewster, “A View of the Early Left,” 362-363.

²³⁷ Quinlan, *The Secret War*, 2-4.

government also established the Government Code and Cipher School (GC&CS) in 1919 under the control of the Secret Intelligence Service (previously named and sometimes still called MI6).²³⁸ This signals intelligence service monitored encrypted radio traffic out of Moscow and, after breaking the code in the early 1930s, discovered the existence of secret Comintern radio stations in many European cities, as well as Shanghai, London, and the United States.²³⁹ The MASK operation, as it was called, proved that there was an overt and covert side to the CPGB, that the CPGB and *Daily Worker* were being financed by Moscow, and that the Comintern had in its employ CPGB operatives engaged in clandestine activities.²⁴⁰ Before this intelligence victory, however, Scotland Yard had to contend with the threat of a General Strike by British trades unions that they believed might be controlled by the CPGB. To eliminate this possibility, in 1925, they raided the offices of the National Minority Movement, Young Communist League, and *Workers' Weekly* and arrested twelve CPGB leaders, including Albert Inkpin, Harry Pollitt, William Gallacher, Wal Hannington, William Rust, and Robin Page-Arnot. All were convicted of violating the Incitement to Mutiny Act of 1797.²⁴¹

Congress launched its first formal investigation of CPUSA in 1930 with the House Committee to Investigate Communist Activities. Though the Committee balked at witness J. Edgar Hoover's recommendation that Congress outlaw "revolutionary words," they continued investigating and Hoover kept spying on

²³⁸ West, *MASK*, 1-3.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4-7.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 5 and 39.

²⁴¹ West, *MASK*, 9; and Quinlan, *The Secret War*, 40-41.

suspected subversives.²⁴² In 1938, the House of Representatives established a Special Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), making a bold claim about Communist infiltration of American life and launching investigations of military personnel, civil servants, and private citizens that would last until the early 1960s.²⁴³

After codebreakers working on a project codenamed VENONA discovered evidence of Soviet espionage in the United States, President Truman instituted the Federal Employee Loyalty Program, which required civil servants to denounce Communism, swear allegiance to the United States, and name anyone they thought might be connected to the CPUSA and/or Soviet government. Truman also signed the National Security Act of 1947. This, among other things, created a National Security Council to coordinate military intelligence, advise the president on security matters, and establish the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to “prosecute the Cold War.”²⁴⁴ The next year, CPUSA leaders, including General Secretary Eugene Dennis, were charged with violating the Alien Registration (Smith) Act of 1940, a law that made it illegal to advocate for the violent overthrow of the government.²⁴⁵ In 1950, Congress passed the Internal Security (McCarran) Act, making registration of Communist Party members the law.²⁴⁶ The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Smith Act in 1951, and several CP leaders under indictment jumped bail and went into hiding. Arrests and convictions of nearly one hundred others soon followed, including Trinidadian Claudia Jones and Louise Todd’s second

²⁴² Weiner, *Enemies*, 65-66.

²⁴³ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, xxxii.

²⁴⁴ Weiner, *Enemies*, 150-153.

²⁴⁵ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, xxxii; and Weiner, *Enemies*, 156.

²⁴⁶ Weiner, *Enemies*, 171-173.

husband, Walter “Rudy” Lambert.²⁴⁷ The Communist Party, the remnants of it at least, had to submit to registration or be subject to arrest. Once again, the CPUSA became an underground organization.

Affiliated Organizations

The Unemployed Movement

Persistent unemployment during the interwar period frustrated and angered the working class, and many Communists in this dissertation participated in the creation of and played leading roles in the movement that arose to focus that anger toward the British and American governments. The W(C)P convened its first unemployment conference in March 1921 while still an underground organization, with delegates from a number of labor and political organizations electing Communist Israel Amter to lead the Unemployed Council of Greater New York (UCGNY).²⁴⁸ A 15 April 1921 meeting of representatives from fifty British towns led to the establishment the National Unemployed Workers’ Committee Movement (NUWCM, renamed the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement or NUWM in 1929) with demands unique for British circumstances but still similar to its US counterpart in wanting to secure financial relief for unemployed workers.²⁴⁹ The establishment of the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) in 1929, along with the stock market crash in late October gave the W(C)P the impetus to increase its efforts to organize the unemployed. TUUL-sponsored demonstrations in major cities in

²⁴⁷ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, xxxii; and Weiner, *Enemies*, 154-155.

²⁴⁸ Daniel J. Leab, “‘United We Eat’: The Creation and Organization of the Unemployed Councils in 1930,” *Labor History* 8, no. 3 (1967): 300.

²⁴⁹ Perry, *Bread and Work*, 104 and 106.

February 1930 brought much-needed media attention to the problem in the US, as did the coordinated marches on the International Day of Struggle against Unemployment on 6 March of that same year.²⁵⁰ After the success of these demonstrations, the TUUL made Pat Devine interim National Secretary of independent Unemployed Councils (UC) and called for a national convention, held on 4-5 July 1930 in Chicago.²⁵¹

While most famous for organizing national hunger marches—three by the UC and six by the NUWCM/NUWM—more impressive were the activities of local affiliates who organized almost daily protests outside relief and employment agencies, coordinated rent strikes, and engaged in standoffs with landlords attempting to evict renters. Sympathetic electrical and gas workers restored service when utility companies shut them off, and the UC and NUWM also represented unemployed workers in official capacities, fighting reductions in relief benefits for those who sought their assistance.²⁵² While it is impossible to assess the number of people who demonstrated at relief agencies, there were numerous reports of large crowds demanding increases in relief money, restoration of people taken off relief rolls, and refusing to submit to relief agent home inspections.²⁵³

²⁵⁰ Leab, “United We Eat,” 301-302; Rodney D. Green and Michael S. Isaacson, “Communists and the Fight for Jobs and Revolution,” *Review of Black Political Economy* 39, no. 1 (March 2012): 163; and Frances Fox Pivens and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 50.

²⁵¹ Green and Isaacson, “Communists and the Fight for Jobs,” 163; Leab, “United We Eat,” 308-309; and Pivens and Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements*, 74.

²⁵² Perry, *Bread and Work*, 105; and Pivens and Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements*, 53-55.

²⁵³ Pivens and Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements*, 56-59.

These protests often resulted in violent confrontations with police and arrests for NUWM and UC leaders.²⁵⁴ Perhaps the most famous arrest of a UC activist came in Atlanta in 1932, when Angelo Herndon organized a successful demonstration that brought about the return of 23,000 people to that city's relief rolls. Convicted of inciting an insurrection and sentenced to twenty years' hard labor, this Black Communist might have died at the hands of white supremacist vigilantes, but the Supreme Court overturned his conviction in 1937.²⁵⁵ On at least two occasions, protests took a deadly turn, as police fired on African American demonstrators outside a relief agency in Chicago in July 1930, killing Abe Grey, John O'Neill, and Frank Armstrong, and in Belfast in 1932, where constabularies shot and killed two men.²⁵⁶

Trade Unionism

Many Communists in this dissertation participated in some form of trade union activism, though it differed according to the current party line and can be broadly categorized as either one of unity with existing unions or separate and antagonistic toward those same unions. It began in July 1921, when delegates met in Moscow at the first Congress of the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU or Profintern), an ostensibly independent organization of trade unions that immediately

²⁵⁴ Leab, "United We Eat," 310; and Perry, *Bread and Work*, 120. W(C)P leaders Robert Minor, William Z. Foster, and Israel Amter missed the UC founding convention because of convictions related to the 6 March demonstration in New York, and NUWM leaders Harry McShane and Wal Hannington served multiple stints in prison for their activism, the latter on at least five different occasions in a ten-year span.

²⁵⁵ Pivens and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, 59-60.

²⁵⁶ Perry, *Bread and Work*, 107-109 and 149-150.

became affiliated with the Comintern.²⁵⁷ General Secretary Alexander Lozovsky advocated for work within the reformist trade unions in the United States and Great Britain, a “united front from below” strategy wherein radicals established left-wing factions and took over the leadership of those unions.²⁵⁸ The first congress coincided with the Comintern Third World Congress, where delegates unanimously endorsed this strategy, and because the RILU had voted to align themselves with the Comintern before voting on questions of tactics, the matter had been decided for them.²⁵⁹ In the United States during this period, William Z. Foster’s Trade Union Education League (TUEL) served as the umbrella organization for left-wing factions in AFL unions, while those in the UK, beginning in 1924, affiliated with the National Minority Movement (NMM) under the leadership of future CPGB Secretary Harry Pollitt and Shop Steward Movement veteran Tom Mann.²⁶⁰

At the Fourth RILU and Sixth Comintern Congresses in 1928 delegates resolved to move away from the “united front from below,” break with reformist trade unions, and establish separate, revolutionary ones.²⁶¹ Thus began the Third Period and the policy of dual unionism. To some extent, this had already happened in the United States, as the AFL had been expelling anyone associated with the W(C)P and/or the TUEL, and radical trade unionists responded by creating separate unions

²⁵⁷ Reiner Tosstorff, *The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), 1920-1937*, trans. Ben Fowkes (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 7 and 348-351.

²⁵⁸ Tosstorff, *RILU*, 374; and Robert W. Cherny, “The Communist Party in California, 1935-1940: From the Political Margins to the Mainstream and Back,” *American Communist History* 9, no. 1 (2010): 4.

²⁵⁹ Tosstorff, *RILU*, 405-406.

²⁶⁰ Ralph Darlington, *The Political Trajectory of J.T. Murphy* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998), 110; and Quinlan, *The Secret War*, 38.

²⁶¹ Tosstorff, *RILU*, 756-757.

for miners and textile, garment, and auto workers.²⁶² When the TUEL reorganized as the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) in 1929, it followed the TUEL's program generally—a united front movement of Communists and progressives—but according to leader William Z. Foster, the TUUL emphasized industrial over craft unionism.²⁶³ Perhaps the most effective organizing in the US during the “class against class” period came in the agricultural sector, with the short-lived Sharecroppers Union and Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union.²⁶⁴

The situation in Britain was more complicated, as this left turn brought up questions about whether the CPGB should call for trade unions to disaffiliate with the Labour Party. At the Tenth Congress of the CPGB in January 1929, speakers denounced the new line and said that creating dual unions would isolate radical workers. Yet, a considerable faction approved of the shift, including NMM activist J.T. Murphy, who argued that it was no longer acceptable to work with the capitalist Labour Party and Trades Union Councils (TUC). Scottish miners succeeded in creating a red union, but an attempt at a breakaway radical clothing workers' union failed miserably, as did endeavors to organize the unorganized during labor disputes in the textile region in 1929 and 1930. At the behest of Harry Pollitt, the Comintern agreed to modify its approach in Britain, allowing for the continuation of work within

²⁶² Edward P. Johanningsmeier, “The Trade Union Unity League: American Communists and the Transition to Industrial Unionism: 1928-1934,” *Labor History* vol. 42, no. 2 (2001): 159 (n1).

²⁶³ Foster, *History*, Chapter 18.

²⁶⁴ See Kelley, *Hammer and Hoe*; Olmsted, *Right Out of California*; and Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*.

existing unions in the hope of building a revolutionary opposition to the bourgeois leadership.²⁶⁵

RILU and the Comintern reversed course again in 1935, adopting a “united front from above” policy with regards to political parties and trade unions. The Popular Front allowed Communist Parties to dissolve red unions and attempt to make connections in established organizations. Despite directives to work against AFL unions, Robert Cherny and others have shown that in certain locations, CPUSA branches and districts had been practicing Popular Front strategies for some time, making connections in meatpacking plants, collieries, automobile factories, and on the waterfront. When unions representing these workers left the AFL and joined the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) around 1938, included in the ranks were seasoned Communist operatives well positioned to assume leadership roles. Around the same time, the CAWIU reorganized as the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) and affiliated with the CIO.²⁶⁶

Spanish Civil War and the International Brigade

Many sources used in Chapter Two are letters sent home by young soldiers or veterans of the International Brigades, variously organized volunteer units that fought with Republican forces between 1936 and 1938 in the Spanish Civil War. Even before the outbreak of war on the Peninsula, Soviet leaders worried about the growing number of fascist governments in bordering states, and at the Seventh Congress,

²⁶⁵ Darlington, *J.T. Murphy*, 196-200.

²⁶⁶ See Cherny, “Prelude to the Popular Front” and “The Communist Party in California, 1935-1940;” Dorothy Healey and Maurice Isserman, *California Red: A Life in the American Communist Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); Olmsted, *Right Out of California*; Ruiz, *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives*; Stepan-Norris and Zeitlin, *Left Out*; and Storch, *Red Chicago*.

Comintern head Georgi Dimitrov called for all Communist Parties to enlist in the struggle against this threat. The first true test of CP anti-fascism came the next year with Francisco Franco's coup against the democratically elected Spanish government and the outbreak of civil war. Spain, anti-fascism, and the Popular Front became central to Comintern policies and tactics, and the CI began a recruitment drive for what became the International Brigades.²⁶⁷ The Soviet Union had initially decided on a policy of non-intervention, signing an agreement to that effect with twenty-six other nations, including Germany and Italy. When the latter two began giving aid to Franco, Stalin called on revolutionaries around the world to take up arms in support of the Republican Army.²⁶⁸

Legislation preventing young Americans and Britons from enlisting in what became the Brigades makes it difficult to assess accurately the number of volunteers, but most historians agree that between 1936 and 1938 some 35,000 people from 53 countries fought with the Republican forces. More than 2300 Britons volunteered, including George Orwell, John Cornford, and Winston Churchill's nephew Esmond Romilly. Most hailed from CPGB and YCL branches in urban areas such as London, Manchester, Glasgow, or Dublin, but a good number came from British colonies or dominions.²⁶⁹ By early 1937, they enlisted in violation of the British Foreign Enlistment Act and Non-Intervention Agreement. Volunteers from the United States numbered around 2800, and, like their British counterparts, they did so in violation of

²⁶⁷ Klehr et al, *Secret World*, xxxi-xxxii; and Pons, *The Global Revolution*, 80.

²⁶⁸ Richard Baxell, *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War: The British Battalion in the International Brigades, 1936-1939* (London: Routledge, 2004), 3-4.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 8-19.

US neutrality laws.²⁷⁰ These laws may have discouraged volunteerism, but no International Brigade veteran was ever prosecuted for violating them. IB veterans would, however, be treated like criminals when they returned home and especially when they enlisted during World War II.²⁷¹

International Red Aid and International Labor Defense

At some point in their lives, every person featured in this study had some connection with International Red Aid (MOPR) and the International Labor Defense (ILD), as an employee, as a contributor to a fundraising campaign, or as a beneficiary of their services. Established by the Comintern at its Fourth Congress in 1922, MOPR initially operated as an independent relief organization that supplied material and moral comfort to political prisoners and their families. Soon, however, the organization's role expanded to include agitation and propaganda to obtain widespread support for the incarcerated and, by extension, Communism. MOPR supplied material aid, organized demonstrations, and created propaganda in support of many political prisoners, including the Scottsboro Nine, Tom Mooney, and the thirty-one Meerut Conspiracy defendants. They also ran a propaganda recruitment campaign for the International Brigades and established a library and canteens for soldiers on leave from the front.²⁷²

Many of those who benefitted from MOPR support attained legal assistance from the International Labor Defense, a united front organization created by the

²⁷⁰ Peter N. Carroll, Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, eds., *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), ix.

²⁷¹ Baxell, *British Volunteers*, 5; and R. Dan Richardson, *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014), 40.

²⁷² Ryle, "International Red Aid;" Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*; and West, *MASK*, 36.

W(C)P in 1925 to help those arrested for labor agitation. The ILD provided bail money and attorneys for working-class prisoners regardless of political affiliation, beginning with Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, anarchist labor activists charged with robbery and murder in 1920. ILD lawyers participated in some of the most famous cases involving labor activists and other members of the working class, including Tom Mooney, the Scottsboro Nine, and Angelo Herndon, as well as Caroline Decker, Anita Whitney, and others indicted for violating California's criminal syndicalism laws. The international Communist press maintained consistent coverage of these cases, garnering meaningful support and celebrity for the ILD, the defendants, and their families, but as will be seen, this legal aid group and its British counterpart defended countless others in the fight for social justice.²⁷³

²⁷³ See Foster, *History*, Chapter 14; Olmsted, *Right Out of California*; Pennybacker, *From Scottsboro to Munich*; Rebecca Roiphe, "Lawyering at the Extremes: The Representation of Tom Mooney, 1916-1939," *Fordham Law Review* 77, no. 4 (2009): 1731-1762; and Rebecca Hill, *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

Chapter Two

Disciplined Bodies

Introduction

On a sweltering June 1943 day in Tunisia, Ralph Katainen sat down to sketch his friend and fellow soldier Herb Lerner.²⁷⁴ Both men were assigned to a mobile army surgical hospital (MASH) attached to Allied Forces participating in the liberation of North Africa, Lerner as an optician and Katainen as part of the hospital's administrative staff. Katainen chose a familiar setting for the drawing—Herb hunched over a typewriter that sat perched atop a wooden box, cigarette dangling from his lips as his fingers pecked at the keys—familiar because, in addition to his duties, Lerner served as editor and principal writer for the camp's daily newsletter. As Lerner explained it to his wife Ruth, this involved listening to radio news broadcasts from London and transcribing them for the servicemen and women unable to listen. While he may have been transcribing as



Figure 2: Ralph Katainen, pencil sketch of Herb Lerner, 18 June 1943. Permission not yet granted.

²⁷⁴ Herb Lerner was an American Jewish Communist and trade union activist with the International Union of Mine, Mill, and Smelter Workers.

Katainen sketched, on this day Herb also composed two letters to Ruth recounting his choice to quit gambling, his thoughts on an impending divorce between friends, and a request for moccasins and a “rubberized air mattress.” More importantly, Lerner lamented the fact that, for some time, he had not received a copy of the news magazine *PM*, another important, and decidedly more liberal, source of information for those daily newsletters.²⁷⁵ This sketch and the letters written that day reveal Lerner’s dedication to a fundamental principle of Communism—that members demonstrate their commitment to the struggle through engagement in self-education, self-criticism, and the education of others. The drawing of Lerner could have been a drawing of any one of countless radicals writing letters to news editors, enlisting others to join in the struggle, or composing articles and press releases about Communist policies or activities. This sketch also provides an especially apt illustration of the disciplined Communist body in that it shows continuing political activism while Lerner served in the armed services during World War II and despite his separation from the Party’s center.

Michel Foucault argued that since the classical age, the body had become an “object and target of power,” an entity “manipulated, shaped, [and] trained” in the service of that power.²⁷⁶ “Disciplines”—the term used by Foucault to describe the methods used by people and institutions—created “docile” bodies, “submissive”

²⁷⁵ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 18 June 1943; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 18 June 1943, TAM.194, box 1, folder 2; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 8 January 1944, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, Herb Lerner World War II Letters to Ruth Lerner (hereafter cited as HL MS), Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University, New York (hereafter cited as WLA). Funded by Marshall Field and published by Ralph Ingersoll between 1940 and 1948, *PM* was a liberal daily afternoon newspaper whose most famous contributor was Theodor Geisel.

²⁷⁶ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 136.

bodies, and bodies “useful” in the maintenance of hierarchical power structures like the military or the Catholic Church.²⁷⁷ Similarly, critiques of disciplinary regimes, and of Communist discipline specifically, paint a conspicuously negative picture of institutional education and introspection, sometimes dismissing these philosophies and practices as efforts to control bodies and/or indoctrinate minds. Former Communist Aileen Kraditor, for example, acknowledged the Party’s commitment to education, yet dismissed it as mere indoctrination. Of her time in the Party during the Cold War, Kraditor said, “[Class] attendance was as much a duty as any assignment.”²⁷⁸

There is certainly some truth to Foucault and Kraditor’s thoughts on disciplinary regimes, particularly in the case of the Communist Party. As Communist operative J. Peters observed, the Party maintained discipline within its ranks “because only those who [agreed] with the program of the Communist Party and the [Communist International could] become members.” Once accepted into the fold, new members had to agree to accept and observe policy decisions made by those above them regardless of their personal feelings. This requirement, called “democratic centralism” by the Communist International, “[guaranteed]...complete inner unity of outlook” and gave members a disciplinary framework within which they could operate independently.²⁷⁹ In his history of the CPUSA, Chairman William

²⁷⁷ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 137.

²⁷⁸ Aileen S. Kraditor, *Jimmy Higgins: The Mental World of the American Rand-and-File Communist, 1930-1958* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 106.

²⁷⁹ Peters, “A Manual on Organization;” Fridrikh I. Firsov, Harvey Klehr, and John Earl Haynes, *Secret Cables of the Comintern, 1933-1943*, trans. by Lynn Visson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 188; and Harvey Klehr, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson, *The Soviet World of*

Z. Foster offered a succinct connection between discipline, democratic centralism, and self-criticism and their importance to the successful functioning of the Party:

Under a correct Leninist system of democratic centralism, there must be within the Party full political discussion, penetrating self-criticism, sound discipline, a vigorous fight against both right and “left” deviations, and an energetic application of Party decisions. These are the conditions for a strong Party and correct policies.²⁸⁰

Strict adherence to Party directives, coupled with educational and activist requirements, surely appeared rigorous and unyielding to outsiders, but one cannot question Communist dedication to helping workers understand their place within the exploitative capitalist system. And key to that understanding, as Paul Mishler argued, was the development of an informed radical community who could apply a “Marxist analysis of politics and economics” to their immediate and localized socio-economic conditions.²⁸¹ To that end, Communists in the United States and Great Britain not only required members to attend classes, study groups, forums, and lectures, but also encouraged them to read Communist and mainstream literature, write thoughtful and informed letters to editors and friends, participate in critical discussions about global politics, and critique not just capitalists and socialists, but also themselves and others within the movement. J. Peters called the latter “Bolshevik criticism” and described

American Communism (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), xxix. Born Sándor Goldberger, Hungarian immigrant J. Peters was named by Whittaker Chambers and others as head of the CPUSA underground organization in the 1930s. According to Peters, the CP operated under a majority rule system with a hierarchical structure of committees and organizations that practiced democratic centralism. In this system, members could participate in debates about current or potential policies and actions until such time as the committee came to a decision about the best course of action. All decisions made by higher-level committees were “binding upon the lower bodies” and had to be “unreservedly carried out even if a minority of the Party membership or a minority of the local Party organizations [was] in disagreement with it.”

²⁸⁰ William Z. Foster, *History*, Chapter 19.

²⁸¹ Mishler, *Raising Reds*, 2.

it as deeply introspective, a process where CP members publicly analyzed their own flaws and “incorrect” thoughts and/or actions and made declarations about how they intended to correct these missteps. Moreover, they freely criticized comrades, including those in leadership positions, and offered suggestions for improvement.²⁸²

Democratic centralism and Bolshevik criticism marked a departure from the relationship between intellectual pursuits and working-class consciousness of previous and competing workers’ organizations. It is beyond the scope of this study to delve into the intricacies of adult education movements among all labor organizations in the United States and Great Britain in the decades preceding the foundation of the CPUSA and CPGB. Suffice it to say that the Knights of Labor, American Federation of Labor, and Independent Labour, Labour, and Socialist Parties were, like Communists, committed to raising the consciousness of workers in both countries but disagreed on the best methods of achieving it.²⁸³ When the CPGB and CPUSA began establishing workers schools in the 1920s, they did so with the intention of providing workers educational opportunities independent of bourgeois influence, so much so that they usually allowed the bourgeois intelligentsia to serve on labor school boards while denying them any real power over curricula.²⁸⁴ Much like the Socialist and Labour Parties, the CP regarded education as central to the

²⁸² Peters, “A Manual on Organization.”

²⁸³ Craig Phelan, *Grand Master Workman: Terence Powderly and the Knights of Labor* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), 130 and 156.

²⁸⁴ “The Workers School: Announcement of Courses, 1929-1930,” Samuel A. Darcy Papers (hereafter cited as SAD MS), box 2, folder 19, TAM.124, WLA; “Proceeding of the Working Class Education Conference,” 19 April 1930, SAD MS, box 2, folder 20, TAM.124, WLA; and Tom Steele and Richard Taylor, “Marxism and Adult Education in Britain,” *Policy Futures in Education* vol. 2, nos. 3 & 4 (2004): 578-592.

raising of working-class consciousness, but Communists diverged from other Left-leaning organizations in making enrollment in certain classes a requirement of membership. More importantly, the Comintern, CPUSA, and CPGB expected members to turn knowledge into action, to use Marxism as a weapon on the picket line, at the Labour Exchange, and on the street corners of Great Britain and the United States.²⁸⁵

This chapter is divided into two sections, the first dealing with education and teaching, and the second with Communists' participation in criticism of themselves, each other, and the Party apparatus and program. In each of these sections I begin with an examination of the discourse of the disciplined Communist body using evidence drawn from the abundance of literature produced by the CPUSA and CPGB. I then move on to the material disciplined Communist body and focus on the ways that Communists engaged in self-study and self-criticism, especially soldiers like James Jackson, Herb Lerner, Ralph Cantor, and George Brown who went to great lengths to continue these practices while stationed overseas during the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Finally, I look at the social disciplined body and the outward promotion of Communist discipline through education efforts and criticism of fellow travelers, Communist Party officials, affiliated organizations, and CP policies and programs.

²⁸⁵ Peters, "A Manual on Organization;" "Dues Does It! A Manuel for Branch Dues Secretaries," Communist Party of the United States Manuscript Collection (hereafter cited as CPUSA MS), TAM.132, box 42, folder 33, WLA; and "The A.B.C. of Agit-Prop Work," Young Communist League New York District Agit-Prop Department, June 1935, CPUSA MS, TAM.132, box 42, folder 35, WLA.

How do education and Bolshevik criticism relate to the history of Communist bodies? In his 1931 explanation of Leninism, Stalin wrote that “iron discipline” required a “unity of will,” but it also required the “wholehearted and unconditional unity of action on the part of members.”²⁸⁶ Both self-study and self-criticism required a measure of physical exertion, the elements of which feature in the analysis that follows, but the primary focus of this chapter will be the intellectual discipline promoted and practiced by Communists as training for the physical activities discussed in later chapters.

Education and the Disciplined Communist Body

They walked neither fast nor slow,
They moved in the shadowed night
Like giants in a trembling wind
On the backs of the men were books,
In the hearts of the men was fire,
On the tongues of the men
Were live words of revolution.
--Jim Waters²⁸⁷

This excerpt from a poem by Jim Waters offers a glimpse into the disciplined Communist body, one dedicated to education and to the dissemination of Party literature through word and deed. It suggests that literature and literacy provided the backbone of Communist discipline, the heart radical passion, and the tongue—properly educated—revolutionary action. It is an image of strength reminiscent of Daniel Chester French’s sculpture *Labor*, which features a bronze statue of a

²⁸⁶ Joseph Stalin on “Leninism,” quoted in “The Party of Lenin,” 1931, Communist Party of Great Britain Papers (hereafter cited as CPGB MS), CP/LOC/SCOT/01/13, Labour History Archive and Study Centre, People’s History Museum, Manchester, UK (hereafter cited as LHASC).

²⁸⁷ Jim Waters, “The Red Messenger,” *The Young Worker*, 27 March 1934.

“student-worker,” who “turned his site of work...into a stage for self-education, not manly toil.” Though the sculpture served as a “surrogate for [Andrew] Carnegie and every other businessman who had escaped manual work” and promoted the idea of “transcending the working-class stereotype,” self-education had an entirely different meaning for Communists.²⁸⁸ They saw education not as a means of social mobility, but the path toward working-class consciousness and radicalization.

Communists, unlike Carnegie and other industrialists, believed that an educated working class would come to understand the false promises held within the capitalist system, and, in the US, the bootstrap myth of upward mobility. Though scholars of the history of the body do not typically think of education and teaching as physical acts, Communists did, and therefore literature for the Young Communist League (YCL) and workers schools echoed Lenin’s words about working-class education including participation in all the struggles of the proletariat. And while it is difficult to determine whether the Party attracted those with a thirst for knowledge or if it developed that thirst through its emphasis on education, Communists in the US and UK took the directive seriously, committing their minds and bodies to the quest for knowledge about the world and their place in it.

²⁸⁸ Slavishak, *Bodies of Work*, 128-130.

Every League member must make time to study, systematically and regularly, the fundamental questions of Marxism-Leninism, to read especially such periodicals as the INTERNATIONAL OF YOUTH and the COMMUNIST, and to absorb all of the recent reports and decisions of our leading Party and League bodies, utilizing these in the day-to-day work.²⁸⁹

Like this quote from a YCL manual on agitation and propaganda (agitprop), almost all CP literature urged readers to engage in constant study, recommendations not limited to new or potential members, but to seasoned cadre as well. The national office of the YCL, for example, urged all branch secretaries to “to constantly increase your political knowledge and...learn how to work efficiently.” They also saw branch dues work as training for work within the Communist Party and advised secretaries to apply the YCL slogan adopted at the Ninth Convention—“Character Building and Education in the Spirit of Socialism”—to all their work. “One of the first steps in that direction is study, self-education, in order to equip ourselves for our work now, and for the future.”²⁹⁰ The Party’s commitment to education penetrated all aspects of organizing, so much so that the 1932 District 13 Convention (California) cited it as fundamental to increasing the Party’s membership and fostering a “better understanding of the need for the overthrow of the capitalist system and all its parasitic institutions as a final emancipation of the masses from exploitation.”²⁹¹ To that end, the CPGB and CPUSA not only founded workers schools, but also produced educational literature like the Colonial Information Bulletin that sought to link “the

²⁸⁹ “A.B.C. of Agit-Prop Work.”

²⁹⁰ “Dues Does It!”

²⁹¹ “Draft Resolution District 13 Convention July 1932,” *Western Worker*, 1 August 1932.

struggle of the colonial peoples with the struggle [in Great Britain]” and make their struggle a “living issue” for CPGB members.²⁹²

The CP and YCL expected members to engage in self-study, form study groups, and read as much Communist literature as they could get, even if they lived far from workers schools and libraries or could not afford to pay the modest tuitions. This is most clearly demonstrated in letters written by Communist operatives serving overseas during the Spanish Civil War and World War II, whose correspondence showed not only their greater political knowledge, but also their enduring interest in global politics and their determination to continue their educations despite their tenuous living and working conditions.²⁹³ While other soldiers may have kept up with news about the war and the home front, what set Communists apart from their fellow soldiers was the desire to expand their knowledge of the people and places affected by the war, to apply a Marxist analysis to all the information they received, and to question the news imparted by the military and other conventional sources. The International Brigade (IB) and International Red Aid (IRA) promoted this ideal

²⁹² *Colonial Information Bulletin* No. 1, 1937, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/INT/69/01, LHASC. The CP and its affiliated organizations produced dozens of monthly newsletters and thousands of pamphlets. Those focusing on global politics and anti-imperialism included the *Pan-Pacific Monthly*, “Democracy” in *Spain*, *5th Column in Mexico*, *8 Million Demand Freedom!*, *A Call to the Nation*, *being the Election Manifesto of the Indian National Congress*, the *A Day in the Life* series, *A Message from Mexico*, *Abyssinia*, *Bananas*, *Civil Liberty in the Colonial Empire*, *The British Empire Fascisti*, and *We Speak For Freedom*, Marx Memorial Library Pamphlet Collection, Marx Memorial Library, London, UK (hereafter cited as MML). See also *The Two Worlds; Communism is Our Ultimate Aim; The Communist Party*; and *Chief Stages in the History of the C.P.S.U.*, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/ED/1/1, LHASC; *Imperialism and the People; Marxism and War*; and *India*, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/ED/1/4, LHASC; and *The Revolutionary Woman Worker: Bulletin of the International women Workers Trade Union Committee of the R.I.L.U* and *International News*, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/IND/11/13, LHASC.

²⁹³ Carroll, et al., editors, *The Good Fight Continues*, 151-152.

during the Spanish Civil War, as George Fletcher acknowledged in his interview with the Brigade's newspaper, *Volunteer for Liberty*.

In his opinion, the formalities of discipline, far from complicating a soldier's life, make it easier. Even in an Imperial army he found that out, though discipline there is not used solely for the purpose of raising the soldier's level of efficiency. *Where he traces the main difference is in the importance that the Republican Army attaches to the development of intelligence in the private soldier, on the assumption that the more a man knows the better he fights.* An Imperialist army is compelled by its own conditions to discourage the rank and file from knowing too much about what is going on in case it occurred to them that they were being used in someone else's interest.²⁹⁴

International Brigade soldiers echoed these sentiments in their letters home, both during the Spanish Civil War and World War II. Mancunian Brigader Maurice Levine felt that he needed to be on the front lines in Spain because his "political understanding and conscienceness (sic) of the situation" made him more valuable to the unit's cohesiveness.²⁹⁵ Similarly, Irving Weissman complained about the lack of political education among soldiers in his World War II battalion, particularly regarding French colonialism in North Africa, telling fellow IB veteran Jack Bjoze, "Faith in the justice of one's cause evokes unpremeditated self-sacrifice and devotion.

²⁹⁴ M.T., "George Fletcher of the British Battalion," *Volunteer for Liberty* Vol. 2, no. 6, February 23, 1938, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PL/01/04, LHASC. Emphasis mine. Founded by the Communist International in 1922 when the Polish Communist Party requested assistance for "victims of bourgeois persecution," the International Red Aid ostensibly provided relief to Communists and "non-partisan revolutionaries" in the twenty years of its existence. The organization soon became an important propagandist for the Comintern and published pamphlets in support of Sacco and Vanzetti, the Scottsboro Boys, Tom Mooney, and Antonio Gramsci, among others. Ryle, "International Red Aid," 43-68.

²⁹⁵ Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 3 April 1937, Spanish Civil War and International Brigades Collection (hereafter cited as SCW MS), EVT/SPAIN/3/4/2, Working Class Movement Library, Salford, UK (hereafter cited as WCML).

Orientation on the part of the soldiers would increase their devotion a thousand times over. For you and me, these are old truisms.”²⁹⁶



Figure 3: International Brigade soldiers reading in the Socorro Rojo Internacional (International Red Aid) library. *Volunteer for Liberty*, 13 January 1938. Permission not yet granted.

Regardless of the war or whether they were stationed on the front lines or in support units, each of these soldiers showed a determination to continue their educations. And they did all of this in living spaces and with working conditions not exactly conducive to study. When one thinks of the ideal situation for intellectual pursuits, one imagines a library or personal study, a place of calm and quiet, with chairs, desks, and pleasant lighting. One does not think of students struggling to read by the dim light of a lantern in muddy or dusty pup tents. They, like many soldiers before them, composed letters and broadsheets in “trenches...a foot deep in water” and endured cramped muscles while huddled in “awkward [positions]” in “breaks between barrages,” yet radical soldiers also took the time to expand their knowledge of the world, exemplifying disciplined Communist intellectualism and internationalism.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ Irving Weissman to Jack Bjoze, 6 April 1943, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 158-161.

²⁹⁷ Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 3 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/2, WCML; Sam Wild to Mick Jenkins, 25 August 1938, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/6/3, WCML; and Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, and Eddie, 7 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/12, WCML.

This is not to say that the average soldier did not read; quite the contrary, they had ample opportunity to find reading materials through various programs funded by the military and non-governmental organizations. Even before the US entered World War II, the American Library Association (ALA) allocated \$60,000 for their Books for Europe campaign, with most of the books going to service libraries for British soldiers.²⁹⁸ After receiving a request from the National Central Library in London, the ALA also procured multiple subscriptions to magazines like *Atlantic Monthly*, *Life*, and *Popular Science* for the Sea War Library Service and British Sailor's Society.²⁹⁹ After the bombing of Pearl Harbor came the Council on Books in Wartime (CBW) in the United States, "a group of trade publishers united behind the slogan 'Books are weapons in the war of ideas!'"³⁰⁰ Over the course of its existence, the CBW printed and distributed nearly 124 million paperback Armed Service Editions of popular and "classic" literature.³⁰¹ According to the CBW's self-published history, the Office of War Information determined which titles to publish, and the Council endured accusations of distributing Communist propaganda by at least one Congressman. To combat this and other criticisms, the Council organized a "reading staff to check every word of all books selected and to note all references to

²⁹⁸ David A. Lincove, "Activists for Internationalism: ALA Responds to World War II and British Requests for Aid, 1939-1941," *Libraries and Culture* 26, vol. 3 (Summer 1991): 495.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Trysh Travis, "Books as Weapons and 'The Smart Man's Peace': The Work of the Council on Books in Wartime," in *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 60, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 356. An internal history was written immediately after the war. Robert O. Ballou, *A History of the Council on Books in Wartime* (New York: Country Life Press, 1946).

³⁰¹ Travis, "Books as Weapons," 386.

politics and racial or religious minorities—in short all matter likely to provoke controversy or scandal.” Marx and Engels, of course, did not make the cut.³⁰²

Soldiers in the Spanish Republican Army had no such governmental support and instead relied on campaigns by International Red Aid, CPGB, and CPUSA to stock the IRA’s library with books and copies of the *Daily Worker* and *New Masses*. As Weissman’s complaint suggests, radical soldiers who wanted reading material that reflected their own political views had to fend for themselves during World War II.³⁰³ James Jackson and Herb Lerner, among others, subscribed to newspapers and magazines with diverse political stances, asked their friends and family members for news clippings, and shared their thoughts on this material with their wives, who often read the same articles and books as their husbands.³⁰⁴

Communist soldiers seemed particularly concerned with keeping abreast of politics on the home front and lamented the fact that the scant news they received came from heavily censored sources like the military paper *Stars and Stripes*, “Army

³⁰² John Jamieson, *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.: A History: Together with the Complete List of 1324 Books Published for American Armed Forces Overseas* (New York: Editions for the Armed Services, Inc., 1948), 21.

³⁰³ Sam Wild to Mick Jenkins, 25 August 1938, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/6/3, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah and Issy, 2 March 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/2, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, 2 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/3, WCML; George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 17 February 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/1, WCML; George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 22 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/4, WCML; and George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 27 June 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/6, WCML.

³⁰⁴ Nicholas John “Nick” Demas to Harold Smith, 8 December 1944, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 200-201; James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 18 February 1945, James E. Jackson and Esther Cooper Jackson Papers (hereafter cited as JJEJ MS), TAM.347, box 6, folder 37, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 5 September 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

station broadcasts,” or news outlets like *The London Times* or *Daily Mail*.³⁰⁵ The *Daily Mail*’s coverage of the conflict in Spain, Ralph Cantor warned, should not be trusted, as the correspondents for the *Daily Worker* were “always on the job” and would provide the “correct report” even if some radical journalists got their information about “tales of heroism, leadership, etc. from any official behind the line.”³⁰⁶ James Jackson felt the need to “concentrate on...useful studies” while deployed in Southeast Asia during World War II and requested that his wife Esther send as many news clippings as would fit in with her letters. As an African American civil rights activist and member of the CPUSA, Jackson surely wanted to read Black and Communist perspectives on the war, news that would not have been included in the “cryptic daily broadcast” and “apolitical GI theater service paper.”³⁰⁷ Lerner complained about “living a practically news-less existence since [leaving] the States,” a situation he likened to “a state of mental suspended animation,” and “unfortunate” for soldiers who “should have constant news.”³⁰⁸ Like Jackson, he asked for clippings from newspapers to augment the information he got from *Stars and Stripes* and other news sources provided by the military, letting his wife Ruth know that

³⁰⁵ Nicholas John “Nick” Demas to Harold Smith, 8 December 1944 and Lawrence Cane to his wife, 15 November 1944, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 200-201 and 206-207; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 8 August 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

³⁰⁶ Ralph Cantor to Norah, 2 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/3, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah and Issy, 28 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/10, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, and Paul, 1 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/11, WCML; and Ralph Cantor diary, 8 or 9 June 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/23, WCML.

³⁰⁷ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 21 February 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 37, WLA and James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 16 December 1944, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 35, WLA.

³⁰⁸ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 2 September 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 9 March 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 2, WLA; and Mike Feller to Moe Fishman, 2 February 1942, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 51.

many soldiers appreciated his subscription to the liberal news magazine *PM*.³⁰⁹ The men in the International Brigade had no such worries about getting “news...totally soaked in propaganda,” but even they requested and received newsletters produced by unions, CP districts and branches, and Communist-affiliated organizations.³¹⁰

Radical soldiers continued their studies of the Marxist classics, attempting to apply Marxist theories (and Lenin’s interpretation of those theories) to a global political moment in which various ideologies were at the center of several massive and deadly struggles.³¹¹ Former Cambridge student John Cornford urged fellow International Brigade volunteers to bring books with them to Spain to relieve the occasional boredom between skirmishes and to provide the men with a political education, choosing for himself Shakespeare’s tragedies and Marx’s *Capital*.³¹²

During World War II, as Communists struggled to keep up with and justify the actions and policy shifts of the Soviet Union, Comintern, and local Communist Parties, soldiers and their wives looked to Marxist theorists for insight. According to Ruth Lerner, many comrades in New York and New Jersey revisited the “classics” in 1944, the year that CPUSA leader Earl Browder dissolved the party and reorganized it as the Communist Political Association (CPA).³¹³ In his response, Lerner

³⁰⁹ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 2 June 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 2, WLA.

³¹⁰ Ralph Cantor diary, 15 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/23, WCML; Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 20 January 1938, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/6, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah and Issy, 2 March 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/2, WCML; and George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 17 February 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/1, WCML.

³¹¹ V.I. Lenin, “What is to be done?” Burning Questions of Our Movement,” Marxist Internet Archive, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/preface.htm>, accessed July 24, 2020.

³¹² Bernard Knox, “John Cornford in Spain,” in *John Cornford: A Memoir*, Pat Sloan, ed., (Dunfermline: Borderline Press, 1938): 183.

³¹³ Foster, *History*, Chapter 30. According to William Z. Foster, in 1943 Browder “[accepted]...capitalism, class collaboration, the two-party system, and the elimination of the Negro

expressed little surprise, noting that members usually looked to theorists during “every period of sharp change. I recall that in September 1939, it was not possible to purchase a copy of [Lenin’s] *Imperialism*.” Here Lerner refers to the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-Aggression Pact signed between the Soviets and Nazis in August 1939 that resulted in the Party’s initial anti-war stance, a move that he found as perplexing as Browder’s application of American exceptionalism to Marxian politics.³¹⁴ “I’m frank to confess that I am floundering around in my mind, trying to catch hold of the key to understanding the present orientation,” he wrote.³¹⁵ During this especially tumultuous period, Jackson also looked to Marx and Engels for insight, telling Esther that he spent many hours “studying the basic classics on the dialectical method of reasoning” so that he might “[keep] orientated in spite of the dearth of detailed information about the doings abroad.”³¹⁶

Lerner at one point expressed amusement at Ruth’s intention to “buckle down to some basic theory” and confessed that he thought “less and less along the lines of basic theoretical reading...[and] no longer [had] the sharp hunger-pangs...for this material.”³¹⁷ Yet, in a letter written a few months later, he suggested that they delve deeper into Marxist theory together, saying, “I can’t think of anything I’d rather do

people’s struggle for national liberation,” thus “[seeing] no need for the Communist Party.” Foster seemed particularly incensed that Browder did not invoke Lenin in his speech about the Teheran Accord and called his Teheran Thesis a “crass revision of Marxism-Leninism.”

³¹⁴ See chapter 1.

³¹⁵ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 20 February 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

³¹⁶ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 21 February 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 37, WLA; and James Jackson to Esther, 19 September 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 44, WLA.

³¹⁷ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 3 February 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 1, WLA.

together with you than study Marxism...well, hardly anything.”³¹⁸ His recent reading of Marx and Engel’s *The Civil War in the United States* had renewed his belief in their “genius” and highlighted his own ignorance in “Marxist knowledge,” by which he meant Marxist interpretations of American history and political economies. He intended to fill this lacuna when he returned to the States.³¹⁹

Communist soldiers did not merely read about politics on the home front; they also contributed to political discourse, writing articles and letters to editors of mainstream and radical newspapers and magazines.³²⁰ Herb Lerner, for example, wrote one such letter to *Time* magazine decrying Japanese and Japanese-American internment in the United States and another to the *Daily Worker* criticizing Elizabeth Gurley Flynn’s characterization of the Allied forces as a “People’s Army.”³²¹ *Time* also received at least one letter complaining about their coverage of John Dollard’s 1943-44 “Fear in Battle” study and its conclusion that the results had nothing to do with the political opinions of the participants, all International Brigade veterans. “What in hell is wrong with our political views?” Irving Fajans asked. “I am damned proud of being one of the 3000 odd Americans who went to Spain to fight Hitler and Mussolini when ‘spit and fascism’ were horrible words to ‘nice’ people in this

³¹⁸ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 10 July 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 16 December 1944, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 35, WLA; and James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 23 May 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 40, WLA. At the end of a letter featuring his opinions about post-war gender relations, James Jackson suggested that Esther expand upon them and send the resulting article to either *Parents Magazine* or *Ladies Home Journal*. He also wrote at least one article for the “theater service paper” on US foreign policy.

³²¹ Herb Lerner to Editor, *Daily Worker*, 28 December 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 21 February 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

country.”³²² Finally, Salaria Kee wrote about her decision to enlist in the fight against fascism, telling readers that Black soldiers, doctors, and nurses went to Spain because they had been “prevented from going to Ethiopia” and thought that “Ethiopia’s only hope for recovery [lay] in Italy’s defeat...in Spain.”³²³

Kee’s essay illustrates the compulsion among many soldiers to get the “true” story out there once their time of service had ended, with Brigadier Ralph Cantor predicting that the Communist publishing house Martin Lawrence would be “overwhelmed very shortly” with proposals for these ostensibly “epic books.”³²⁴ Cantor’s diary shows that he may have intended to be one of those memoirists, but he died fighting in a battle outside Madrid in the summer of 1937. Jackson and other Black soldiers planned to write a collective memoir about their experiences during the war using letters written to their loved ones, and though it does not appear to have come to fruition, Jackson wrote letters to Esther with this in mind.³²⁵ He also hoped to get a “correspondent’s authorization” so that he could be paid for his observations

³²² Irving Fajans to Editor, *Time*, 21 November 1943, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 155-156; and Carroll, *The Good Fight Continues*, 43-44.

³²³ Salaria Kee, “A Negro Nurse in Republican Spain,” in *The Good Fight Continues*, 26-28, 269; and Salaria Kee O’Reilly interview, 1980, ALBA A 18-153, interviewed by John Gerassi for the John Gerassi Oral History Collection, ALBA.AUDIO.018, WLA. Salaria Kee O’Reilly was born in Georgia, trained at the Harlem Hospital Training School, and served with the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War and WWII with the Army Nurse Corps. She was the only African American nurse to enlist in the fight against fascism in Spain. The Negro Committee to Aid Spain published Kee’s essay as a pamphlet in 1938. In an interview with John Gerassi, O’Reilly denied that she and IB veteran Pat O’Reilly were Communists.

³²⁴ Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, and Paul, 1 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/11, WCML.

³²⁵ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 4 January 1944, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 30, WLA.

on the political situation in Southeast Asia and may have succeeded in attaining one from the NAACP magazine *The Crisis*, as a letter from Esther in 1945 suggests.³²⁶

Letter-writing campaigns and plans for memoirs did not encompass the entirety of their civic engagement, as these soldiers also remained active participants in politics and trade unionism.³²⁷ For example, Herb Lerner asked Ruth for any information about the 1944 presidential campaign so he could do some electioneering for Franklin Delano Roosevelt and later volunteered to make absentee ballot applications for the men in his unit, 207 in all from twenty-eight states.³²⁸ As Esther Jackson made preparations to attend the 1945 World Youth Conference in London, James offered advice on her speech, encouraging her to quote Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill so that she “[invoked] the authority of the three main architects of the dawning anti-fascist era.”³²⁹ Maurice Levine and many other Brigadiers exchanged correspondence with Mick Jenkins, a comrade who remained in Manchester during the Civil War and continued his work with the Young Communist League. In his letters, Levine applauded the YCL for making “big strides forward” and told Jenkins

³²⁶ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 10 December 1944, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 35, WLA; and Esther Jackson to James Jackson, 9 July 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 25, WLA.

³²⁷ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 17 May 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 17 June 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 22 June 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA.

³²⁸ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 21 February 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 5 June 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA.

³²⁹ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 29 September 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 44, WLA; James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 3 October 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 45, WLA; and Esther Jackson to Mrs. Coop, 5 November 1945, TAM.347, box 1, folder 18, WLA. Though nothing in their letters indicates that Esther also attended the Pan-African Congress held in Manchester that same year, Esther is listed by her maiden name—Esther V. Cooper—as the Executive Secretary of the Southern Negro Youth Congress and a signatory to a resolution calling for more “adequate representation of the coloured peoples of the world within the United Nations Organizations.” Hakim Adi and Merika Sherwood, *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited* (London: New Beacon Books, 1995), 57-59.

that he “[felt] quite keen to know and feel the influence and progress the Party has made in [his] absence.”³³⁰ Ralph Cantor told Jenkins that George Brown had passed around a copy of the YCL’s Manchester Conference resolutions and asked him to send updates on YCL activity, reminding his comrades not to forget that the Mancunian Brigaders were “still branch members” who wanted to take “an active part in their struggles at home.”³³¹ Trade unionists on the front lines also made sure to continue those affiliations, keeping their union cards up to date and sharing their opinions about contract negotiations and internal union politics.³³² For the men and women of the International Brigade, of course, this activism also included requests for their comrades back home to enlist support for the war from their unions and national governments.³³³

While maintaining ties with their unions and political and social organizations, Communist soldiers also educated themselves about the people and places they encountered while serving in the military, adhering to Lenin’s assertion that a successful socialist movement was grounded in internationalism. In order to

³³⁰ Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 25 September 1937, SCW SM, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/4, WCML; Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 1 March 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/5, WCML; Sam Wild to Comrades, no date, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/6/10, WCML; and Sam Wild to Dad, 17 May, no year, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/6/9, WCML.

³³¹ Ralph Cantor to Mick Jenkins, 2 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/4, WCML.

³³² Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 5 February 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/1, WCML; Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 1 March 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/5, WCML; George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 22 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/4, WCML; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 30 August 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 3 October 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 2 August 1943, HL SM, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

³³³ Lancashire men of the British Battalion of the International Brigade to Lancashire District Committee of the CPGB, no date, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/6/12, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, etc., 4 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/5, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, and Eddie, 7 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/12, WCML; George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 21 March 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/2, WCML; and George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 27 June 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/6, WCML.

“combat national chauvinism,” Lenin wrote, Communists needed to take the time to “[make] use of the experiences of [social movements in] other countries” and to examine them “critically,” learn from their mistakes, and apply that knowledge to movements in their own countries.³³⁴ Given the nature of their service in an international volunteer army, it is not surprising that letters from soldiers fighting in the Spanish Civil War were replete with commentary on the local political situation and how it fit into the global fight against fascism, many featuring criticisms of the British government for “assisting the Fascists in their mass murder of these gallant and brave people.”³³⁵ James Jackson regularly critiqued British imperialism while stationed in India and Burma, especially that “stubborn old imperialist Churchill” and the limits on the number of Indian soldiers allowed to fight on the subcontinent.³³⁶ During his deployment, Herb Lerner sought out Communists in North Africa and Italy, observing signs of an underground movement in Tunis and flourishing, if fractured, radical political movements in Florence and Rome.³³⁷

³³⁴ Lenin, “What is to be done?” Although American Service Edition books did include a few titles about “country and travel” (45) as well as “current affairs and the war” (20) all had to pass through the rigorous and multi-leveled approval process, ensuring that the Allied countries were seen in the most favorable light. Jamieson, *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.*, 17.

³³⁵ Sam Wild to Mick Jenkins, 25 August 1938, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/6/3, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, 2 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/3, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, etc., 4 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/5, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Edgar, 7 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/13, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, and Edgar, 27 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/14, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, and Paul, 31 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/16, WCML; and Ralph Cantor to Norah and Issy, no date, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/18, WCML.

³³⁶ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 11 February 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM. 347, box 6, folder 37, WLA.

³³⁷ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 24 June 1943, box 1, folder 3, HL MS, TAM.194, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 28 February 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 2, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 29 June 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 15 November 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 16 December 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 5 January 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 25 July 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1,

They also worked on their language skills, or sought out those who could communicate with the locals, so that they could at least make an attempt to get insider perspectives, again following imperatives promoted in *Volunteer for Liberty*.³³⁸ This was especially important during the Civil War because the International Brigade consisted of a culturally and linguistically diverse group of soldiers who battled alongside the Spanish-speaking Republican Army, but possibly less of an issue for British and American soldiers fighting in monolingual units during World War II. The *Hugo's Spanish* books were highly sought-after commodities among British Brigaders, and many of their letters included requests for additional copies, praise for the system, and boasts about how quickly they were able to pick up the language.³³⁹ Lincoln Brigade veteran Alexander Schwartzman, who spoke French, Spanish, and German in addition to English, served as an interpreter for Allied forces during the liberation of concentration camps in France, where he found IB veterans among those doing forced labor for the Nazis, while Irving Weissman got by with “broken French and Spanish” when speaking with locals during the North Africa campaign.³⁴⁰ Anxious to find fellow radicals in the French colonial city of Tunis, Herb Lerner

folder 3, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 14 June 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA.

³³⁸ “Learn Spanish,” *Volunteer for Liberty* vol. II, no. 6 (February 23, 1938), CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PL/01/04, LHASC. The editors of the paper called Spanish proficiency an “anti-fascist duty,” and “vital” if they hoped to “fulfill [their] mission.”

³³⁹ Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, and Eddy, 17 January 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/1, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah and Issy, 2 March 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/2, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Mick Jenkins, 2 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/4, WCML; Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, etc., 4 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/5, WCML; George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 27 June 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/6, WCML; and Ralph Cantor diary, 23 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/23, WCML.

³⁴⁰ Alexander Schwartzman to “Vets,” 2 February 1943, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 157-158; and Irving Weissman to Jack Bjoze, 6 April 1943, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 159.

enlisted the help of a Syrian-born American GI on his few excursions there, where they spoke with a group of locals who initially supported the Nazis, thanks in large part to their anti-imperial rhetoric, but who had changed their allegiance to the Allied forces. When asked their opinion about French socialism, his informants told him that, upon his rise to power in 1936, Léon Blum, “made fine promises to the Arabs, [but] also appointed the vicious overseer, Nogues, as Governor-General of Morocco.”³⁴¹

Lerner seemed genuinely surprised to encounter “those rarest of all beings, a group of educated, well-informed, politically conscious Arabs,” a condescending attitude toward the locals also demonstrated in other soldiers’ letters. While some understood that North Africans had “suffered from generations of imperialist oppression,” others found the Arab population “not as politically advanced as the European” and lacking in the political knowledge required to see through fascist anti-imperial propaganda.³⁴² When discussing their mutual friend Ed Strong’s deployment in Calcutta, James Jackson resorted to that old imperialist fear about too much contact with colonial subjects, assuring Esther that Strong had not “gone native” like so many others and remained focused on developing the Party’s platform

³⁴¹ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 24 June 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 28 February 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 2, WLA. In Tunisia, Herb saw Communist graffiti like “Vive Staline,” “Vive L’URSS,” and “Fighting French + French Communist Party.” He recounted this and his encounter with local Tunisians in a series of three letters composed and mailed on the same day.

³⁴² Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 11 May 1943, HL MS, TAM.197, box 1, folder 2, WLA; Irving Weissman to Jack Bjoze, 6 April 1943, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 159; and David Hyman “Hy” Wallach to Nils Berg, 31 May 1944, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 178

on the “Negro question.”³⁴³ Apparently Ruth Lerner expressed an interest in the local women that Herb encountered, and he obliged with observations about Sicilians, Florentines, and Romans, noting a rising level of political knowledge and activism the further north he traveled. “Almost every adult woman [on the island] has a baby at her breast and a brood of children at her apron strings,” he wrote, due in part to “intense fascist propaganda...illiteracy, [and] intense Catholicism.”³⁴⁴ Though Lerner estimated that women made up between ten and twenty percent of the Communist Party in Florence, he thought the number of politically active ones “infinitesimal.” This, he told Ruth, was “due to [their] terrible backwardness.”³⁴⁵ By contrast, the more politically astute Northern Italian women participated in the resistance movement by “[acting] as their eyes and ears in the areas controlled by the Nazis.”³⁴⁶ Despite this explicit bias, Communists’ interest in and observations about the people and places they encountered illustrates a willingness on their part to have those preconceptions upended.

Communist internationalism and wartime overseas deployment awakened in these soldiers a desire to see more of the world, and many cited desires to visit Mexico, Europe, and the Soviet Union after the wars ended.³⁴⁷ These men believed

³⁴³ James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 3 October 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 45, WLA.

³⁴⁴ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 25 July 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

³⁴⁵ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 5 January 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 1, WLA.

³⁴⁶ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 29 June 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA. It is doubtful that Lerner could have known just how many Italian women actively participated in the resistance and the varied roles they played. See Jane Slaughter, *Women and the Italian Resistance, 1943-1945* (Denver: Arden Press, 1997) and Jomarie Alano, “Armed with a Yellow Mimosa: Women’s Defence and Assistance Groups in Italy, 1943-1945,” *Journal of Contemporary History* (2003): 615-631.

³⁴⁷ International Brigade soldiers also wrote about possibly staying in Spain after defeating Franco. Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, etc., 4 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/5, WCML; Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 3 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/2, WCML; Herb Lerner to

that such endeavors not only expanded their worldviews, but also, as Lenin asserted, offered them insights about politics at home. “I don’t believe that anyone who has never been to a foreign country can properly appreciate how much this sharpens your understanding of your own country, as well as giving you that internationalism of viewpoint and understanding that must be standard equipment for every Marxist.”³⁴⁸

While they planned and fantasized about post-war travel, these men also took the opportunity to read histories and other non-fiction books about India, China, the French and British Empires, and, of course, Russia and the Soviet Union.³⁴⁹

In addition to continuing their own educations, members were expected to take what they learned and teach others about socialism, the working-class struggle, and why the Communist Party represented the best chance of achieving a classless society. Lenin made this clear in *What is to Be Done*:

Ruth Lerner, 12 January 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 5, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 20 June 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 29 July 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 7, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 19 May 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 19 July 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 22 July 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 26 July 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 19 August 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA; Esther Jackson to James Jackson, 18 March 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 23, WLA; Esther Jackson to James Jackson, 9 July 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 25, WLA; James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 1 November 1944, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 35, WLA; and James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 5 September 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 44, WLA.

³⁴⁸ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 19 July 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA.

³⁴⁹ Ralph Cantor to Norah, Issy, Edgar, and Paul, 1 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/11, WCML; James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 4 January 1944, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 30, WLA; James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 16 February 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 37, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 2 November 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 22 December 1942, HL MS, TAM.197, box 1, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 3 October 1942, HL MS, TAM.197, box 1, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 8 January 1944, HL MS, TAM.197, box 1, folder 5, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 20 June 1944, HL MS, TAM.197, box 1, folder 7, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 18 September 1944, HL MS, TAM.197, box 1, folder 8, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 2 November 1944, HL MS, TAM.197, box 1, folder 8, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 19 July 1945, HL MS, TAM.197, box 2, folder 2, WLA.

Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relations to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organized political force. Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organization of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities. *We must take up actively the political education of the working class and the development of its political consciousness.*³⁵⁰

But how might soldiers far from their Communist communities accomplish this part of their mission? As mentioned, many of them requested radical literature and shared it with other soldiers and sometimes civilians in their theater of operations, but they also made efforts to produce literature themselves that at the very least gave readers more information about the status of war efforts than could be found in conventional news sources. George Brown sent Mick Jenkins copies of “some of the journals” the Brigaders produced, including the French, Spanish, and English-language *Notre Combat* (“Our Fight”); daily bulletins with news translated from Spanish; and “Trench Wall Papers.” He also contributed to *Volunteer for Liberty*. “Of course all these papers are in the process of developing but you can readily see that there is a vast field of expression such as has never been seen in any other army outside of the Soviet Union.”³⁵¹ Almost as soon as he finished basic training, Herb Lerner approached his superiors about starting a battalion newsletter, telling Ruth, “After all, kid, we got to politicize!”³⁵² Though the general did not approve his request, Lerner

³⁵⁰ Lenin, “What Is to Be Done?” Emphasis mine. Labor historians have only recently begun to study military history as working-class history.

³⁵¹ George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 27 June 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/6, WCML. Brown was killed in action a few days after writing this letter. Nat Frayman, Manchester and District League of Youth to Comrades, 10 July 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/7, WCML; and Constance Davy to Comrades, 11 July 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/8, WCML.

³⁵² Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 8 September 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA.

continued his campaign for a newsletter because he found the army to be a valuable space for educating young minds.³⁵³ Once deployed to North Africa, Herb began transcribing broadcasts from London and supplemented their coverage of “progress on the military fronts” with transcriptions of *PM* articles.³⁵⁴ Others, like IB veteran Joe Taylor, educated fellow soldiers in less formal ways, sharing and discussing articles printed in *Volunteer for Liberty*.³⁵⁵

Taylor’s assignment to a segregated African American unit during WWII made clear to him that soldiers needed political educations in addition to their military training, a sentiment shared by many other radical soldiers. When they set out to organize the thousands of volunteers who joined the fight against Franco, International Brigade leaders assigned political commissars to each unit, officers whose main responsibilities included soldier morale and education. Ralph Cantor, for one, appreciated the occasional commissar “trench talks” that explained not only the state of the conflict, but also the ever-shifting political situation in Spain.³⁵⁶ By contrast, American Special Services officers concerned themselves with providing sporting equipment and other forms of entertainment instead of educational activities, according to Herb Lerner, and did not provide time for proper discussion and analysis of propaganda films shown to the troops.³⁵⁷ For this reason, he and Saul Birnbaum, among others, cited the need for education directors in each unit to teach soldiers

³⁵³ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 15 September 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 3 October 1942, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 1, WLA.

³⁵⁴ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 25 April 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 2, WLA; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 18 June 1943, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 2, WLA.

³⁵⁵ Joe Taylor to Jack Bjoze, 17 May 1943, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 126-127.

³⁵⁶ Ralph Cantor diary, 21 May 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/23, WCML.

³⁵⁷ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 24 January 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

about imperialism, fascism, and American history.³⁵⁸ A few officers agreed with them and sometimes asked International Brigade veterans to prepare and give lectures on the Spanish Civil War and how it related to the current global conflict.³⁵⁹ As the war drew to a close, both Herb Lerner and James Jackson became something like education directors for their units, with Lerner taking on a role with the Information and Education office and Jackson giving orientation talks wherein he discussed how the Southern Negro Youth Congress, NAACP, and labor unions could help Black soldiers “fulfill their aspirations for job security, democratic justice, and equality of citizenship.”³⁶⁰

For these and all other Communists, education was crucial to understanding not only Marxist theory but also Leninist and Stalinist interpretations of those theories. It also enabled them to learn the fundamentals of Communist Party organization and operation, proper Bolshevik language, and how democratic centralism worked with Bolshevik criticism to maintain Party discipline.

Criticism and the Disciplined Communist Body

The [Executive Committee] recognizes that it has not fully appreciated the role of self-criticism in the building of a Bolshevik Party but regards the opening of the whole party to a full discussion of its experiences and tasks prior to the Tenth Party Congress as a decided advance in this direction. It undertakes to explain to the party the

³⁵⁸ Saul Birnbaum to “Fellows,” March 1942, in *The Good Fight Continues*, 51-52; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 24 January 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

³⁵⁹ Carroll, *The Good Fight Continues*, 43-44.

³⁶⁰ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 15 January 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 1, WLA; Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 18 January 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 1, WLA; and James Jackson to Esther Jackson, 5 September 1945, JJEJ MS, TAM.347, box 6, folder 44, WLA.

significance and importance of self-criticism and encourage its fullest use in the development of the Party.³⁶¹

This quote from the Executive Committee of the CPGB gives some indication of how essential “Bolshevik criticism” was to the proper functioning of the Party hierarchical apparatus. Here the EC criticizes itself for underestimating the importance of self-criticism and pledges to rectify this failure, modeling for individuals and affiliated organizations the two halves that constituted proper Bolshevik criticism—acknowledgement of a problem and plans to improve thinking or performance. More importantly, it demonstrates that the CP operated as what Foucault called the “integrated system” of disciplinary power, a system “organized as a multiple, automatic, and anonymous power” where “surveillance [rested] on individuals,” but functioned as “a network of relations from top to bottom...bottom to top and laterally;” in other words, “supervisors perpetually supervised.”³⁶² By instructing individuals and committees within the Communist hierarchy to practice Bolshevik criticism, the Party produced a “disciplinary power...absolutely indiscreet, since it [was] everywhere and always alert.”³⁶³ The disciplinary regime of the Communist Party did not, as Foucault would have it, operate “in silence,” however. Communist leaders wanted members and groups in Great Britain and the United States to be very intentional and public in criticisms of themselves and others, but all understood the need to maintain a delicate balance when assessing Party policy, as

³⁶¹ “E.C. Statement on Closed Letter to the ECCI, 5 April 1929, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CI/1/1, LHASC.

³⁶² Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 176-177.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*

they could never be sure if their criticisms might be construed as more “destructive” than “constructive.”³⁶⁴ On such occasions, they faced censure, demotion, and sometimes expulsion from the very institution they sought to improve.³⁶⁵

In his manual on the Party apparatus, J. Peters argued that Bolshevik self-criticism “must be conscious and not mechanical.” It worked within democratic centralism in such a way as to allow for “complete freedom of discussion” until leading committees came to a decision, “after which discussion must cease and the decision be carried out by every organization and individual member of the Party.” Certain foundational principles, however, could not be questioned, and as examples Peters cited the “role of the proletariat...or the necessity for the proletarian dictatorship,” the need to overthrow capitalism, and the “correctness of the revolutionary theory of the class struggle laid down by Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin.” Above all else, members could not question decisions made by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI), Party conventions, or the Central Committees of the CPUSA and CPGB.³⁶⁶

Peters relied on Stalin’s 1929 speech on factionalism within CPUSA to outline the parameters of “constructive” versus “destructive” criticism, marking the former as thoughtful evaluation that never strayed from the Party line and the latter as

³⁶⁴ Peters, “A Manual on Organization.”

³⁶⁵ “Draft Constitution of the Communist Party of Great Britain,” 1943, Records of the Security Service, KV3/393, TNA. This draft of the CPGB Constitution written just before the 16th Party Congress in 1943 outlined the duties of the Control Commission, which included maintenance of Party discipline and investigation of complaints made by members against other members. It also explicitly outlined punishments for breaches in discipline. These ranged from censure to demotion, or, in extreme cases, expulsion from the Party. Members could, and did, appeal the Commission’s decisions, however.

³⁶⁶ Peters, “A Manual on Organization.”

that which not only strayed but also offered no proposals for improvement. This, Stalin contended, led to factionalism and a weakening of the Party and its hierarchical structure.³⁶⁷ Implicit in this speech and in Peters' pamphlet was the notion that Stalin and the Soviet government's decisions were also sacrosanct and should be adhered to without question, illustrated by a conversation between Peter Kerrigan and CPGB members Peter Zinkin and Julie Jacobs. After Zinkin and Jacobs complained that Soviet broadcasts in English were "useless," Kerrigan became furious and told those assembled that no Communist Party had the right to "tell Moscow what to do" and every member must believe in the Soviet Union if they hoped to "convince anyone else" to join.³⁶⁸ On the surface, Kerrigan's warning simply reads as a workplace dispute, but it takes on deeper meaning when viewed in relation to democratic centralism and Bolshevik criticism as outlined by Lenin, Stalin, and Peters.

It also demonstrates one of the four ways that Communists engaged in Bolshevik criticism. The first, of course, would be criticism made by CP officials in Party literature that generally focused on groups rather than individuals. The second type comprised of the required self-criticisms in applications for membership, employment with the Party, or slots at different labor schools. Complaints about members or organizations given through official channels, such as letters or motions put forth in meetings calling for censure or expulsion, constituted the third. Finally, members practiced Bolshevik criticism in their daily lives and frequently evaluated

³⁶⁷ Peters, "A Manual on Organization."

³⁶⁸ "Peter Kerrigan's Report on Statement of Central Committee to Industrial National Committee," 31 December 1940, Records of the Security Service, KV3/393, TNA.

the actions of other members, CP committees, and CP-affiliated organizations in private conversations and correspondence, illustrated in the Kerrigan example above. Each of these types reveals certain truths about the practice, most significantly in the difference between its public and private manifestations, as seen in a letter from Herb Lerner to his wife about democratic centralism:

It is traditional in our party that there must be complete unanimity of the organization. As a result of this slavish following of the desire for unanimity, we all too frequently stifle our honest differences of opinion in order to accept that which has already been agreed upon at a higher level.³⁶⁹

This hostility toward one of the foundational tenets of Leninism-Stalinism could have resulted in censure or even expulsion had Lerner made it in a public forum.

A cursory glance at any CP report dealing with membership, literature sales, or activism will garner at least a paragraph or two of criticism directed at the individuals and committees involved, including suggestions for ways to improve results. Perhaps the best examples of this practice come from periods when growth in membership could have warranted celebration rather than condemnation. In 1934, *Western Worker* editor George Morris published an article on the development of the CP in California (District 13) since the 1929-1930 transition to the isolationist Third Period and the resulting Lovestone factional split, both discussed in the previous chapter. Though he praised the district for its exponential growth (not a difficult feat considering that the number of dues-paying members fell below 200 in 1930), he criticized operatives for failing to recognize that the “type of members, their attitude

³⁶⁹ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 22 June 1945, HL MS, TAM.194, box 2, folder 2, WLA.

to Party tasks, and the industries they came from [had] likewise changed.” Morris referred to gains made among Japanese, Mexican, Filipino, and African American populations, especially in the agricultural sector during the strike waves of 1932-1933. These members, most of them Communists for less than two years, needed guidance and a Marxist education, Morris noted, but he reminded the “old guard” that the Party needed to acknowledge issues specific to those communities and to work out plans to address them. What Japanese, Mexican, Filipino, and African American members did not need was more tokenism, condescension, and lip service. If the Party in California intended to grow, he argued, they must “root out” the lingering “Anti-Semitism and white chauvinism” within their ranks and truly work toward the equality of nationalities promoted by Stalin and the Soviet Union.³⁷⁰

Similarly, though the CPGB gained many new members after the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union during World War II, each “Weekly Letter” sent to branches in 1943 suggested that leaders in some regions, particularly Greater Manchester, failed in their responsibilities. People shirked their duties by not attending branch meetings, paying dues, or selling enough literature, and “in general [demonstrated] a slackness in Party work and organization.”³⁷¹ Such criticisms were often directed at the CPGB membership as a whole, as was the case when the Central Agit-Prop department admonished cadres for being ill-prepared to answer theoretical questions asked by potential new members. At other times, they targeted specific branches, such as when Comrade Pat Devine reported that the Party in Lancashire and

³⁷⁰ George Morris, “Our Party Changes and Advances,” *Western Worker*, 2 April 1934.

³⁷¹ “Our Weekly Letter,” CC, CPGB, 6 August 1943, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CIRC/63/01, LHASC.

Cheshire only held their ground and when the London District Committee demanded that the city's branches needed to be "roused out of [their] passivity and largely ineffective methods of working."³⁷² As mentioned, on occasion the Central Committee even critiqued itself. "We recognize that what was being aimed at did not reach the mark, very largely because we read the report and tired the comrades out, so that it did not appear there was anything very new in what was being said."³⁷³ Boring or not, these reports, and the criticisms in them, were crucial to the functioning of the Party, as a closed letter from the ECCI to the CPGB central office demonstrates:

The importance and significance of self-criticism must be explained to the Party. In this connection, we should recall that the resolution of the IX Plenum contained a special point on the need for a serious discussion in the Party on all issues. The resolution of the VI Congress MADE IT OBLIGATORY for the Party to start a discussion immediately. We must put a stop to the philistine twaddle about self-criticism.³⁷⁴

The practice of self-criticism, however, usually garnered more concrete results. This type, a regular requirement of individual members hoping to advance within the Party, can be construed as a sort of virtual panopticon wherein members "assumed responsibility for the constraints of power" and became willing participants in their own "subjection," but it also gave them the opportunity to reflect on past

³⁷² "To: All Districts and Locals, 'Party Education,' From: Central Agit-Prop. Dept., 5 October 1934, Records of the Secret Service, KV 3/389, TNA; "Our Weekly Letter," CC, CPGB, 3 December 1943, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CIRC/63/01, LHASC; and *The Party Fighter: Monthly Bulletin of the London District Committee of the Communist Party*, no. 1, May 1933, CPGB MS, CP/LON/CIRCS/2/9, CPGB MS, LHASC.

³⁷³ "Our Weekly Letter," CC, CPGB, 22 October 1943, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CIRC/63/01, LHASC; and "Our Weekly Letter," CC, CPGB, 5 November 1943, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CIRC/63/01, LHASC.

³⁷⁴ ECCI to CPGB, "Closed Letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain," 1929, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CI/1/1, LHASC.

activism and reassert their commitment to Communism.³⁷⁵ Some comrades responded to this directive by doing the bare minimum, filling out mimeographed forms with single words or a few short sentences, but others, like David Ainley, wrote lengthy, typewritten biographies. Though he felt that he had “made some small contribution to the...movement,” Ainley acknowledged the occasional “sectarian tendencies [that] marked [his] work in the YCL and...early years in the Party.” He also agreed with those who called him “prone to operate correct decisions the wrong way” and pledged to work on his understanding of theory if given a slot at the CPGB’s National School.³⁷⁶ Concerned that her lack of theoretical knowledge might limit her “future development,” Gertrude Roche applied to the school as well, noting that she intended to devote more time to her studies and to public agitation.³⁷⁷ Len Crompton stated that he planned to use the educational opportunity to improve prior success in “open air work” and to help him regain his trade union position. In his view, his past activism made him “in general to be worthy of the title of ‘Member of the Party,’ a title many of us must say we are not worthy of if we examin ourselves realy critically (sic).”³⁷⁸

The Party’s commitment to Bolshevik criticism extended beyond applications, evidenced by teacher and student evaluations of their experiences after each session ended. Teachers found Crompton enthusiastic but less knowledgeable than required

³⁷⁵ Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202-203.

³⁷⁶ David Ainley, self-narration, 1952, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/1/1, LHASC.

³⁷⁷ Gertrude Roche self-narration, CPGB National School, 1952, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/05/05, LHASC.

³⁷⁸ Len Crompton, application to British National School, 1949, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/2/2, LHASC.

of tutors and recommended further study before giving him more responsibilities.³⁷⁹ They thought Sol Gadian to be a “clearly...experienced and able comrade,” but also occasionally “over-active” and “very much in need of the school.” Despite his many years of service, the evaluator believed that Gadian had failed to become “a real political leader.”³⁸⁰ Though Gertrude Roche had the “makings of an outstanding party cadre,” she showed a “lack of confidence” when asked to chair meetings. In contrast to Crompton, however, two evaluators suggested giving her more responsibilities so that she could work on overcoming this particular flaw.³⁸¹ Similarly, J. Nolan appeared “unnecessarily over-awed by the School,” according to his evaluation, though his teachers found him to be “in general a good and keen comrade.”³⁸²

Students did not leave school without having their say, however, and readily critiqued the curricula and their instructors. In a postmortem of his experience, Nolan said that the school had given him “a better understanding of theory and practice,” and praised several of his teachers, including Pat Devine for presentation of course content, D. Garman for moderation of “lively and animated discussion,” and E. Frow for excellent trade union lectures. William Rust, however, thoroughly disappointed

³⁷⁹ Len Crompton, application to British National School.

³⁸⁰ Sol Gadian Nomination for National School, 10-17 April 1948, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/2/2, LHASC.

³⁸¹ Gertrude Roche student evaluations, CPGB National School, 1952, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/05/05, LHASC. Roche was expelled from the Party in 1957 because, as she put it in an interview, she “continued fighting against what was taking place in Russia.” Gertrude Roche interview, Tape 022, WCML.

³⁸² Evaluation of J. Nolan, British Labor School, 1942, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/05/04, LHASC.

him.³⁸³ After apparent complaints about the contents of a class taught by Emile Burns, Harry Pollitt castigated him in a letter to former students, telling them that Burns's views did not reflect those of the Political Bureau and students should not "take the standpoint put forward by Comrade Burns as the agreed view of the Party."³⁸⁴ Finally, a student named Sam Aaronovitch complained to a member of the School Committee that David Ainley did not "seriously [exert] himself, nor [give] as much help as he could have done to younger comrades." In the author's view, Ainley "had been living on his theoretical and political capital and that, as a result, his contributions to the school tended to be paternal rather than fraternal." The Committee called Ainley in twice for meetings to discuss this, and though he seemed surprised by Aaronovitch's assertions, he did admit that, since he began working for the *Daily* in an administrative capacity, he had become somewhat complacent.³⁸⁵

Student complaints such as these, along with Len Crompton's self-praise for his own activities in comparison to unnamed and undeserving others, illustrate another important aspect of Bolshevik criticism—the necessity to call out comrades when they failed in their duties. The most damning accusations usually included words and phrases like "opportunism," "factionalism," "petty bourgeois," "right thinking" or "right deviation," "Trotskyism," or sometimes even "intellectualism," all of which signaled the accuser's belief that the accused lacked the disciplinary strength to adhere to the tenets of democratic centralism and toe the Party line even when they

³⁸³ J. Nolan, "Criticisms," undated, but most likely 1942, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/05/04, LHASC.

³⁸⁴ Harry Pollitt to "Students at School, 14 February 1944, CPGB MS, CP/IND/MISC/11/10, LHASC.

³⁸⁵ Critique of David Ainley, June 1950, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/1/1, LHASC.

disagreed with it. For example, in his complaint about the Oakland bookstore, East Bay (California) Section District 13 convention delegate Tobey stated that it had been “impossible to organize along working-class lines,” most likely because the “celebrity” Anita Whitney fashioned it into a “hangout for bourgeois elements.” Dart noted that the bookstore’s policy against smoking created a decidedly “unproletarian” atmosphere that had been corrected somewhat by refusing to allow “petty bourgeois professors and speakers” to attend meetings.³⁸⁶ That same year, Emmanuel Levin, the District Organizer for California, blamed Whitney for making the Oakland section more Christian Socialist than Communist, evidenced by a picture of Jesus at the bookstore.³⁸⁷ Ralph Cantor lamented the “Trotskyists, drunkards, thieves, [and] hypocrites” fighting for the International Brigade, and though he called out Glasgow, Manchester, London, and France for sending the “worst culprits,” he singled out Bronstein and one other man as particularly egregious examples.³⁸⁸ Though he agreed with Lenin that the working class had to free itself, he surmised that “only workers who are free from bourgeois influence and upbringing can really lead such sharp struggles.”³⁸⁹ Cantor’s critique appeared not in official Party documents or correspondence with a fellow traveler, but in a diary entry while serving in Spain.

³⁸⁶ Emanuel Levin, “District Organizer Report to the 1929 District Convention,” *Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Sotsial’no-Politcheskoi Istorrii* (Russian State Archive of Social and Political History—hereafter cited as RGASPI), Archive of the Communist Party of the United States, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 1791*. The collections at RGASPI have a fond number, an opis number, and a file or delo number. Fond 515 holds the papers for CPUSA and is available on microfilm at the Green Library at Stanford University.

³⁸⁷ Emanuel Levin, “District Organizer Report to the 1929 District Convention,” 26 January 1929, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 1791*.

³⁸⁸ Ralph Cantor diary, 31 March 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/23, WCML.

³⁸⁹ Ralph Cantor diary, 12 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/3/23, WCML.

Regardless of whether he filed official complaints with his superiors, Cantor's take on his fellow soldiers demonstrates how Bolshevik criticism penetrated every aspect of members' lives.³⁹⁰

Soldiers and prisoners who continued their political activism and education from afar also maintained their practice of Bolshevik criticism, especially in their letters to CP or YCL officials. Both Maurice Levine and George Brown warned Mick Jenkins and other Manchester YCL'ers against trusting International Brigade deserter E. Stern (or possibly Stein), calling him "lousy" and a "cocksucker" who should be prevented at all costs from "speaking as a representative of the Brigade."³⁹¹ In some cases these critiques included advice about correcting perceived failures, such as suggestions by Comrade Sklar and Dorothy Ray Healey that the CPUSA do more to support members incarcerated for labor activism. Both Healey and Sklar were arrested for attempting to organize migrant farm laborers in California's Imperial Valley, and the fact that her admonition came three years after his indicates that the CP and International Labor Defense had done little to address the issue.³⁹²

Although Healey and Sklar clearly had a personal interest in fomenting more activism, in other instances, prisoners merely wanted to express their opinions about

³⁹⁰ Party documents are replete with this condemning language. See "Minutes District #13 Buro Meeting," 29 January 1930, and "Minutes District #13 Buro Meeting," 10 February 1930, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 2131*; "Report on the Oakland Situation," 9 February 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 2499*; Sam Darcy to William Weiner, Organization Department, CC, 24 May 1931 and William Raport to William Weiner, 20 June 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 2319*; and Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 17 January 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 3, WLA.

³⁹¹ Maurice Levine to Mick Jenkins, 3 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/4/3, WCML; and George Brown to Mick Jenkins, 22 April 1937, SCW MS, EVT/SPAIN/3/2/4, WCML.

³⁹² Dorothy Healey to Section Committee, YCL, 22 June 1934, Dorothy Ray Healey Papers (hereafter cited as DRH MS), box 4, folder 2, University of California Special Collections, Los Angeles, California (hereafter cited as UCLA); and "Minutes of District Plenum #13, 24 January 24, 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 2495*.

activities separate from their own troubles with the law. While serving several months in Winchester Prison, St. Pancras, London branch member W.G. Shepherd admonished his comrades for failing to keep him abreast of the local elections and Party activities, asking that the Branch assign a member to visit him regularly and give him updates. Nevertheless, from the “scanty reports” he had gotten, Shepherd found much to critique, and in separate letters cited weaknesses in Branch reports, their official stance on the last elections, and Len Powell’s performance at a recent “aggregate meeting.” He also accused G.G. Graham of being “overworked and tired and as usual too longwinded” to give him reports in short visits at the prison and recommended they send someone else.³⁹³ Similarly, Sklar’s fellow inmates criticized California’s District Committee for failing to keep them informed, proclaiming that they “must have systematic contacts with especially appointed comrades in order to continue our usefulness to the Party in all its campaigns.”³⁹⁴

In addition to his complaints about Graham’s ineffective reporting of Party activities, Shepherd apparently made attempts to exclude him from the Local Political Committee as well. On the eve of his own incarceration for unnamed offenses, Graham responded with gusto, listing his contributions to the Local before launching into a critique of the “campaign of a most disruptive character.” Shepherd’s “disruptive tactics,” he contended, amounted to “mean-spirited sectarianism” that “will never build up the Party and will never win for us the support of masses of

³⁹³ W.G. Shephard to Len Powell, 26 October 1931; W.G. Shephard to Len Powell, 7 November 1931; and W.G. Shephard to Len Powell, 17 November 1931, CPGB MS, CP/IND/MISC/8/4, LHASC.

³⁹⁴ “Minutes of District Plenum #13,” 24 January 1931, RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 2495.

workers.” Though most likely a personal dispute, it is important to note how both Graham and Shepherd expressed their displeasure within the parameters of acceptable Bolshevik criticism.³⁹⁵

The most damning instances of Bolshevik criticism came in the form of official complaints against members during meetings or conventions and usually accompanied motions to censure or expel them. When groups loyal to Jay Lovestone sought to retain control of the CPUSA despite his expulsion in 1928, members on each side of this factional struggle hurled accusations and threatened opponents with expulsion.³⁹⁶ Johnny Ballam, a member of the Lovestone faction and representative of the Central Executive Committee, threatened to expel California’s District Organizer Emanuel Levin along with other members of the district’s Executive Committee. Levin called Ballam’s actions “political terrorism” and his threats of expulsion “the most terrible threat I have ever received in my life; the most serious. I have had threats of physical violence, jails, but they are nothing compared to the threat of being expelled from the Party.”³⁹⁷ Though they protested vigorously against Lovestone’s expulsion, even going so far as to proclaim their opposition to “the use of disciplinary methods...expulsions, removals, etc., instead of winning over comrades through conviction to the correct line,” his supporters in California

³⁹⁵ G. Graham to “Comrades,” no date, CPGB MS, CP/IND/MISC/8/4, LHASC.

³⁹⁶ See chapter 1.

³⁹⁷ “Order of Business for the District Convention, 1st Session,” 26 January 1929, RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 1791.

nevertheless used this tool against those who supported the new CPUSA leadership.³⁹⁸

Once it became clear that the national office had no intention of removing the CPUSA from the Comintern as Lovestone had suggested, these same activists scrambled to prevent such measures being used against them, withdrawing their protests against Lovestone's expulsion and loudly proclaiming support for the Comintern's new policies.³⁹⁹ In a statement written to the DEC of California's District 13, Mike Daniels apologized for ardently supporting and defending Lovestone, telling his comrades, "Only renegades of the type of Lovestone and his group spreading their poisonous propaganda of defeatism and pessimism can come to the conclusion that the whole CI is degenerate and our Party is going to pieces."⁴⁰⁰ The CPUSA had indeed gone to pieces, at least in California, where fewer than 200 dues-paying members remained.

As for Bolshevik criticism in personal correspondence and private conversations, the best examples may be those involving Pat Devine, the native of Scotland who worked as an organizer and trade union activist in both the US and UK, gaining notoriety for his oratory skills, confrontational leadership style, and lengthy rap sheets.⁴⁰¹ He also managed to alienate and infuriate fellow operatives from

³⁹⁸ "Minutes, District #13 Meeting," 14 May 1929, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 1793*; "District Committee #13 Meeting Minutes," 21 May 1929, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 1794*; and "Minutes, District Executive Committee Meeting," 9 July 1929, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 1793*.

³⁹⁹ "Resolution Adopted by the District Executive Committee, District 13," 15 August 1929, RGASPI, *fond 515, opis 1, delo 1793*.

⁴⁰⁰ "Statement by Mike Daniels," 27 October 1929, RGASPI *fond 515, opis 1, delo 1793*.

⁴⁰¹ "Woman 'Red' Chief Predicts Class Battle: Mrs. Florence Hathaway, Candidate for Governor, Addresses Crowd," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune*, 5 August 1928; "Police Block Negro 'Red'

Lawrence, Massachusetts to Manchester, England. Devine lived in the US for about three years and at various times worked as an Organizer in Minneapolis, Minnesota and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and in the national leadership for the CP-affiliated Unemployed Council and National Textile Workers' Union. His handling of the 1931 textile strike in Lawrence brought him into conflict with Sophie Gerson, a young YCL activist and veteran of the 1929 Gastonia textile strike who apparently returned to New York after a falling out with Devine over strike strategies and tactics. After being rejected in her application to attend the "school" (possibly the Lenin School in Moscow), Gerson told husband Simon that she believed Devine bore some of the responsibility for the decision. According to Sophie, Devine represented the "filth in [the Communist] movement," and by "filth" she meant the undisciplined comrade who deigned to "see his grandma or Aunt Tillie in England while the starving workers are clamoring for organization." Worse still were those in the

Organization: Communists to Lodge Protest With Mayor Leach Today," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 21 January 1929; "Leach, Police Halt May Day Parade Here: Two Score Officers Break Up Proposed Communist Demonstration," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 2 May 1929; "Leach Gets Debate Defi From Foley: Communist Rival Urges Discussion on Labor Viewpoint," *Minneapolis Morning Tribune*, 3 May 1929; "Police Halt Northside Red Meeting, Arrest 28," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 2 August 1929; "Protest Rally Held by Reds on Northside: Police Get Names of Speakers For City Law Bureau," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 8 August 1929; "Red Refuses Aid of Clark: Will Hold Meetings Without Permits, Devine Says," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 16 August 1929; "Jobless Mass in Lawrence Today: Will Present Demands on Mayor; Challenge Him to Appear," *Daily Worker*, 16 January 1931; "Lawrence Strikers Reject Concessions: Mills Drop Efficiency Men and Stretch-out—All Police on Today, Feeling Against Reds," *Daily Boston Globe*, 24 February 1931; "Three Woolen Mills Close Due to Strike: 10,000 Idle," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 26 February 1931; "Moves to Deport Red Strike Chiefs: Government Agent Arrests Trio at Lawrence, Mass., and Takes Them to Boston," *New York Times*, 28 February 1931; and "Local Communist Will Be Deported," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 29 May 1931.

national leadership who rewarded this undisciplined behavior by making him leader of the textile workers union upon his return to the US.⁴⁰²

Devine was arrested during the Lawrence strike and deported to Scotland after serving a year in Atlanta Federal Prison for “obtaining a passport under false representations.”⁴⁰³ Over the next decade, Devine rose steadily through the ranks of the CPGB, continuing his inflammatory and confrontational oratory in clashes with the British Union of Fascists (BUF) as well as his highhanded management style in the Lancashire and Midlands District in Northern England.⁴⁰⁴ By the start of World War II, Devine had become Organizer of that District and a member of the Secretariat alongside Norah Jeffries and Bill Whittaker. From 1942 to at least 1944, Jeffries and Whittaker repeatedly complained about his performance, especially Devine’s inability to delegate or work with others. In one such meeting at the national office, Whittaker pointed out that Lancashire activists Mick Jenkins and Bessie Dickerson also had trouble working with him. When confronted with these accusations, Devine went on the offensive, blaming everyone else for the lack of progress in the District, but Harry Pollitt reminded him that disciplined Communists critiqued themselves before casting aspersions on fellow comrades.⁴⁰⁵

In conversations reported by Secret Service informants over the next few years, Pollitt, R. Palme Dutt, and others noted Devine’s narcissism, penchant to

⁴⁰² Sophie Gerson to Simon Gerson, 12 February 1931, Sophie Gerson Letters to Simon Gerson (hereafter cited as SGSG MS), TAM.401, box 1, folder 9, WLA.

⁴⁰³ “Local Communist Will Be Deported,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 29 May 1931.

⁴⁰⁴ Special Branch Reports (8 September 1937, October 1937, and 23 October 1938), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1573, TNA; and Special Branch Report (26 October 1941), Records of the Security Services, KV/1574, TNA.

⁴⁰⁵ Special Branch Report (August 1942), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1574, TNA.

“sabotage” work done by other comrades, and disregard for ideas promoted by anyone but himself.⁴⁰⁶ According to Pollitt, “Comrade Devine only saw Comrade Devine,” while Peter Kerrigan concluded that “Devine put every comrade’s back up, and at the Secretariat meetings, he snapped down anything that he was not in favor of himself.”⁴⁰⁷ Pollitt, in noting Devine’s seeming inability for self-reflection, pointed to Jeffries and Whittaker’s measured letters and District reports as examples of disciplined Bolshevik criticism, but Devine seemed unwilling to listen.⁴⁰⁸ In fact, according to activists W. McGillivray and Stella Davies, inattentiveness was a regular feature of their interactions with the District Organizer, who feigned interest “until they’d stopped talking.”⁴⁰⁹ And the informant described Pollitt’s repeated attempts to get Devine to understand his culpability in this matter as an adult “lecturing Pat like a small child.”⁴¹⁰ Though Pollitt emphasized the gravity of his position by telling him that they had received complaints from people in “all parts of the country,” Devine continued to defend himself without acknowledging his faults, much to the consternation of Kerrigan, who called him a “complete and utter fool politically.”⁴¹¹

Throughout this entire period, Norah Jeffries somehow maintained her Communist discipline, repeatedly stating her desire to work with Devine. Whittaker, however, requested leave to move into factory work in 1943, and his replacement in

⁴⁰⁶ Special Branch Report (November 1943), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1574, TNA.

⁴⁰⁷ Special Branch Reports (Sometime between July and November 1943 and 28 September 1944), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1574, TNA.

⁴⁰⁸ Special Branch Reports (Sometime between July and November 1943 and 2 December 1943), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1574, TNA.

⁴⁰⁹ Special Branch Report (12 October 1944), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1574, TNA.

⁴¹⁰ Special Branch Report (October 1944), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1574, TNA.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

the Secretariat, Sid Abbott, asked for a transfer, a factory job, or Devine's ouster not long after. He had spoken with his local doctor and the CP physician Joan McMichael, who apparently told him that his physical ailments stemmed from the mental stress and "constant irritation of working with Pat Devine."⁴¹² Devine seemed incapable of the introspection required of disciplined Communists, yet he somehow managed to stay in the Party. Perhaps the national leaderships of the CPUSA and CPGB thought that his Marxist education and ability to articulate those theories mattered more than his inability to critique himself.

Conclusion

When Stalin wrote that Bolshevik discipline required a unity of will and an unconditional unity of action, he was not being metaphorical; by "action" he meant all the physical activities deemed necessary to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat.⁴¹³ The disciplined Communist then, educated in Marxist theory and trained in self-reflection, could boldly perform Communism on the soapbox, in the playing field, and on the picket line; could maintain friendships and intimate relationships despite separation due to war, incarceration, or Party directive; and could withstand the violence that often came with membership in the Party.

⁴¹² Special Branch Report (May 1945), Records of the Security Services, KV2/1574, TNA.

⁴¹³ Joseph Stalin on "Leninism," quoted in "The Party of Lenin," 1931, CPGB MS, CP/LOC/SCOT/01/13, LHASC.

Chapter Three

Performing Bodies

Introduction

Early in the morning on April 24, 1932, four young men set out from their homes in Cheetham, a working-class neighborhood a few miles north of central Manchester. As they made their way out of the city and into the countryside to the southeast, the four were joined by nineteen-year-old Manchester University student Anthony Walter Gillett and several hundred other ramblers who intended to climb Kinder Scout, a scenic hilltop located on the estate of the ninth Duke of Devonshire in what is now the Peak District National Park.⁴¹⁴ A flier circulated by rambling enthusiast Benny Rothman the week before had instructed hikers to meet at the Hayfield Recreation Ground before proceeding, but this proved to be a diversionary tactic, as the young demonstrators gathered at nearby Bowden Bridge Quarry instead.⁴¹⁵

Reports vary as to how many joined in the “mass trespass”—in his later testimony, Inspector Clews put the number at around one hundred, while Rothman estimated that more than five times that number participated—but all agreed that a violent confrontation ensued when local villagers and gamekeepers attempted to

⁴¹⁴ In this instance a “rambler” was someone who engaged in rambling, an activity where participants walked for no apparent reason and with no destination. The closest equivalent in the United States would be hiking.

⁴¹⁵ “Rioting on Kinder Scout: Five Youths Sent to Gaol,” *London Times*, 8 July 1932.

prevent the hikers from accessing Kinder.⁴¹⁶ Two days after the mass trespass the *London Times* reported on the demonstration and the arrest of John Thomas Anderson, as well as those of Cheetham residents Julius Clyne, Harry Mendel, Bernard Rothman, and David Mussbaum.⁴¹⁷ As their trial date drew near the *London Times* warned the public, “If deliberate breaches of the law of this kind were to be tolerated the whole administration of justice and the whole of law and order must apparently come to an end.”⁴¹⁸

Rothman and members of the Manchester section of the British Workers’ Sports Federation (BWSF), the national governing body for Communist sports leagues in the United Kingdom, organized the mass trespass, a direct action that demonstrates Communists’ willingness to place their bodies in harm’s way for political purposes, expressing their commitment to the struggle through a physical manifestation of working-class consciousness. And they did so frequently—loudly proclaiming themselves radicals on soapboxes and in picket lines, hawking copies of the *Daily Worker*, *Young Worker*, *New Sport and Play*, and *Worker Sportsman* on street corners, and in skirmishes like Kinder Scout. The Party expected such public performances of Communism, as illustrated by literature that declared workers’

⁴¹⁶ “Ramblers Charged: Alleged ‘Mass Trespass’ on Kinder Scout,” *London Times*, 26 April 1932; Bernard Rothman, “—And the Sequel: Six Hikers Arrested,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1 (May 1932), British Workers’ Sports Federation, AG-Communism, WCML. No first name was given for Inspector Clews.

⁴¹⁷ Benny Rothman, *The Battle for Kinder Scout: Including the 1932 Mass Trespass* (Cheshire: Willow Publishing, 2012), 64-65. Anderson maintained his innocence for the rest of his life. According to Benny Rothman, Anderson set off that day for a ramble across William Clough not knowing about the BWSF plan to ascend Kinder Scout. He learned of the trespass upon arriving in Hayfield, declared his opposition to it in a conversation with trespasser Sol Gadian, and only became involved when he went to help Edward Beever, the gamekeeper who accused him of doing grievous bodily harm.

⁴¹⁸ “Kinder Scout Case: Alleged Unlawful Assembly,” *London Times*, 12 May 1932.

schools and the Young Communist League (YCL) academic institutions for educating young Communist minds, but also as training grounds for “[participation] in all...class struggles.”⁴¹⁹ Young Communists demonstrated the physicality of that struggle through such actions as the mass trespass and proved their resolve to obey decrees from the Moscow-based Communist International (Comintern) and Young Communist International (YCI) that defined Communism as political philosophy, all-encompassing lifestyle, and bodily practice.

Though performance of Communism entailed a variety of bodily practices, I will focus on participation in sports (individual ones like rambling and team sports like those under umbrella groups the BWSF in the UK and Labor Sports Union in the United States) and public speaking (outdoor soapboxing and indoor meetings). The Party emphasized the need for all members to engage in sports and public speaking, both as a means of recruitment and as a physical representation of their political beliefs. And while they performed Communism in their private lives as well, the very public nature of participation in radical sports leagues and soapbox oration, the physicality of these activities, exemplifies the totality of Communist membership, an experience that encompassed the body as much as the mind.

Sports and the Communist Body

I'm a Rambler; I'm a Rambler from Manchester Way
I get all me pleasure the hard moorland way
I may be a wage-slave on Monday
But I am a free man on Sunday⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁹ “New York Workers School, 1929-1930,” SAD MS, TAM.145, box 2, folder 19, WLA; and “A.B.C. of Agit-Prop Work.”

⁴²⁰ Ewan MacColl, “The Manchester Rambler,” 1932.

When the Kinder Scout trespassers returned to Hayfield accompanied by supporters, onlookers, and county officials, undercover agents dressed as hikers pointed out the supposed ringleaders for immediate arrest. In the trial that followed a few weeks later, Comrades Julius Clyne, Benny Rothman, David Mussbaum (variously called Nesbitt and Nussbaum in news reports), and Anthony Walter Gillett received sentences ranging from two to four months for trespass, inciting to riot, and breach of the peace. “Mr. Justice Acton” also sentenced rambler John Thomas Anderson six months for doing “grievous bodily harm” to “special keeper” Edward Beever.⁴²¹ The harsh sentences levied against the five young men in part demonstrate the aristocracy’s determination to hold on to British land use traditions, judicial contempt for working-class radicalism, and British society’s seeming disregard for the health and well-being of working-class bodies. Direct actions like the mass trespass were not merely political demonstrations against capitalism and the continuing commodification of open spaces, however; they also illustrate Communist concern for workers’ mental and physical fitness. Although they used athletics to promote a broad range of working-class concerns, British and American Communists did not do so simply as a means of politicizing sport. Rather, they campaigned for games on Sundays, better athletic facilities, and the freedom to cycle, ramble, sing, picnic, and camp where they wanted because of their deeply held belief that exercise

⁴²¹ “Ramblers Charged: Alleged ‘Mass Trespass’ on Kinder Scout,” *London Times*, 26 April 1932; and “Rioting on Kinder Scout: Five Youths Sent to Goal,” *London Times*, 8 July 1932.

and fellowship in the countryside would help alleviate the devastating physical and emotional effects of industrial labor.

The CP and its affiliated organizations politicized sport through the body in four distinct ways. In the radical press, they differentiated Communist sport from Socialist and capitalist sport, exposed the politics behind mainstream sporting competitions, revealed the class inequalities in leisure culture, and demonstrated their own concern for worker health that mirrored Soviet propaganda. But Communists did not merely talk and write about sports; they also put those words into action, forming competitive sports leagues, cycling clubs, and rambling and hiking associations where likeminded youth could gather and talk politics while improving their health. Communist athletes also exhibited their commitment to revolutionary sport through direct actions that defied land use restrictions or bans on Sunday games and used so-called capitalist sporting events as sites for raising awareness of social injustice, thereby making the material body a political instrument. Physical culture also served as a vital recruitment tool, particularly for the Young Communist League, who believed young workers needed fellowship as much as political education and that group physical activities facilitated the development of worker solidarity. Following a brief history of Communist sports in the United States and Great Britain, I will analyze the discursive, material, and social aspects of radical sports and show that participation in radical physical culture demonstrated young workers' commitment to the revolutionary class struggle and constituted a physical expression of Communism.

Sports fell under the purview of the YCL in both the US and UK; a tradition dating back to nineteenth-century Socialist youth sports organizations affiliated with the International Federation for Physical Education and Sport (Lucerne Sport International or LSI). The LSI promoted socialist internationalism and fellowship through sport, not revolutionary struggle, so the Soviet Union founded the Red Sport International (RSI) in 1921 with an explicit mission to make athletics a vital component of that struggle, and political factionalism became part of radical physical culture. In April 1923, members from six sections of the Clarion Cycling Club (CCC) met with representatives from trade councils, the Independent Labour Party, Labour Party, and individual trade unions to form the London branch of what would become the British Workers Sport Federation.⁴²²

Socialist sport did not have the same foothold in the United States, an issue that *Young Worker* editor H. Sidney Bloomfield addressed in “The Sport Problem in the United States,” where he chastised the working-class movement for neglecting sport despite it “[constituting] one of labor’s most serious problems to solve.” The paper’s editors noted that young workers in Canada and Chicago had formed sports federations and urged other Young Workers League (YWL, the precursor to the YCL) branches to follow suit.⁴²³ This came to fruition at a January 1924 convention in Chicago, where YWL delegates discussed the need for a national association to unite the various Communist sports leagues around the country, promote radical

⁴²² Minute Book, Workers Federation for Sport, 1923, CPGB MS, CP/ORG/MISC/05/03, LHASC.

⁴²³ H. Sidney Bloomfield, “The Sport Problem in the United States,” *The Young Worker*, April 1923; and Editorial, “The Sport Problem,” *The Young Worker*, April 1923.

athletics, and help plan and raise funds for tours and tournaments.⁴²⁴ A Workers Sport Conference in New York quickly followed, and delegates from YWL ethnic branches across the five boroughs voted in favor of RSI policies, elected sports reporter Emil Toikka head of the Workers Sport Alliance, and agreed to host a national conference of US radical athletic clubs.⁴²⁵ That conference took place at a 1927 Detroit track and field competition, where the assembled delegates from thirty sports clubs voted in favor of the Labor Sport Union.⁴²⁶

Such measures began as attempts to unite all worker sports organizations, evidenced by the BWSF's intention to "[promote] sport by organisations definitely attached to the working-class movement" through "affiliation to the International Federation for Physical Education and Sport," but they soon progressed into battles over legitimacy of both organizations following the LSI's initial refusal to admit the RSI delegation to its November 1925 Paris Conference.⁴²⁷ Fritz Reussner, one of two RSI representatives, was given the opportunity to speak on the question of sport unity and proposed that sections of the two organizations at least be allowed to compete with one another. Approval of this proposal, Reussner noted in his report, marked the

⁴²⁴ "With the Young Workers: Chicago Young Workers Elect New Committee: Issue Leaflets for the Working Youth," *Daily Worker* (US), 15 January 1924.

⁴²⁵ Emil Toikka, "Workers Hold Sporting Meet in New York: Plan to Call National Conference," *Daily Worker* (US), 31 March 1924; and "Athletic Games of Workers' Sports Clubs a Great Success," *Daily Worker* (US), 13 November 1924.

⁴²⁶ Gabe Logan, "Playing for the People: Labor Sport Union Athletic Clubs in the Lake Superior/Iron Range, 1927-1936," *Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Region* vol. 4, article 3, https://commons.nmu.edu/upper_country/vol4/iss1/3.

⁴²⁷ Minute Book, Workers Federation for Sport, 1923; and Fritz Reussner, "Red Sport International: The Results of the Paris Conference of the Lucerne Sport International," *International Press Correspondence* 5, no. 87, 17 December 1925, <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/inprecor/1925/index.htm>, accessed 13 November 2022.

LSI's official recognition of the RSI "as a factor in the international Labour sport movement," but, he continued, the change of their name to the International Socialist League for Sport and Physical Culture demonstrated their wish to differentiate themselves from the revolutionary Communist Third International and signal their continuing allegiance to the reformist Socialist Second International.⁴²⁸

The BWSF's effort to maintain harmony among the various political factions in its ranks began to crumble as early as the 1925 Frankfurt Olympiad, where, according to the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International, LSI planners failed to make the event a "mighty international demonstration of working class sport against bourgeois sport, bourgeois militarism, and the new war peril," marking the Olympiad as "a humdrum neutral pacifist function."⁴²⁹ The collapse came in 1928, when the BWSF sent club members to participate in the RSI-sponsored Moscow Spartakiade held that August. Secretary G.W. Sinfield had been duly warned—he received letters in June informing him of the LSI's decision not to attend and of the CCC's intention not to support any of its members who did—so he could not have been surprised when the CCC officially left the BWSF and threw out Spartakiade cyclist "May of Sheffield," and the LSI asked for a detailed list of BWSF participants, presumably with the goal of banning them from future competitions.⁴³⁰

Although they continued to maintain friendly relations with several Clarion branches,

⁴²⁸ "Minute Book, Workers Federation for Sport;" and Reussner, "Red Sport International."

⁴²⁹ "The Frankfurt Olympiad and Workers' Sport," *The International of Youth: Organ of the Executive Committee of the Young Communist International*, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/YOUTH/05/03, LHASC.

⁴³⁰ R. Silba to G.W. Sinfield, 20 June 1928; E. Sugden to G.W. Sinfield, 20 June 1928; E. Sugden to G.W. Sinfield, 25 September 1928; E. Sugden to G.W. Sinfield, 16 October 1928; and R. Silba to G.W. Sinfield, 9 November 1928, CPGB MS, CP/ORG/MISC/05/10, LHASC.

and the Clarion Cycling Club voted later to “come to an amicable agreement with the BWSF,” in breaking with the LSI’s directive not to participate in the Moscow Spartakiade, the British Workers’ Sports Federation announced their alignment with the RSI, international communism, and the new “class against class” Party line.⁴³¹ There appears to be no example of this struggle in the United States, and there might not have been one because, prior to the foundation of the RSI, the radical sports movement in North America was fairly weak.

The workers’ sport movement, Sinfield explained, must engage in a “bitter and relentless struggle against all types of capitalist sport organisations,” pointing out that while sport and healthful recreation were excellent things, they should be “used by the workers to build not only strength but intelligence and solidarity in their ranks, and not to turn out mere unthinking, muscular automatons.”⁴³² Sidney Bloomfield agreed, and argued that the “Sport Trusts” used athletics “not to promote health, manhood, and artistic expression,” but for profit alone, and this commercialization “[afforded] the movement a splendid opportunity of winning over...[the] young, robust, virile fighting proletarian who is a victim of capitalist exploitation.”⁴³³ Communist sports writers repeatedly accused professional and governmental sports organizations of being more concerned with profits and cultural imperialism than

⁴³¹ “Clarion Cyclists Vote for Red Sport Unity: Easter Conference at York Smashes Anti-Soviet Reformists,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, May 1, 1932; and “3rd National Conference, British Workers Sports Federation, affiliated with the Red Sports International, March 4-5, 1933,” CPGB MS, CP/ORG/MISC/05/10, LHASC.

⁴³² George Sinfield, “The Workers’ Sports Movement (Including an account of the experiences of the first British Workers football team in Soviet Russia),” London, 1927, Boxed Pamphlets, YC01.24/WOR, MML.

⁴³³ Bloomfield, “The Sport Problem in the United States.”

with the bodies of the athletes they exploited and the health of the workers who cheered them on.⁴³⁴

T.M. Condon of the BWSF maintained that radical sports culture should not be just about politics but should also provide workers with a much-needed distraction from “their immediate economic problems.”⁴³⁵ This proved impossible with the prohibitive costs associated with team sports, particularly in London. Condon claimed that the London County Council required deposits for access to their cricket and football pitches and payment for dressing room usage and the services of referees and umpires. Add to these the cost of transportation to the pitches, and it becomes apparent how under- and unemployed workers might not have been able to afford to play.⁴³⁶ Much like team sports, excursions to the countryside also came at considerable expense for working-class outdoor enthusiasts, both in terms of time and money. Benny Rothman noted that it cost at least two shillings (about £7.53 today) for a working class lass to “get clean out of the smoke and dirty atmosphere of

⁴³⁴ “Labour M.P. Boosts Capitalist Sport: Only Workers’ Sport Aids International Peace,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 January 1930; Michael Condon, “Workers’ Sport Reminiscences: Foreign Tours and Class Solidarity: How Right Wingers Organised Fake Team,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 10 January 1930; Michael Condon, “Workers’ Sport Reminiscences: ‘Shamateurs’ Who Toured Austria as Representatives of British Workers: Viennese Workers’ Welcome,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 10 January 1930; “The *Daily* and Sport,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 22 January 1930; R. Palme Dutt, “In Sport, As In Everything Else, There Can Be No Peace Between the Classes,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 25 January 1930; Robert Smith, “The Olympics and the Negro Athlete,” *New Sport and Play: An Illustrated Labor Sports Magazine*, vol. 1, num. 1 (April 1932), Thomas J. Mooney Papers (hereafter cited as TJM MS), BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley (hereafter cited as BL); and “Helping to Build a Camp for Workers’ Children,” *Daily Worker* (US), 22 June 1938.

⁴³⁵ T.M. Condon, “The Fight for the Workers’ Playing Fields,” London Workers’ Football Council (BWSF), Boxed Pamphlets, YE07.04/FIG, MML.

⁴³⁶ Condon, “Fight for the Workers’ Playing Fields.”

Manchester and its tentacles of suburbia.”⁴³⁷ A “Stepney Sportsman” worried that those who worked for “wages that could hardly keep a maggot alive, let alone a human being,” might have difficulty paying their way, and suggested that ramblers pool resources and rent lorries so that “unemployed comrades [could] come along for free.”⁴³⁸ Delegates to the 1937 British Youth Peace Conference still found the costs of recreation prohibitive, this despite a partnership between the Youth Hostel Association and British Railways that offered cheap fares to members on “*bona fide* walking or cycling tours.”⁴³⁹

As for games on Sunday, Condon reminded readers that for many working youth, “this [was] the one full day, for many the only day, when they can play games,” and that this one day should not be “reserved for church,” but for young workers to “spend as they please.”⁴⁴⁰ In another pamphlet on the fight for Sunday games in Tottenham, Condon asked, “*How many property-owners of this district forgo their game of golf or tennis on Sundays?* How many of them have not got motor-cars which can take them out to far pleasanter places than Tottenham for their Sunday recreation?”⁴⁴¹ He also claimed that Islington, one of London’s largest boroughs, had no playing field open for Sunday matches and that very few cycle tracks and public swimming pools existed in the whole of London.

⁴³⁷ Bernard Rothman, “Trespass—En Masse! Fight for Workers’ Hiking Rights,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, 1 May 1932.

⁴³⁸ “Stepney Sportsman,” “Can We Afford to Ramble?” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, 1 May 1932.

⁴³⁹ *Youth in Britain Today: a survey in six parts, a programme for advance*, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/YOUTH/04/03, LHASC.

⁴⁴⁰ Condon, “Fight for Workers’ Playing Fields.”

⁴⁴¹ T.M. Condon, “Tottenham Sunday Games Banned! A Demand for Increased Playing Facilities for the Young Workers of Tottenham,” Boxed Pamphlets, YE12/TOT, MML. Emphasis in the original.

Communists in the US and UK especially lamented the fact that children in working-class families often spent the hot summer months roaming the streets of the city or swimming in East End canals, while their middle- and upper-class contemporaries enjoyed the “advantages of physical activity and supervised play” at “exclusive profit-making summer camps.”⁴⁴² In an issue of *The Worker Sportsman* featuring articles about water sports, L. Kenton had this to say about swimming opportunities for London’s working-class youth:

We in London are well off for swimming facilities. There are the canals; there is the river of Wapping, a bit smelly and oily, of course, but that’s only to be expected near the docks. On any summer evening you can see hundreds of young chaps and kiddies splashing about in the foul, evil-smelling Thames water. But then, when you live in the bug-hatches of Hoxton or Wapping, when you sweat all day long at the bench and sleep at night in a small room, with four brothers and one tiny window...it’s a relief even to swim in the stinking Thames.⁴⁴³

The photographs that accompanied this article showed children—all skinny, seemingly malnourished boys—perched atop or treading water beside a barge in one of London’s industrial canals. To hammer home the dangers posed by such activity, the next month’s edition reported that a child’s body had been discovered in one canal and that Henry Ford and John Staples, both of Shoreditch, had received fines for swimming in another.⁴⁴⁴ In photos of American YCL members building summer camps for working-class children, by contrast, the youth appear muscular, happy, and generally healthier. These images revealed the stark contrast between undernourished

⁴⁴² “The Street is the Playing Field of the Workers’ Kiddie,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, 1 May 1932; “An East End Lido,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 2, vol. 1, June 1932; and “Helping to Build a Camp for Workers’ Children,” *The Daily Worker* (US), 22 June 1928.

⁴⁴³ L. Kenton, “Open Air Bathing Deluxe!” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 2, vol. 1, June 1932.

⁴⁴⁴ “Notes of the Month,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 3, vol. 1, July 1932.

children seeking amusement on the dusty streets or relief from the heat in East End canals and the strapping, shirtless young men erecting a cabin in the lush green countryside of upstate New York.

Hyperbolic or not, discourse produced by Communists and non-Communists about the lack of public spaces for physical recreation and concomitant lobbying efforts led to passage of the *Physical Training and Recreation Act of 1937* in Great Britain. This gave local Boards of Education the power to award grants to local authorities for the procurement of preexisting “recreational facilities, including gymnasiums, playing fields, swimming baths, bathing places, holiday camps and camping sites, and other buildings and premises for physical training and recreation.” Moneys from Parliament could also be used to pay for qualified teachers and coaches at these facilities as well as fund a National College of Physical Training for England and Wales.⁴⁴⁵ Comparable measures in the United States came through New Deal agencies like the Civil Works Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps, both of which provided resources and manpower for the erection and renovation of schools, libraries, campgrounds, and nature trails throughout the country.⁴⁴⁶

The Soviet Union stressed the importance of sport as a means of keeping the body prepared for the coming war against the forces of capitalism, an imperative echoed in literature produced by Communist youth organizations in Great Britain and

⁴⁴⁵ *Physical Training and Recreation Act, 13 July 1937*, TNA, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Edw8and1Geo6/1/46/contents>, accessed 13 November 2022. This act, the last provision stated emphatically, did not apply to Northern Ireland.

⁴⁴⁶ Paul K. Conkin, *The New Deal*, Third Edition (Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 1992); and Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), Chapter 6.

the United States. The Soviet State, George Sinfield maintained, regarded physical culture as “important and necessary,” and “[considered] the welfare of the workers to be its first consideration.”⁴⁴⁷ Regular exercise not only made healthy proletariat bodies, but also gave them the “capacity to shoulder responsibility within Socialist industry” and made them “better fitted to take their full share in the historic task of Socialist construction.”⁴⁴⁸ To that end, British and American reporters explained, the Soviets built lavish facilities like Moscow’s Dynamo Stadium where football, volleyball, net-ball, and lawn tennis clubs practiced and held tournaments, but they also contended, “nearly every factory [had] its own swimming bath...free to all workers.”⁴⁴⁹ This, of course, was not true, as the state struggled to provide adequate housing, much less the crèches, dining halls, and communal laundries they also promised workers.⁴⁵⁰

Yet the Soviet Union persisted in glorifying the socialist athlete, promoting the ideal performing Communist body as mentally and physically fit, capable of withstanding whatever opposition came its way. British and American sports writers assisted in this campaign, lauding the achievements of Soviet sportswomen and men in photographs and reports about friendly tours and international sports competitions.

⁴⁴⁷ Sinfield, “The Workers Sports Movement.”

⁴⁴⁸ George Sinfield, “A Nation of Champions: All About Soviet Sport,” Boxed Pamphlets, YC01.24/NAT, MML.

⁴⁴⁹ Ivor Montagu, “A Date with the Dynamos,” Ivor Montagu Papers (hereafter cited as IM MS), CP/IND/MONT/3/4, LHASC; and L. Kenton, “Open Air Bathing Deluxe!”

⁴⁵⁰ Lynn Attwood, *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia*, 4 and 242. Lynn Attwood argues that for most people during the Soviet period, the search for adequate or better housing was a major aspect of their lives. People married apartments, denounced neighbors, and used various illegal means to acquire more living space. Though this was primarily an urban phenomenon, adequate housing proved elusive for the many men and women who flocked to new Soviet industrial centers as well.

The cover of the inaugural issue of *The Worker Sportsman*, for example, does not feature a photograph of a British athlete, but that of a Russian gymnast in a contorted pose, and half of another page shows a touring Russian sailors' football team whose members exude physical health, stamina, and beauty.⁴⁵¹ As Erik Jensen has argued about images of bloated Weimar leaders, these photographs offered viewers a "vivid corporeal metaphor" for the new Bolshevik government and its people.⁴⁵²

Readers unable to afford a trip to Russia had only these types of images for confirmation of Soviet physical prowess, at least until the passage of the Anglo-Soviet Pact during World War II, when Parliament lifted visa restrictions and allowed a Russian delegation to visit Britain on their way home from an International Student Assembly in the United States.⁴⁵³ These representatives of ideal Soviet youth, according to the pamphlet, drew enthusiastic crowds wherever they went, and demonstrated the success of socialist education and training, instruction that began in the Soviet youth organization the Octoberists and continued through the Pioneers and Komsomols, where group leaders used "healthy...leisure and participation in voluntary social activities" as a means of training "responsible [citizens]."⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ G.W. Sinfield, "British Workers' Sports Delegation Visit to U.S.S.R.," *The Worker Sportsman* vol. 1, no. 1, 1 May 1932.

⁴⁵² Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 3.

⁴⁵³ "Russian Workers' Football Team Arrives in May: Industrial Towns to Be Visited," *Daily Worker* (UK), 1 January 1930; "Victoria Park to Get Great Spartakiade: Football, Running, Net-ball, and Children's Events," *Daily Worker* (UK), 22 January 1930; "Will Russian Team Be Banned? Visas Not Yet Granted by Government," *Daily Worker* (UK), 12 April 1930; and "Soviet Youth Visits Britain: Report of the Visit of the Soviet Youth Delegation, November-December 1942, National Union of Students and the ASYFA," CPGB MS, CP/CENT/YOUTH/04/06, LHASC.

⁴⁵⁴ "Soviet Youth Organizations: Pioneers, Komsomols, Sport and Culture," CPGB MS, CP/CENT/YOUTH/04/06, LHASC.

Though British and American Communists were quick to criticize youth organizations in their respective countries, such as an exposé accusing General Sir Robert Baden-Powell of using the Scouts in Britain as a tool of capitalism and imperialism, all three iterations of organized youth culture had remarkably similar missions, as each organization instilled in their charges the importance of duty to country, fellow citizens, and one's body.⁴⁵⁵ A Pioneer, for example, was advised to "[take] care of his own health," to be "tolerant and cheerful," never to "swear, smoke, or drink," and to do "setting-up exercises" every morning. Komsomol members, meanwhile, kept "physically fit" through military training and organized "sports, games, and other leisure activities" for their younger counterparts.⁴⁵⁶

Editors, reporters, and readers framed their discussions about worker sports not only within the context of political struggles, but also in terms of worker health. In his greeting to readers of *The Worker Sportsman*, CPGB National Secretary Harry Pollitt brought the two together, noting that sport would help develop "a big, fine upstanding race of young workers, healthy, strong, and of good physical stamina" able "more effectively [to] participate in all the struggles of the workers."⁴⁵⁷ The paper's medical correspondent agreed, but cited the many impediments that young

⁴⁵⁵ Minnie Carson, "Report on YWL activity to the 1929 District 13 Convention," RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 1791; Boy Scouts of America, <https://www.scouting.org/discover/faq/question10/>; "Baden-Powell Exposed!" CPGB MS, CP/CENT/YOUTH/04/06, LHASC. The Pioneer Summer Camps served as a recruitment tool for the Party as well. In a report on YWL activity to District 13's 1929 convention, Minnie Carson noted that California's three Pioneer Camps reached many "non-party parents," but that no follow up had occurred. Though Baden-Powell's original oath said nothing about a scout's body, the current one in use by scouts in the United States includes the line "To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight."

⁴⁵⁶ "Soviet Youth Organizations."

⁴⁵⁷ Harry Pollitt, "Harry Pollitt Our President Sends Us Greetings," *The Worker Sportsman* vol. 1, no. 1, 1 May 1932.

workers faced in trying to maintain healthy bodies. Despite these obstacles, the author called good health a special “duty of...class and cause” and urged young workers to “make every effort to be as physically fit as...possible under such adverse conditions.” Radicals continued to make the case for working-class sport throughout the 1930s and focused on the benefits of rambling and cycling, two less strenuous activities that they argued appealed to youth with pre-existing health problems or exhaustion due to long workdays or physically taxing occupations.⁴⁵⁸

Communist and Communist-affiliated organizations backed up this rhetoric by offering concrete measures to increase and/or maintain worker health. Some of this appeared in articles by the “Medical Correspondent” to *The Worker Sportsmen*, one of which stressed the importance of dental health, giving in excruciating detail examples of diseases that accompanied poor oral hygiene, and ended with the suggestion that the “mouth being in order” should serve as a one requirement for membership on a team or in a sports league.⁴⁵⁹ Subsequent columns discussed the “physiological results of muscular activity” and “exercise in relation to health,” the “effects of exercise on important body activities” like breathing, circulation, and the elimination of waste, and, finally, “exercise and the nervous system.”⁴⁶⁰ The paper’s cycling reporter named his sport as the most conducive for improving worker health

⁴⁵⁸ *Youth in Britain Today*.

⁴⁵⁹ Medical Correspondent, “Keeping Fit: Care of the Teeth,” *The Worker Sportsman* vol. 1, no. 1, 1 May 1932.

⁴⁶⁰ Medical Correspondent, “Keeping Fit: Exercise and Health,” *The Worker Sportsman* vol. 1, no. 2, 1 June 1932; and Medical Correspondent, “Keeping Fit: Exercise and the Nervous System,” *The Worker Sportsman* vol. 1, no. 4, August 1932.

and used the body to promote adoption of the fixed wheel, a style of cycling that required continuous peddling, but, they argued, put less stress on the muscles.⁴⁶¹

Radical sports enthusiasts did not simply talk about the positive effects of physical culture; they also formed associations and sports leagues, offered classes and facilities, and in general created the conditions under which workers could improve their health, provided they had the means and time for leisurely pursuits. When District 13 (California) moved their headquarters to 121 Haight St. in the early 1930s, they did so with the intention of offering more physical culture for young workers. The on-site gymnasium meant that San Francisco's LSU teams no longer had to worry about finding and paying for adequate facilities for practices and games.⁴⁶² In the UK, the Springburn Workers' Sport Club reported that they combined sports with lectures like "Food in relation to physical fitness" and "sex psychology" to help members "develop [their] mentality as well as [their] physique."⁴⁶³

Communists sometimes even had doctors on hand to ensure the safety of athletes or demonstrators, as they did at a 1932 San Francisco "Free Tom Mooney" street run and at a 1937 sit-in organized by Workers Alliance Local 10 at a New York City relief bureau. At the latter, organizers Helen Lynch and Eugene Benton also arranged for food and drink to be delivered, and a "gymnasium instructor" to lead protestors in "setting up exercises."⁴⁶⁴ Finally, advertisements in Party newspapers

⁴⁶¹ "Merits of the Fixed Wheel," *The Workers Sportsman* no. 2, vol. 1, June 1932.

⁴⁶² "With the Young Workers: Girls Basketball Team, Gym Class Starts in S.F.," *Western Worker*, 1 January 1934.

⁴⁶³ "From the Clubs," *The Worker Sportsman* no. 3, vol. 1, July 1932.

⁴⁶⁴ "Free Tom Mooney Street Run!" Flier, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B410, carton 27, folder 32, BL; and Gudrun Borg, "We Sing as We Sit," *Women Today* (July 1937): 11.

often listed “holiday homes” that catered to vegetarian diets, one of which called itself a “food reform guest house” where “special diets are studied” and another promoted simply as the “ideal health home.”⁴⁶⁵

Communists in particular emphasized women’s health in their efforts to secure more training facilities for young workers and often catered to the specific needs of female athletes in the physical activities they offered. Britain’s National Council of Girls’ Clubs, with the express mission to “secure to every girl and young woman the fullest possible opportunities,” urged its affiliates during World War II to “step in and fill the breach” brought about by wartime mobilization that had resulted in the loss of facilities and experienced leaders in girls’ physical culture.⁴⁶⁶ District 13’s Mini Carson understood the time constraints of industrial wage work, particularly for young women also burdened with unpaid domestic labor, and offered calisthenics classes at their Haight Street location for “girls who work and do not get any recreation.”⁴⁶⁷

The radical press lauded the



Figure 4: "Miss F. Birchenough in Action," *The Worker Sportsman*, July 1932. Permission not yet granted.

⁴⁶⁵ *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, 1 May 1932.

⁴⁶⁶ Elsie Fisher, “The National Council of Girls’ Clubs,” *Youth News*, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/YOUTH/06/04, LHASC.

⁴⁶⁷ “With the Young Workers: Girls Basketball Team, Gym Class Starts in S.F.,” *Western Worker*, 1 January 1934.

accomplishments of the athletic women and people of color within their ranks, describing their exploits in local and international competitions and citing their physical strength and competitive spirit as an indication that they could and should be allowed to engage fully in physical culture. Robert Smith called Jim Crowism the “boss policy” of competitive sports in the US and urged African American athletes to join the LSU and compete alongside their white comrades. As an example of interracial cooperation, the story featured a picture of sprinter Bill Duff, said to have represented the LSU at the 1931 Spartakiade.⁴⁶⁸ An article in *The Worker Sportsman* featured a photograph of author Florence Birchenough engaged in the shot put. Muscles, especially in her legs, ripple as she prepares her body to hurl the steel ball across the pitch.

Birchenough described the evolution of international women’s sports competitions—at the time held between the Olympic Summer Games—and lamented the fact that Great Britain had thus far not sent women track and field athletes to the Olympics. Her foray into international competitions began with basketball, but she quickly became enamored with the shot put, javelin, and discus, writing, “they are events requiring a great deal of patience and a knowledge of technical points. They are particularly suited to anyone having a broad and sturdy build.”⁴⁶⁹ They were also events that required considerable strength, a physical characteristic not often associated with white middle- and upper-class women and certainly not condoned by

⁴⁶⁸ Robert Smith, “The Olympics and the Negro Athlete,” *New Sport and Play*, April 1932.

⁴⁶⁹ Florence Birchenough, “Experiences of Women’s International Athletics,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 3, vol. 1, July 1932.

mainstream British and American culture. Exceptions to this might have been the Scots, who encouraged both girls and boys to engage in the Scottish traditional sport of wrestling, and Weimar Germans, who promoted women's boxing as sport and entertainment.⁴⁷⁰

Birchenough made lasting friendships in international competitions, a fact that speaks to the socialist belief that physical recreation fostered camaraderie among young workers.⁴⁷¹ And it was with this goal in mind that the YCI encouraged its affiliates to “satisfy [young workers’] need for entertainment and recreation” by offering “genuine proletarian sociability” in the form of “festivals, political satires, dramatic circles, choirs, youth homes, camps, outings, [and] rambles.”⁴⁷² Unlike Socialist Party youth organizations and those sponsored by religious institutions that also engaged in these forms of recreation, however, Communists saw these activities not merely as opportunities for fellowship, but also for the promotion of Communist ideologies and political goals.



Figure 5: Bill Duff, *New Sport and Play*, April 1932. Permission not yet granted.

⁴⁷⁰ Wilson Hall to George Sinfield, 8 August 1941; CPGB MS, CP/ORG/MISC/05/10, LHASC. Enclosed with a letter to BWSF secretary George Sinfield was a flier announcing a “Grand Physical Cultural Display” featuring female Scottish wrestler Agnes Clark. She and her troupe of athletes promised exhibitions of skipping, something called “equilibristics,” wrestling, muscle control, and artistic posing, among other physical feats. On German women’s boxing, see Jensen, “Belle of the Brawl,” in *Body by Weimar*, 50-98. Jensen notes that despite continuing promotion of women’s athletics, the National Socialists decried women boxers as symptomatic of the Weimar Republic as a “haven for female degeneracy.” Jensen, *Body by Weimar*, 137.

⁴⁷¹ Birchenough, “Experiences of Women’s International Athletics.”

⁴⁷² “A.B.C. of Agit-Prop Work.” Sidney Bloomfield insisted that people in the United States were obsessed with sports from a young age and suggested that Americanization came with participation in “every phase” of American life, including sports. Bloomfield, “The Sport Problem in the United States,” *The Young Worker*, April 1923.

Rambles, for example, accomplished this with little effort, as Benny Rothman, folk singer Ewan MacColl, and others contended, as the slow pace allowed participants to sing and hold meaningful discussions while also enjoying a walk in the countryside.⁴⁷³ Advertisements in Party literature and oral histories indicate that Communists did enjoy physical recreation for mere fellowship, but this desire sometimes came into conflict with Party objectives, as Minnie Carson suggested in a 1929 report on YWL activities where she criticized the San Francisco nucleus for spending “most of their time organizing socials and hikes” rather than the industrial work the Party ordered them to undertake.⁴⁷⁴

George Sinfield argued that a workers’ sports movement would “help to build a generation of thinking *and acting* worker-sportsmen,” and Communist athletes responded with great enthusiasm, throwing their bodies into the working-class struggle through sport.⁴⁷⁵ They took to the streets and playing fields of Great Britain and the United States to protest a variety of injustices, some particular to sports and others to the wider working-class struggle. Direct actions could be as simple as participating in events like May Day demonstrations in New York, San Francisco, or Hyde Park, where, *The Worker Sportsman* reported, some 50 or 60 BWSF cyclists

⁴⁷³ Special Branch Report (3 May 1941), Records of the Security Service, KV3/395, TNA. The Secret Service understood this as well. One informant reported plans for summer rambles led by poet and composer Randall Swinger that the CPGB would use as opportunities for recruitment.

⁴⁷⁴ “10th Anniversary of the Clubhouse,” *Western Worker*, 1 November 1934; *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, May 1932; *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, June 1932; and Minnie Carson, “Young Workers League Report to the 1929 District 13 Convention,” RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 1791. One such ad invited readers to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Los Angeles Nature Friends clubhouse, while others were from ramblers and nudists looking for companionship.

⁴⁷⁵ Sinfield, “The Workers Sports Movement.”

joined “a contingent of hikers [and] runners.”⁴⁷⁶ But workers also used sports to raise funds for striking workers, engaged in protest runs for incarcerated labor activist Tom Mooney, and openly defied bans on Sunday sports (commonly referred to as “Blue Laws” in the United States).⁴⁷⁷ Evidence from 1932 alone shows that Communists regarded sporting events as fertile ground and Communist bodies as important tools in the struggle, as radical sportsmen and –women participated in several international competitions and sports tours, a Counter-Olympics in Chicago, a political protest at the Los Angeles Summer Games, and mass trespasses like the one at Kinder Scout discussed in the introduction to this chapter. The latter three were arguably the most ambitious direct actions undertaken by young Communists in the early twentieth century, and all illustrate not only embodied Communism, but also the physical totality of that experience, as each event required a particularly radical discipline and resulted in violence and suffering for some participants.

In his writings, rambling enthusiast Benny Rothman made the case for greater freedom to roam the countryside in economic and political terms, but more importantly, he argued that bodies subjected to the rigors of industrial labor needed an occasional break from the fetid air of Manchester. Rothman wrote that in the summer months workers “go Open Air Mad,” perhaps from a “primitive desire for open spaces,” but more likely as a means of forgetting the “monotony and deadly dullness

⁴⁷⁶ “Worker Sportsmen in S.F. May Day Parade,” *Western Worker*, 15 May 1932; and Spartacus, “Under the Signpost,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 2, vol. 1, June 1932.

⁴⁷⁷ “‘Free Mooney’ Run via Market St., S.F. Prior Mass Meeting,” *Western Worker*, 7 November 1932; and J.R., “Fined for Seeking Health,” *The Worker Sportsman* no. 1, vol. 1, 1 May 1932.

of factory work” away from the “stink and smoke of the cities and towns.”⁴⁷⁸ The previously mentioned “Stepney Sportsman” agreed, writing in the next issue of *The Worker Sportsman* that the “glorious countryside,” with its “beautiful meadows...[and]...flowers, green grass, trees, hills, and valleys” called to urbanites, coaxing them “out of the slums.”⁴⁷⁹ Rothman encouraged hikers to form a national Workers’ Ramblers Federation to increase pressure on Parliament to enact legislation providing greater access to open spaces, certainly, but he also urged other hiking organizations to follow the example set by the Manchester Ramblers and engage in direct actions against landowners.

Rothman made sure that Derbyshire residents knew about the upcoming mass trespass at Kinder Scout, as he and others sent press releases to local newspapers, hung fliers in neighboring villages, and requested participation from rambling clubs all around the Peak District. Area newspapers assisted in advertising the event by publishing that press release and allowing local hiking enthusiasts and conservationists to weigh in on the matter in op-ed pieces and letters to the editor. An 18 April 1932 article in the *Derby Daily Telegraph*, for example, announced the mass trespass and the BWSF’s goals of winning better facilities and preventing the closing of more footpaths. They expected fifteen Lancashire and two Sheffield rambling associations to participate.⁴⁸⁰ The *Nottingham Journal* and the *Sheffield Daily*

⁴⁷⁸ Rothman, “Trespass—En Masse!”

⁴⁷⁹ “Stepney Sportsman,” “Can We Afford to Ramble?”

⁴⁸⁰ “A Mass Trespass: Derbyshire Selected by Ramblers,” *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 18 April 1932.

Telegraph printed near replica articles the following day.⁴⁸¹ Then came the opinion pieces, beginning with one from a Borrowash resident calling themselves “Peakite,” who wrote that rambling clubs should “leave the securing of better facilities...to persons in an influential quarter.”⁴⁸² The *Sheffield Independent* chimed in on April 19, warning of a “wholesale invasion of Kinder Scout.” When asked for his opinion on the impending “invasion,” Sheffield and District Ramblers’ Federation Treasurer J. R. Tate, said, “I do not personally know anything about the affair, and if I did, I would not be willing to give any information about it.”⁴⁸³ The Sheffield ramblers that did know something about the affair announced their intentions to the *Independent* shortly thereafter. Two clubs with at least 60 members planned to take the train from L.M.S. Railway Station, Sheffield, at 8:45 on Sunday. Disembarking in Hope, they would then hike over Rushop Edge to Hayfield, where they would join up with Manchester ramblers at 2:00 pm.⁴⁸⁴

Pundits often cited small farmers as the primary victims of trespassers and accused hikers of littering, destroying property, disturbing the peace, and causing livestock to escape from these family farms.⁴⁸⁵ As Rothman and others pointed out, most of the forbidden land existed on the huge country estates of the British aristocracy and not the yeoman farmer, but this was not the point for those worried

⁴⁸¹ Ramblers Up in Arms: Mass Trespass Arranged for Next Sunday,” *Nottingham Journal*, 19 April 1932; and “Object of Ramblers’ Rally at Hayfield,” *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 19 April 1932.

⁴⁸² “From Our Post-Bag,” *Derby Evening Telegraph*, 20 April 1932.

⁴⁸³ “Mass Trespass by Ramblers: Kinder Scout Access Claim,” *Sheffield Independent*, 19 April 1932.

⁴⁸⁴ “Kinder Scout Invasion Plans: ‘Mass Trespass’ of Sheffield Ramblers,” *Sheffield Independent*, 22 April 1932.

⁴⁸⁵ “Ramblers Plan Mass Trespass: A Closed Estate, Yorkshire Clubs and Beauty Spot Near Keighley,” *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 12 November 1930.

about the character of the weekend Rambler. Mr. L. Ramsbottom of the Derbyshire Rural Community Council criticized those who would ruin the good works of the Peak District and Derbyshire Footpath Societies by engaging in rash activism and illegal behavior. “Some of us believe that access even to these [places] may be secured by reasonable negotiation and decent standards of behavior,” Ramsbottom wrote. “But such foolishness as is now reported to be contemplated cannot but bring the cause of rambles into disrepute just at a time when it is agreed that the general standard of conduct is greatly improved.”⁴⁸⁶ Ramsbottom’s opinion about “the general standard of conduct” references class-based criticisms often levied against hikers and cyclists, especially those city folk who dared to venture out to the countryside on Sundays. It suggested, and not too subtly, that working-class rambles and cyclists did not understand the ways of the country, nor did they concern themselves with proper stewardship of natural spaces, an interesting accusation considering the extent to which these elites contributed to the pollution problem in industrial cities like Manchester and hence the need for workers to find relief in the countryside.

Anti-working-class sentiment also guided the rhetoric of the mass trespass, as seen in the ways that most publishers chose to characterize the demonstrators, gamekeepers, and the event itself, using the coded language of class and barbarity. It was a “wild scene” on Kinder that day according to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*. Parish councilors, constables, and other local elites watched the “mountain melee”

⁴⁸⁶ “Mass Trespas Idea ‘Foolish’: Derby Appeals to Ramblers,” *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 21 April 1932.

instigated by a “mob styling themselves ‘The British Workers’ Sport Federation,’” where “gamekeepers tried in vain” to prevent the “mass invasion” or “mass raid” by an “army of ramblers” estimated to be five hundred strong. All agreed that the terrain made for an especially treacherous confrontation and that several participants nearly tumbled down the steep slope.⁴⁸⁷ A few days later, rambling columnist “Montana” called the mass trespass “a foolish experiment” and “a huge mistake” and accused the BWSF of being “entirely ignorant of sensible methods of agitation.”⁴⁸⁸

A few accounts, however, characterized the trespassers in decidedly more favorable terms. A reporter who apparently walked with the Sheffield contingent from the Hope train station to Edale described them as very considerate hikers, noting that they closed gates, buried all refuse, and did not engage in any acts of hooliganism. Another wrote that the demonstrators asked for permission to go on the moors, and it was only after gamekeepers refused that a “spearhead of the ramblers’ army consisting of 20 or 30 young men” rushed up the hill. One reporter even suggested that gamekeepers instigated the physical confrontation, stating that hikers were “ambushed by a cordon of about a dozen gamekeepers, armed with heavy sticks.” Several accounts noted that when ramblers succeeded in disarming their opponents, they simply broke the sticks and returned them to their owners. Perhaps

⁴⁸⁷ “Mass Trespass: Hikers Charged by 50 Gamekeepers,” *Gloucester Citizen*, 25 April 1932; “Mass Trespass on a Hill: Gamekeepers’ Fight with Army of Ramblers,” *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 25 April 1932; “Ramblers Battle with Keepers: Six Arrests After Mass Invasion; Man Injured,” *Sheffield Independent*, 25 April 1932; Sunday Scene on Kinder Scout: Six Ramblers Charged in Court,” *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 26 April 1932; and “Mountain-Side Melee: Hundreds of Ramblers Fight Their Way Through Cordon of Gamekeepers,” *Taunton Courier and Western Advertiser*, 27 April 1932 and *Western Gazette*, 29 April 1932.

⁴⁸⁸ Montana, “Notes for Ramblers,” *Liverpool Echo*, 30 April 1932.

the most favorable description of all involved the injured keeper, Edward Beever, who reportedly received immediate assistance from a demonstrator when he twisted an ankle in the scuffle.⁴⁸⁹

The arrests, convictions, and harsh sentences levied against the six young activists did not signal the end of the mass trespass movement, a movement that can be read as a performative critique of the alienation and commodification of land. On 17 July 1932, ramblers gathered at Jacob's Ladder, not far from Kinder Scout, and held a rally to protest the incarceration of their comrades. *The Worker Sportsman* reported that a contingent from the Rochdale Workers' Rambling Club "tramped 38 miles to the demonstration, starting the previous midnight."⁴⁹⁰ The assembled hikers signed petitions, passed a resolution to work for the prisoners' "unconditional release," and listened to speeches by "Comrade Wolfe, District Organizer for the BWSF, L. Helman, Secretary of the Ramblers' Rights Movement, and Dutson of the International Labour Defence."⁴⁹¹ After his release from prison in late August, Julius Clyne spoke before a crowd at Jacob's Ladder, saying, "It [his arrest and conviction] has increased my determination tenfold to go on with the movement for better facilities for ramblers...because it is only by direct action that we shall ever get access to mountains." Demonstrators announced a mass trespass on Froggatt Edge from Sheffield for the following Sunday but scrapped that plan for one along Abbey

⁴⁸⁹ "A Free Fight: Ramblers Clash with Keepers," *Edinburgh Evening News*, 25 April 1932; "Ramblers Fight Keepers: Dispute About Access to Moor; One Man Hurt; Six Arrested," *The Scotsman*, 25 April 1932; and "Wild Scenes on Kinder: One Injured; Six Arrests in Mass Raid," *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 25 April 1932.

⁴⁹⁰ "Hikers Sent to Prison: Savage Sentences on Workers for Trespassing," *The Worker Sportsman* no. 4, vol. 1, August 1932.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

Brook near Derwent in December.⁴⁹² Finally, an estimated 200 Sheffield ramblers organized a mass trespass over the Derbyshire moors on 18 September, but a crew of about 50 “gamekeepers and assistants” thwarted their efforts to ascend Abbey Clough.⁴⁹³

Meanwhile, worker sportsmen in the United States planned several direct actions intended to disrupt the 1932 Summer Games in Los Angeles and to promote the cause of incarcerated labor activist Tom Mooney. In a letter to the Tom Mooney Molders Defense Committee about the upcoming International Workers Athletic Meet (IWAM or Counter-Olympics), Frank Henderson of the LSU National Executive Board promised something big, a series of events so massive the California judiciary, the state government, really the entire world would marvel at the number of Communist bodies on the streets expressing their discontent through physical exertion. The Board intended to enlist athletes from as many workers sports leagues as possible to boycott the Los Angeles Games, engage in “Free Tom Mooney Street Runs,” and participate in an international worker sports meet unfettered by capitalist influence.⁴⁹⁴ In all of these direct actions, worker athletes would wear t-shirts and/or placards with the words “Free Tom Mooney” emblazoned upon them, marking their clothes and bodies as political entities and, as a result, making it easy for the police to

⁴⁹² “Jacob’s Ladder Meeting: Released Rambler Addresses Crowd,” *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 29 August 1932; and “Police on Moors: Ramblers Abandon Mass Trespass,” *Hull Daily Mail*, 5 September 1932.

⁴⁹³ “Ramblers Turned Back: Mass Trespass Prevented by Police and Gamekeepers,” *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 19 September 1932.

⁴⁹⁴ Frank Henderson to Tom Mooney Molders Defense Committee, 17 November 1931, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 11, folder 17, BL.

find and arrest them.⁴⁹⁵ Fliers for a run in San Francisco stated that the organizers saw this as “a most fitting way for amateur athletes from workers, farmers, or students organizations to protest the incarcerations of Mooney, Warren K. Billings,

the Scottsboro Nine, and “all other political prisoners.”⁴⁹⁶ Like their comrades across the Atlantic, worker athletes in the US also called for greater access to and increased funding for sports facilities, an end to Sunday Blue Laws and Jim Crowism in sports, and recognition of the Soviet Union by the International Olympic Committee.⁴⁹⁷

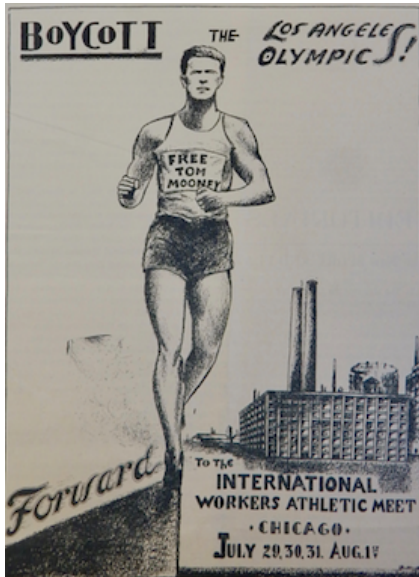


Figure 6: Philip Wolfe, *New Sport and Play*, April 1932. Permission not yet granted.

The LSU and Counter-Olympic Committee managed to pull off each event, including multiple street runs in major American cities, without the masses of bodies promised, but probably better

than expected turn-outs. Mooney street runs in San Francisco, Chicago, Cleveland, and New York, for example, never drew more than 30 participants, and, with the CP propensity to inflate statistics, one is left to wonder about the gap between reports and reality.⁴⁹⁸ However, Communists loved a good spectacle, and they undoubtedly scheduled speakers at either end of the courses and enlisted others to build platforms,

⁴⁹⁵ “Boycott the Los Angeles Olympics!” Cover, *New Sport and Play*, April 1932.

⁴⁹⁶ “Tom Mooney Street Run,” 21 February 1932, flier, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, BL.

⁴⁹⁷ “Boycott the Anti-Labor Olympics! Support the International Workers Athletic Meet!” flier announcing Counter-Olympics elimination meets in New York City, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, BL.

⁴⁹⁸ “Roamin’ the Districts,” *New Sport and Play*, April 1932.

carry signs, sell literature, pass out fliers, and sing revolutionary songs. Course lengths varied from 1.5 to 2.5 miles, and though police may have cordoned off the routes, runners more than likely navigated obstacle courses of weekend shoppers and vehicles. This meant exposing themselves to potential ridicule and anti-Communist violence, which was precisely the point, to bring this injustice to light in the most public way possible. Participants also had to contend with adverse weather, as they did during a heavy rainstorm in Cleveland, but runners there persisted, opting to circle Public Square several times rather than cancel the event.⁴⁹⁹

Reports on the winning times from these runs suggest that none of the participants could be described as Olympic-worthy, a fact in direct contrast to the rhetoric of the physically fit worker athlete found in most Communist literature.⁵⁰⁰ The cover of one issue of *New Sport and Play*, for example, features a drawing of a robust Mooney runner with prominent muscles and clean-cut appearance seemingly ready for an Olympic trial.⁵⁰¹ The inclusion of smokestacks in the background suggest that this athlete ran directly from the factory floor to the starting line, a rhetorical device employed on several occasions that year, such as a press release about a Counter-Olympic preliminary meet lauding Seymour Siporin, who “came directly from work where he was forced to be on the job for more than twenty hours at a stretch.” Though Siporin did not win the one-mile race, the Counter-Olympic Committee called him “a tremendous example of the spirit of worker athletes, and a

⁴⁹⁹ “Roamin’ the Districts.”

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

⁵⁰¹ *New Sport and Play*, cover, April 1932.

remarkable contrast” to “subsidized and pampered” Olympic athletes.⁵⁰² Of course, some worker athletes may have fit the profile of the ideal track-and-field star, as did the runner on a flier announcing a “Scottsboro-Tom Mooney” street run in Harlem sponsored by the Vesa Athletic Club, but because this image has no caption identifying the subject or the photographer, there is no way of knowing if he was indeed affiliated with Vesa, the LSU, or the CP for that matter.⁵⁰³

The Counter-Olympics entry form included a statement of principles that all entrants had to sign. Their signature marked their agreement to “promote widespread workers athletic and physical culture activity,” “support...the activities and struggles of the labor movement,” “promote sports activity with the trade unions,” “break down race discrimination in sports,” “struggle against the use of sports for capitalistic militarism,” and promote “unity with Soviet sportsmen.”⁵⁰⁴ Once they pledged adherence to these principles, male worker athletes could sign up to compete in twenty-one track and field events, women seven, and juniors six. Though the entry form included twelve swimming competitions—four for each category of athlete—plus diving and water polo for adult male entrants, the Committee had to cancel these once they lost access to a pool.⁵⁰⁵ They also had to change venues when Loyola University backed out of an agreement to host the event.

⁵⁰² “Mooney Sends Trophies; Greets International Workers’ Athletic Meet from Prison,” National Counter-Olympic press release, no date, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, BL.

⁵⁰³ “The Scottsboro Boys Must Not Die! Scottsboro-Tom Mooney Street Run!” flier, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, BL.

⁵⁰⁴ “Counter-Olympic International Workers Athletic Meet” entry form, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, BL.

⁵⁰⁵ Simon Gerson to Tom Mooney Molders Defense Committee, 22 July 1932, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, BL.

Yet the press release following the tournament proclaimed it a success, a “meet totally free of race prejudice” with an “excellent cross-section of the American worker athlete,” according to organizer and judge Leo Snell, who cited “complete harmony between the colored and white sportsmen.” All the planned track and field events occurred with the addition of a “Tom Mooney Medley Relay” won by the Yritys Athletic Club of Norwood, Massachusetts. This was not the international event envisioned by Gerson, Snell, and others, with no teams from outside the Northeast quadrant of the United States participating and most clubs coming from New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin, and St. Louis, Missouri.⁵⁰⁶

In comparison, an estimated 100,000 people attended the closing ceremony for the 1932 Summer Games in Los Angeles, and it was here that six members of the Young Communist League waged a demonstration against the continued incarceration of Tom Mooney.⁵⁰⁷ As a marching band struck the first notes that signaled the start of the ceremony, the six jumped the railing, unfurled a banner, and proceeded to circle the track while other YCL members showered the audience with fliers. In an interview conducted the next year, Captain William “Red” Hynes, head of the Los Angeles “Red Squad,” described participant Ethel Dell as one of four “Fighting Dells,” a “girl” who “not only [could] run, but [also had] a right-hand

⁵⁰⁶ Press release, National Counter-Olympic Committee, 17 August 1932, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, carton 27, folder 32, BL.

⁵⁰⁷ “\$2,000,000 Receipts, 1,000,000 Attendance Estimated for Olympics, Which Close Today,” *The New York Times*, 14 August 1932.

swing that [had] clouted many a man on the jaw.”⁵⁰⁸ Contrast this characterization with Sam Darcy’s depiction of Dell and fellow Mooney runner Ann Davis, who supposedly ran out of steam during the protest because they expected to get arrested long before the slow-reacting police caught up with them.⁵⁰⁹ Darcy’s sexist account notwithstanding, the CP and ILD understood that it took “courage” to “[place] their liberty in jeopardy in order to call...attention...to the frame-up of Tom Mooney.”⁵¹⁰ For her part, nineteen-year-old Ethel Dell told the jury that, if convicted, she would “come out more determined to carry on. We will never stop demonstrating as long as Mooney or any other class war prisoner is in jail. We are not sorry for what we did. We are proud of it.”⁵¹¹

Street corners, soapboxes, and stages

On the Downs almost any night you could find orators representing the Conservative, Liberal, Labour, and Communist Parties: ‘high’ Anglicans, low churchmen, respectable nonconformists who worship in chapels and the less respectable ones who carry boards proclaiming that God is not mocked and who sing revivalist hymns to the accompaniment of wheezy portable harmoniums. Any night as dusk fell and the meetings broke up you were likely to hear, mingling at one and the same time, the strains of ‘Land of Hope and Glory,’ ‘England Arise,’ ‘Abide With Me,’ and ‘Shall We Gather at the River?’ And the ‘Internationale.’ Always the ‘Internationale.’⁵¹²

This quote by Douglas Hyde, one-time editor of the Communist Party of Great Britain’s (CPGB) official newspaper *The Daily Worker*, demonstrates not only

⁵⁰⁸ Karl D. Pancake, “Ladies Who See Red,” *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 1933.

⁵⁰⁹ Sam Darcy to Tom Mooney, 17 February 1933, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, Carton 27, folder 32, BL.

⁵¹⁰ “Excerpts From Final Arguments of ILD Attorney Leo Gallagher and Defendants Acting as Own Counsel in Trial of Mooney Counter-Olympics Demonstrators,” August 1932, TJM MS, BANC MSS C-B 410, Carton 27, folder 32, BANC MSS C-B 410, BL.

⁵¹¹ Ibid.

⁵¹² Hyde, *I Believed*, 1.

the popularity and competitive nature of soapbox oration in early twentieth-century Bristol, but also the Downs as the perfect location for getting one's message heard by the greatest number of people. The modern Downs are two expanses of protected green space on the eastern bank of the river Avon, a place where local families gather for rest and recreation and tourists congregate to walk across historic Clifton suspension bridge. One imagines that the Downs would have been no different in the interwar period, as they would have provided an escape from industrial Bristol and given visitors a taste of the countryside while remaining close to home. As Hyde made clear, these visitors also likely encountered any number of soapbox orators who took advantage of the Downs' popularity by setting up shop and exclaiming the joys of Anglicanism, socialism, or any other "–ism" in vogue at that moment. What Hyde does not relate is the effort made by these men and women to create an atmosphere that would attract an audience. Undoubtedly, some orators arrived at the Downs with soapbox and literature in hand, picked a suitable location, climbed up, and began to speak. But others, particularly Communists if they followed the dictates of Party literature, planned each meeting as an event bordering on spectacle. "Whether [a meeting] took place in a member's kitchen or a large hall," John A Mahon reportedly told the audience at a CPGB propaganda conference, "There should be plenty of colour and display."⁵¹³ The same could be said of open-air meetings. These required not only the services of the speaker, but of comrades to build and decorate the platform with placards bearing the organization's name and "some pertinent slogan;"

⁵¹³ Special Branch Report (27 November 1938), Records of the Secret Service, KV3/392, TNA.

others to collect donations, signatures, and membership applications; and still others to parade around the audience, banners held aloft while singing radical songs.⁵¹⁴

Though it is impossible to know how many attained this level of complexity, YCL and CP promotions of the meeting ideal demonstrate its importance to their mission. It also illustrates the physicality of Communist public speaking that goes well beyond simply orating atop an apple crate or stepladder.



Figure 7: Marjorie Pollitt, *Daily Worker* (UK), 1 March 1938. Permission not yet granted.

The Party expected members to participate in lectures, forums, and open-air meetings as speakers, assistants, and attendees, evidenced by the overwhelming number of advertisements for such events in Party newspapers. Whether in Chicago, New York, London, Detroit, or Sheffield, members could hear stump speeches by Party candidates in lecture halls or, in the summer, at “Red Picnics.”⁵¹⁵

Or they might choose to attend the almost daily open-air meetings in the larger cities and listen to soapbox

⁵¹⁴ Peter V. Cacchione, *Public Speaking: A Speaker's Guide Book* (New York: Workers Library, 1942), Williamson Pamphlets, YW18/PUB, MML; “The A.B.C. of Agit-Prop;” and Special Branch Report (5 November 1939), Records of the Security Service, KV3/393, TNA. Forbes, like so many other rank-and-file members who were not soapbox orators, sold Communist literature on the weekends and sometimes assisted speakers like fellow rank-and-filer George Short.

⁵¹⁵ “Workers Party Candidates Go East and West,” *The Daily Worker*, 14 October 1924; “Red Picnic Presidential Campaign,” *The Daily Worker*, 22 June 1928; “What’s On,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 October 1937; and “What’s On,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 January 1939.

orations by rank-and-file activists.⁵¹⁶ The Party tried to attract attendees by asking foreign-born speakers to lecture in their native tongue and frequently combined educational talks with other leisure activities, such as events that promised dancing, songs, and recitations as well as speeches memorializing Communist icons or in support of current political campaigns.⁵¹⁷ On any given day in Northern California, men and women might hear lectures on worker health, the fight for workers' rights in the agricultural sector, or racial injustice in the American South, as well as attend symposiums on global Communism, radical unionism, and the Soviet experiment.⁵¹⁸ For example, in the same week Benjamin Fee of the Chinese Anti-Imperialist League joined Alfred Girard and *Western Worker* editor George Morris to discuss Chinese and Soviet Communism, while International Labor Defense attorney Leo Gallagher and Ada Wright spoke in Oakland about the fight to exonerate her sons and the other young men accused of rape in Scottsboro, Alabama.⁵¹⁹ A typical week for Londoners might include lectures by Arthur Bird on Spanish fascism, M. Greene and Dr. S.L.

⁵¹⁶ "Communist Open Air Meetings in Chicago," *The Daily Worker*, 14 October 1924; "New York Party Activities: Open Air Meetings," *The Daily Worker*, 14 October 1924; "South Essex Local Anti-War Campaign Open-Air meeting. Goresbrook Park, Dagenham. Speaker: Sadie Span," *Daily Worker* (UK), 16 August 1930; and "F.S.U Open-Air Meeting, Leyton and Walthamstow," *Daily Worker* (UK), 10 October 1931.

⁵¹⁷ "New York City Party Activities: Open Air Meetings," *The Daily Worker*, 14 October 1924; "Liebknecht-Luxemburg Memorial Meeting," *The Daily Worker*, 8 January 1926; "Lenin Memorial Meeting," *The Daily Worker*, 8 January 1926; "What's On: Meerut Prisoners' Defence Committee Garden Party," *Daily Worker* (UK), 5 July 1932; and "What's On: Food For Spain," *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 January 1939. For example, the advertisement for open-air meetings in New York City on 16 October 1924 promised a "Jewish" speaker at the corner of Washington and Claremont Parkway and a "Pollack and Jewish" speaker in Rutgers Square.

⁵¹⁸ These lectures were featured in a regular column called "Where to Go..." *Western Worker*, 4/16/1934, 4/23/34, 5/14/34, and 1/8/34.

⁵¹⁹ "Russian Soviets, Chinese Soviets, World Soviets of Tomorrow," *Western Worker*, "Where to Go," 14 May 1934. In a 1931 report to the Central Executive Committee, District Organizer Sam Darcy claimed to have overseen a litany of activity around recent local elections, including planning and participating in "about 150 meetings, mostly street meetings." Sam Darcy to the Central Executive Committee, 9 November 1931, RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 2282.

Peng on Japanese imperialism, Joan Beauchamp on the “woman problem,” or discussion about the rise of modern capitalism.⁵²⁰

Speakers like Wright, Peng, Beauchamp, and Fee demonstrated a tendency for the Party to select lecturers with some apparent personal connection to the topic, thereby lending authenticity to their public performance of Communism. For women comrades, this meant annual speaking engagements on International Women’s Day, but they also took to the soapbox or stage to expound on enlightened Soviet family policies regardless of marital or parental status. Violet Orr, Olive Budden, and Louise Todd lectured on these very subjects, though only Budden chose to have a child with husband Robin Page-Arnot.⁵²¹ One also wonders about the content of Janet Chance’s 1937 Marx House lecture on abortion reform, especially given that it came the year after the Soviet government rescinded sections of the 1918 Family Code in its 1936 Constitution, and in light of the presence of advertisements for questionable “birth control appliances” in the *Daily Worker*.⁵²² Caroline Decker insisted that the gender of the speaker did not matter to CPUSA leaders, stating that the only requirement was the ability to “open their mouths and talk,” yet her reputation as an effective speaker and organizer for the Cannery and Agricultural

⁵²⁰ “What’s On,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 9 October 1937.

⁵²¹ “Where to Go,” *Western Worker*, 4 March 1935; “What’s On: Women’s Part in the Fight for Socialism,” Speaker: Nan McMillan, *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 October 1937; and Special Branch Report (4 March 1935), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA. The 4 March 1935 listing in “Where to Go” indicated that Violet Orr spoke in Los Angeles for five consecutive nights, four of which discussed “Soviet Family Life Today,” while her 8 March speech called for international women’s unity.

⁵²² “Marx House Sunday Lectures: Janet Chance, ‘Abortion Law Reform,’” *Daily Worker* (UK), 25 September 1937; and “Birth Control for 1939,” The Hygienic Stores Ltd. and “Birth Control,” Le Brasseur Surgical Co., Ltd., *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 January 1939.

Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) rested in part on her physical appearance and feminine voice.⁵²³

This is not to say that women were relegated to talking only about women's issues. Decker's experiences in California's agricultural sector made her a much sought-after speaker on migrant labor, and Budden, as she put it, "[took] to the soap box" during the 1929 elections in London because she had nothing else to do.⁵²⁴ Todd, the Organizing Secretary for District 13, also gave periodic reports on the demographics and economic standing of the CP in California, advising her comrades on ways to increase membership and, by extension, Party coffers.⁵²⁵ The *Daily Worker* called Marjorie Pollitt, who began her public speaking career after the 1925 arrests of husband Harry and eleven other CPGB officials, "one of the most popular women speakers in the labour movement," a speaker who "[held] the attention of thousands" at a 1938 anti-government demonstration in Trafalgar Square.⁵²⁶ A photograph of Marjorie from that demonstration shows a petite, well-dressed woman bent over at the waist emphatically addressing the attentive crowd gathered around

⁵²³ Caroline Decker, "The Twentieth Century Trade Union Woman: Vehicle for Social Change," interview by Sue Cobble, 1976, digital audio file #10 (hereafter cited as DAF), California Historical Society (hereafter cited as CHS), https://archive.org/details/chi_000011, accessed 26 November 2022. When questioned about Decker's participation in California agricultural strikes, Louise Todd said, "Caroline was equally admired and beloved by the strikers. She was a beautiful blonde-haired girl, and young, and she became kind of a heroine to everybody." Louise Todd Lambert, interview by Lucy Kendall for the California Historical Society's Women in the Trade Union Movement Project, 1976, DAF #4, CHS, https://archive.org/details/chi_00006/chi_00006_t02_b_access.mp3, accessed 26 November, 2022.

⁵²⁴ Special Branch Report (30 April 1929), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA.

⁵²⁵ Louise Todd, "Party's Growth—A Step Towards Greater Gains," *Western Worker*, 8 January 1934.

⁵²⁶ "Public Speaker—And Mother Too," *Daily Worker* (UK), 21 March 1939.

her.⁵²⁷ Given her ability to enrapture an audience, it is little wonder that the CPGB entrusted her (along with Ted Bramley) to speak at a Hyde Park gathering on the Party line shift following the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact in 1939.⁵²⁸

African American CP members, meanwhile, took to the platform to denounce Jim Crowism, lynching, and the continued subjugation of Black and Brown people the world over. Attorney Richard B. Moore, described by Mark Naison as “one of Harlem’s great orators” and “a person who combined logic and erudition with a taste for invective,” shared the stage with Scottsboro mother Jennie Patterson at New York rallies, went on an ILD speaking tour to drum up support for the Scottsboro defense, and represented the American Negro Labor Congress at an Anti-Imperial League convention.⁵²⁹ Solomon Harper, a stalwart rank-and-filer often found in the middle of many confrontations with police, attempted to take over a meeting called by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters to protest the lynching of porter G.H. Wilkins in Locust Grove, Georgia. Police arrested Harper, who was not a member of the AFL union, after he jumped up on the platform and accused the train crew of perpetrating the crime.⁵³⁰

⁵²⁷ “R. Palme Dutt and Marjorie Pollitt speaking at the Trafalgar Square demonstration against the Government, organised by the Communist Party,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 1 March 1938.

⁵²⁸ Special Branch Report (19 September 1939), Records of the Security Service, KV3/393, TNA.

⁵²⁹ “140 Police Guard Rally of 500 Reds in Harlem: Join March as the Mass Meeting Parades Two Miles to Hear Communist Oratory,” *New York Times*, 29 March 1931; “10,000 hear Pleas to Free Negroes: Union Square Traffic Halted as Reds Urge Racial Unity in Scottsboro Defense,” *New York Times*, 15 April 1933; “Colored Communist Speaker Barred From U. of V. Hall,” *Washington Post*, 19 May 1934; “Anti-Imperialists Deride Peace Movement: Convention Here Calls Hoover and MacDonald Proposals ‘Smoke-Screen’ for War,” *New York Times*, 16 June 1929; and Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 7.

⁵³⁰ “Seize Reds at Negro Rally: Police Arrest Two Who Interrupt Protest on Porter’s Lynching,” *New York Times*, 12 April 1930.

Perhaps the speakers who drew the largest crowds were those who could provide firsthand accounts of life in the Soviet Union. After his return to the United States, Federated Press reporter Scott Nearing gave comparative lectures on Russia and China in Baltimore and offered his services to other interested CPUSA districts, while in San Francisco Dr. Vera Goldman, “traveler” Ben F. Wilson, and Union Theological Seminarian Harry F. Ward extolled the virtues of Soviet education, public health, and the whole of the Soviet experiment.⁵³¹ A delegation of teachers from Leyton, UK went to the USSR in 1932, and upon their return, a “Mrs. King” gave talks, naturally, on Soviet marriage and family life.⁵³²

The Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU) sponsored many such lectures by Americans and Britons who had spent time in the Republic, including Paul and Violet Orr, who taught English for two years at Moscow State University before joining the Party upon their return to California in the early 1930s. Both spoke frequently at FSU, Cosmopolitan Club, or Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) events, several at their alma mater Stanford University. According to *The Stanford Daily*, the Orrs lauded efforts to improve Soviet education, healthcare, and gender relations and argued that Bolsheviks had no intention of fomenting “world revolution,” but would let their successful application of Communist principles “speak for itself.”⁵³³

⁵³¹ “Russia and China,” *The Daily Worker*, 3 April 1928; “Scott Nearing Available for Lecture Dates,” *The Daily Worker*, 3 April 1928; and “Where to Go...Education in Soviet Russia, Aspects of Public Health in Soviet Russia, [and] What We Can Learn from the Soviet Union by Professor Harry F. Ward,” *Western Worker*, 1 August 1934.

⁵³² “What’s On,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 23 May 1932.

⁵³³ “Orr to Speak on Russian Education at Club Meeting,” *The Stanford Daily*, 17 February 1931; and Ralph Malloch, “Russians Paid Salaries for Attending College,” *The Stanford Daily*, 23 April 1931.

Public speaking and the ability to articulate Marxist theories and/or Communist policies mattered to the Comintern, CPGB, and CPUSA to such a degree that they produced extensive literature on the subject and offered classes in oration and English in the various labor and worker schools.⁵³⁴ When the

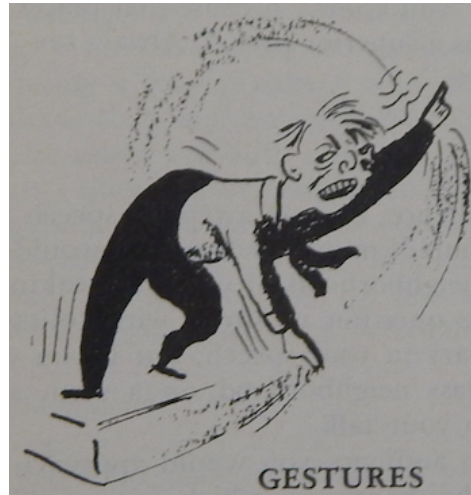


Figure 8: Peter Cacchione, *A Speaker's Guide Book*. Permission not yet granted.

Comintern advised its affiliates to form Agit-Prop departments in 1926, *The Daily Worker* informed readers that “agitation” covered all the “verbal, written, pictorial, etc.” work of the Party and “propaganda” the schools and study materials that facilitated the “training of comrades to lead...discussions on various subjects.”⁵³⁵ In keeping with this order, New York Workers School director Max Bedacht promised in 1929 that the courses offered would develop “cadres of trained revolutionaries who will be able to effectively lead the working class” in their quest to overthrow the capitalist system.⁵³⁶ That leadership included participation in all “current struggles of the

⁵³⁴ “Boston Workers School Draws Many Students: Courses Include Labor Journalism,” *The Daily Worker* (US), 5 April 1928; Wal Hannington, “Speakers Class: All Comrades Desiring Training Invited,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 5 July 1932; “Workers School, Ruthenberg House, 121 Haight,” *Western Worker*, 26 February 1934; Marx House, “Winter Session Commences October 4,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 25 September 1937; and Robert Stewart, “Public Speaking and Debate,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 January 1939.

⁵³⁵ “What is the Agit-Prop Department?” *The Daily Worker*, 8 January 1926.

⁵³⁶ “The Workers School, Training for the Class Struggle,” SAD MS, TAM.145, Box 2, folder 19, WLA.

working class” by “[supplying] speakers to strike meetings and organizers for unorganized workers.”⁵³⁷

Besides the expected classes in Marxist theory, labor history, and the “problems” of women, children, and people of color, the school also offered seven levels of English so that the “foreign-born worker [could] attain an effective mastery of the English language,” a “speech improvement” class for the worker “who has an accent and who wishes to improve his voice and speech for all occasions,” and a course on public speaking designed for those “free from acute accent problems [who] are ready for training in [the] principles of persuasion.”⁵³⁸ This emphasis on English language proficiency and accent removal reflected the demographic make-up of the CPUSA during this period, as many of its members were either foreign-born or first-generation immigrants.⁵³⁹ Literature from the New York District Agit-Prop Department of the YCL indicates the seriousness with which the Party viewed effective public speaking, as they insisted “every member...carry on regular and consistent oral...agitation as an organizer.”⁵⁴⁰ They cautioned against allowing just anyone to climb onto the soapbox, however, and suggested that an experienced speaker lead weekly classes for “promising comrades” who would practice oration before venturing out in public.⁵⁴¹

Secondary to knowledge of theory and party line, but no less important to conveying the Communist message was oral and body language, evidenced by

⁵³⁷ Ibid.

⁵³⁸ “The Workers School, Training for the Class Struggle.”

⁵³⁹ Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, 25.

⁵⁴⁰ “A.B.C. of Agit-Prop Work.”

⁵⁴¹ Ibid.

suggestions in this literature on movement, figures of speech, and physical location of the body. Not only should YCL speakers persist in advocating for Communism, the writers of the “A.B.C. of Agit-Prop” maintained, but they should also “be able to give the correct YCL position on every question *in a most convincing manner*” and “learn how to get the floor, stand up ‘on their own hind legs,’ and speak in such a manner as to be able to win the audience.”⁵⁴² To that end, students like those in the public speaking class at

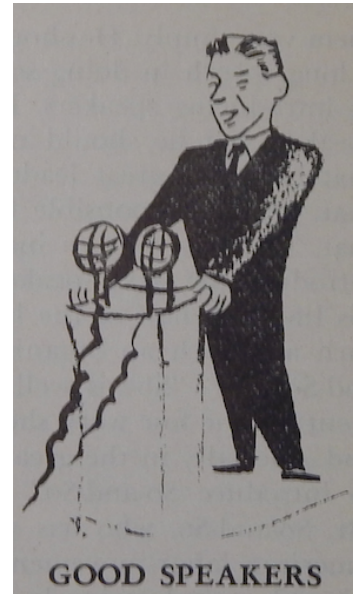


Figure 9: Peter Cacchione, *A Speaker's Guide Book*. Permission not yet granted.

San Francisco’s Workers School learned “delivery [and] voice control” as well as “organization of speeches” and “effective agitation and propaganda.”⁵⁴³

In his pamphlet on public speaking, *Daily Worker* (UK) reporter Alan Winnington suggested ways that anyone could become an effective orator, including use of proper body language. Gestures, he argued, “add much to the power of words,” but must “be part of your own personality.” They should never be “over-dramatic,” nor should the body be stiff in its delivery, as both resulted in the speaker appearing “foolish” to the audience.⁵⁴⁴ Peter Cacchione, CP member of the New York City Council, agreed and argued that gestures offered “great assistance to a public speaker,” but should never be used by beginners. With more experience, he

⁵⁴² Ibid. Emphasis in original.

⁵⁴³ “San Francisco Workers School Announcement of Courses,” 1934, SAD MS, TAM.145, box 2, folder 19, WLA.

⁵⁴⁴ Alan Winnington, *Hints on Public Speaking* (London: The Communist Party of Great Britain, 1942), CPGB MS, CP/CENT/ED/1/8, LHASC.

continued, orators would begin to employ them “naturally” as they talked. Cacchione also noted that all indoor meetings should have a speaker’s rostrum, one that “[came] up to the upper part of the chest,” thus providing lecturers a place to put their notes, somewhere to rest his or her arms, and a screen behind which to shift weight from one foot to the other without appearing to fidget.⁵⁴⁵

Though orators might wish to demonstrate their understanding of Marxist philosophy through the use of “flowery words,” Winnington, Cacchione, and the YCL cautioned against such tendencies and suggested the most effective speakers employed “short, homely” ones that “expressed complicated ideas.”⁵⁴⁶ In other words, they should “speak in the language understandable by the masses.”⁵⁴⁷ An excellent example of an orator establishing his working-class credentials through the use of common language comes from a speech given by Sam Darcy in 1933, by this time a decade-long veteran of radical activism and the current Organizer for District 13 in California. At a symposium on culture in San Francisco’s Civic Auditorium, Darcy opened his speech with these words: “When I saw this leaflet announcing my topic for tonight I was a bit embarrassed—it was such a high-fallutin’ title—because I am only a carpenter.”⁵⁴⁸ Cacchione argued that the most effective speaker never

⁵⁴⁵ Peter V. Cacchione, *A Speaker’s Guide Book*, Williamson Pamphlets, YW18/PUB, MML.

⁵⁴⁶ Winnington, *Hints on Public Speaking*, 8; Cacchione, *A Speaker’s Guide Book*, 13.

⁵⁴⁷ Cacchione, *A Speaker’s Guide Book*, 19.

⁵⁴⁸ Samuel A. Darcy, “Symposium on Culture,” San Francisco, SAD MS, TAM.145, Box 2, Folder 34, 1933, WLA. This recommendation, that speakers employ familiar words and phrases when speaking in public, ran counter to the Bolshevization of international Communism, when members began employing a distinctive language that demonstrated their identity as a “counterpublic.” Michael Warner defined a counterpublic as an alternative to the public that “extends not just to ideas or policy questions but to the speech genres and modes of address that constitute the public.” Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 117-119.

“[tried] to impress the audience with [their] education” and offered as proof Abraham Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, citing the number of times the president used words of one or two syllables, and suggested that this strategy not only made a speech easy to understand and remember, but also helped to prevent inadvertent mispronunciations of more complicated words.⁵⁴⁹

There existed three types of speakers, according to Cacchione, the bombastic, the soft-spoken, and the steady stream of sentences from beginning to end. Each type worked in different circumstances, but by far the best were those who varied their speech patterns and paused between sentences.⁵⁵⁰ Both Winnington and Cacchione advised potential lecturers to begin with the “voice pitched low” and avoid shouting, speaking “deliberately” and “directly” at the audience. The orator should “stand up straight” with “shoulders squared [and] chin up.” These simple measures, they contended, alleviated any initial stage fright, and gave off an air of physical confidence in the presenter.⁵⁵¹ Finally, Winnington noted that speakers should empower their audience, making them understand the path they needed to take to ensure victory over capitalist forces.⁵⁵² The key, though, was complete knowledge of and the ability to articulate the current Party line.

Knowledge of the topic figured in decisions about who would speak and where, but more important was their ability to raise money for various campaigns, increase membership in the Party, and/or sell high volumes of Party literature. A

⁵⁴⁹ Cacchione, *A Speaker’s Guide Book*, 12-13.

⁵⁵⁰ Cacchione, *A Speaker’s Guide Book*, 4.

⁵⁵¹ Winnington, *Hints on Public Speaking*, 11; and Cacchione, *A Speaker’s Guide Book*, 11.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 5.

1939 newsletter from the Central Committee of the CPGB to Branch Propaganda Secretaries, for example, suggested that week's open-air meetings should be framed around the question of why listeners should join the Party, and reports from London branches included audience size, literature sales, and recruitment figures.⁵⁵³ Speakers, of course, could only ask for donations and encourage listeners to join the Party; the collection of money and application cards was given over to "certain assigned comrades" responsible for a "systematic canvassing" of the crowd.⁵⁵⁴ Violet Orr, who planned and spoke at many events for the FSU and CPUSA, noted the importance of getting a "very good agitational speaker" to collect money for campaigns, and, based on a story she recounted in an earlier interview, she may have been referring to her own prowess as an orator. While speaking on behalf of William Z. Foster's 1932 presidential campaign, Violet invited the crowd to throw silver dollars at her, and, according to Oleta O'Conner Yates, they did.⁵⁵⁵

When things did not go according to plan, the Party did not hesitate to criticize inefficient or absent comrades. At times the Party simply noted the number of cancellations or the over-use of "front-line speakers," but on other occasions the criticisms became very pointed.⁵⁵⁶ This could range from anonymous complaints about late speakers, inexperienced chairmen, or the speaker that "felt seasick" on the

⁵⁵³ "Hints for Speakers and Propaganda Secretaries, Issued by the Propaganda Department, 27 June 1939, Records of the Secret Service, KV3/393, TNA.

⁵⁵⁴ "The A.B.C. of Agit-Prop."

⁵⁵⁵ Violet Orr, interview by Lucy Kendall for the California Historical Society's Women in California Collection, 1976, DAF #5 and #8, CHS, https://archive.org/details/chi_00009, accessed 13 November 2022.

⁵⁵⁶ "Our Weekly Letter," Central Committee, CPGB, 12 November 1943, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CIRC/63/01, LHASC.

high platform and “divorced from [the] public,” to very specific critiques, such as when J. Hadley called out Bob Graves and C.J. Jones for “[letting] us down” in East Ham and the Central Committee publicly chastised “Joan Clark of Hounslow” for not living up to her potential as “one of our best women speakers.” Assistants came under attack as well if they forgot to show up with posters or built shoddy platforms.⁵⁵⁷ The CP and YCL, remember, also expected members to go to organizational meetings, attend classes and mass demonstrations, sell Communist literature, and make arrangements for fundraisers and other social events.⁵⁵⁸ Those who gave the speeches also had to find time to research the topic, write a coherent essay, and, most importantly, practice their delivery. The average rank-and-filer, if lucky enough to be employed during the global economic slump, had little time to devote to this much activity, so the occasional miscue was bound to happen.

Even high-ranking comrades failed in their duties at times. The Party selected recent Lenin School student Norwell Allen to become the new Organizational Secretary for District 13 but changed their minds just three weeks later. Though Allen showed promise and represented the Party’s efforts to elevate more African American comrades to leadership positions, the Central Committee raised concerns about his ability to do the job when he failed to appear at meetings where he was

⁵⁵⁷ “Hints for Speakers and Propaganda Secretaries.”

⁵⁵⁸ Special Branch Report, “*Daily Worker* Campaign Committee to All Locals” (8 December 1931), Records of the Security Service, KV3/388, TNA; Special Branch Report, “R.W. Robson to All Locals” (25 November 1931), KV3/388, Records of the Security Service, TNA; Special Branch Report, “Propaganda Department, CPGB, to All Districts (3 May 1941), Records of the Security Service, KV3/395, TNA; and “Our Weekly Letter,” CC, CPGB, 24 September 1943 and 1 October 1943, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CIRC/63/01, LHASC.

scheduled to speak.⁵⁵⁹ When Britain's YCL General Secretary John Gollan and CPGB National Industrial Organizer Finlay Hart skipped a February 1938 meeting at Marx House, it fell to J.L. Douglas and C.V. Berridge (themselves ranking members of the YCL and CPGB) to report on the Trades Union Council's Youth Charter Campaign and Central Committee decisions about industrial work. According to a Special Branch agent, after Douglas's report on work among youth in industry, Berridge laid into the lad and the YCL in general, calling both less helpful and more of a hindrance in "the task of organising young workers."⁵⁶⁰ Apparently, ranking members felt the meeting a lost cause, as many of them walked out during J.A. Mahon's afternoon talk on CP activism in London's trade unions. Secret Service agents, accustomed as they were to hearing Communist lecturers, sometimes joined in with critiques of their own. Samuel Blackwell "gave his version of dialectics and Communism," but seemed to "grasp it imperfectly," and thus became "very entangled when answering questions," while Vera Carver and Gerry Walker "simply followed the text of Marx House and Party publications."⁵⁶¹

⁵⁵⁹ NO Organization Department, Central Executive Committee to William Simons, 9 August 1930, RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 1994.

⁵⁶⁰ Special Branch Report (15 February 1938), Records of the Security Service, KV3/391, TNA.

⁵⁶¹ Special Branch report (December 1942), Records of the Security Service, KV3/399, TNA.

Soapbox speakers often displayed a physical passion for Communism and its causes, gesticulating emphatically as they tried to woo the public, their movements and personal appearance inviting accusations of barbarity or lack of civilization. This was particularly true for African American speakers like Solomon Harper, described by one reporter as “especially troublesome” and a “most uncontrollable...burly colored man.”⁵⁶² When *Los Angeles Times*

correspondent Karl D. Pancake set out to interview Southern California Communists, he expected to encounter “one or more long-haired Reds whose disdain of soap gave them a high, gamy flavor, who quoted Karl Marx, cursed this government, waved red flags, and took pot shots at policemen whenever the notion seized them.”⁵⁶³ Radical men had been fighting this stereotype for generations, with the gendered and raced rhetoric of respectability and civilization most notable in the ways that political cartoonists depicted male Communists in the British and American press. In many



Common-Sense and Communism.
Figure 10: David Low, “Common-Sense and Communism,” *The Star*, 4 September 1924. Permission not yet granted.

⁵⁶² “Thousands Jam Avenue to See Communists in Demonstration: 14 Men and Girls Put Under Arrest,” *Washington Post*, 7 March 1930; and “Tear Gas Routs Reds Before White House: Police Break Up Demonstration on Sidewalk as One of Radicals Starts Speech,” *New York Times*, 7 March 1930. Reporters found it particularly disturbing to see young white women marching with Black men at these events.

⁵⁶³ Pancake, “Ladies Who See Red.”

such portrayals, radical men demonstrated a disregard for personal hygiene by wearing ill fitting, patched clothing and maintaining unruly beard and hairstyles. Even sympathetic pundits like cartoonist David Low, who often lampooned British fears of the Communist threat, played into these stereotypes when he used a beard to symbolize the only real difference between mainstream and Communist politicians.⁵⁶⁴

With the exception of a short-lived “beard movement” in the mid-nineteenth century, facial hair typically symbolized the foreign, the radical, or the Other in the minds of middle-class Britons and Americans, and the clean shaven face indicative of respectability, somatic control, and character, so Communists attempting to make the Party more attractive to the mainstream encouraged men to arrive at speaking engagements with a visible jawline.⁵⁶⁵ Facial hair in particular became the subject of some debate among members of the International Brigade, the volunteer army organized by the Comintern to help preserve the Spanish Republic in the late 1930s. An anonymous writer to the Brigade’s newspaper, *Volunteer for Liberty*, called the propensity for beard growth among soldiers an “outbreak” whose eradication would be “long and arduous.” He noted that Samson, that paragon of hirsute manliness, “wrecked his career on a woman and ended his life in an orgy of sordid suicide.”⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁴ David Low, “Common-Sense and Communism, *The Star*, 4 September 1924, LSE7157, British Cartoon Archive, University of Kent (hereafter cited as BCA); David Low, “Heavy Tragedy at Westminster,” *Evening Standard*, 3 March 1928, DL0061, BCA; David Low, “A Time of Conferences,” *Evening Standard*, 11 April 1929, LES0569, BCA; and David Low, “Hi! I’ve something to show you—when you’ve time,” *Evening Standard*, 27 November 1936, DL1145, BCA.

⁵⁶⁵ Christopher Oldstone-Moore, “The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain,” *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 8; Christopher Oldstone-Moore, *Of Beards and Men: The Revealing History of Facial Hair* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016); and “What’s in a Beard?” *Volunteer for Liberty: organ of the international brigade* vol. I, no. 28 27 December 1937.

⁵⁶⁶ “On Beards: A Reply,” *Volunteer for Liberty: organ of the international brigade* vol. II, no. 2, 13 January 1938.

A hairy, but still anonymous, soldier replied in a later volume, and noted that bearded men had played important roles in history, including the “left group in Egypt and their leader Moses, Abraham Lincoln, Karl Marx, Fredrick Engels, and Vladimir Lenin,” all “proud bearers of a hirsute chin.” Besides a desire to emulate these great men, he continued, there were practical reasons for letting down one’s facial hair, especially during wartime. It provided warmth in cold weather, gave a man something to chew on when food was scarce, and had proven to be popular with the ladies.⁵⁶⁷ Clive Branson’s sketches of thirty-one of his fellow Brigaders, however, show that most adhered to the clean-shaven model of British masculinity.⁵⁶⁸

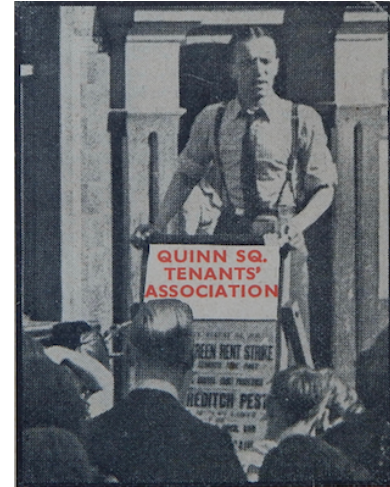


Figure 11: Bob Graves, *Quinn Square Tenants' Rent Strike Victory*. Permission not yet granted.

In Britain and America during this period, as in others, clothing indicated not only a person’s occupation and social status, but also their character, so attempts to appear respectable could be a fine line to walk for Communists wishing to maintain connections with their mostly working-class audiences while simultaneously subverting the stereotype of the disheveled bomb-throwing radical. “A speaker should be neat, hair clipped and smooth-shaven,” Peter Cacchione advised, “should never take the platform without wearing his tie,” and “should never speak at any type

⁵⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁸ Volume 5, Spain, poems and being a prisoner of war, Clive Branson Manuscript Collection (hereafter cited as CB MS), CB/1/1/6, MML.

of meeting in a sport shirt or a sweater.” He should also leave his head uncovered in fair or foul weather.⁵⁶⁹

Regardless of whether this was the norm for rank-and-file orators; it was certainly these men lauded in the Communist press as effective spokespersons and rank-and-file leaders of the Party. With his clean-shaven face, slicked back hair, neatly pressed pants, loosely knotted tie, rolled up sleeves, and a set of suspenders to offset the whiteness of his collared shirt, Quinn Square tenant rent strike leader Bob Graves represented the epitome of working-class respectability, as did the similarly dressed anonymous speaker at a CAWIU rally for striking spinach workers in Pescadero, California.⁵⁷⁰ Cacchione suggested that men should never take off their coats until after beginning their speeches, but in many drawings and photographs of male Communist orators, coats have long been abandoned and the shirtsleeves have been rolled up to just below the elbow. In fact, the rolled sleeves appeared so often in radical visual culture that it served two very important functions, as both a cultural marker of working-class identity and an indication that physical labor had been exerted in the presentation of the lecture.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁶⁹ Cacchione, *A Speaker's Guide Book*, 7-8.

⁵⁷⁰ *Quinn Square Tenants' Rent Strike Victory*, CPGB MS, CP/LON/CIRC/02/05, LHASC; and “The Western Worker in Pescadero Strike,” *Western Worker*, 5 February 1934. In his application for a job with the *Daily Worker* in London, Stewart Robertson felt compelled to describe his appearance, writing that he was “orthodox in dress [and] unorthodox in manner.” Stewart Robertson to *Daily Worker*, 31 March 1946, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/05/05, LHASC.

⁵⁷¹ For other examples, see, “On Guard in the West—May Day,” *Western Worker*, 1 May 1932; “Smash the Criminal Syndicalism Law!” *Western Worker*, 12 June 1933; “Join the Parade,” *Western Worker*, 4 September 1933; “For What We Are About to Receive,” *The Workers' Weekly*, 14 January 1927; “Resolve to Fight!” *The Workers' Weekly*, 21 January 1927; and “Wait for Your Leaders” and “Whitewashing the Donkey,” *Workers' Life*, 28 January 1927.

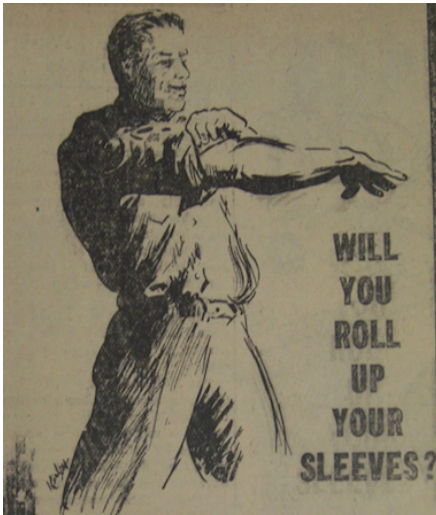


Figure 12: "Will You Roll Up Your Sleeves?" *Western Worker*, 18 June 1934. Permission not yet granted.

Public speaking enabled women

Communists to demonstrate not only their oratory skills, but also their ability to inspire others to action. This generation, it must be noted, came of age with the franchise, with passage of the 1918 *Representation of the People Act* in Great Britain and ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920 in the United States. While all women in the US ostensibly enjoyed the full measure of

enfranchisement, African American women had to contend with poll taxes, literacy tests, and Grandfather clauses in attempting to exercise their right to vote.

Meanwhile, British women had to be over the age of thirty and not subject to any "legal incapacity," at least until 1928 when the *Equal Franchise Act* extended suffrage to all those over the age of twenty-one.⁵⁷²

This was a generation of women—white women at least—who vigorously exercised these rights. Many of them grew up in radical families, with mothers who demonstrated their right to the franchise by "[moving] with the working man every time he went into action to win his human rights."⁵⁷³ The CPGB relied on founding

⁵⁷² Nineteenth Amendment, <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=63&page=transcript>; and *Representation of the People Act*, 1918, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1918/64/contents/enacted>, accessed 13 November 2022.

⁵⁷³ Alexandra Kollontai, "Towards a History of the Working Women's Movement in Russia," in *Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Writings*, ed. Alix Holt (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977): 39; Mildred McAdory Edelman, Communist Party of the United States Oral History Collection, OH.065, DAF #1, WLA, <http://digitaltamiment.hosting.nyu.edu/s/cpoh/item/3964>; and Sonia Baltrun

member Isabel Brown’s ability to inspire support for the British Party, enlisting her help in recruitment drives during World War II. On the occasion of her fiftieth birthday, the Executive Committee lauded her as a “bonnie fighter,” and an “impassioned speaker” with the power to make the “most diverse people...[sit] motionless under the spell of her words, drinking in every sentence.”⁵⁷⁴ Pearl



Figure 13: Ida Rothstein, *Los Angeles Times*, 26 March 1933. Permission not yet granted.

Alterman recalled that Hamtramck City Council (Michigan) member Mary Zuk gave “fiery speeches against the high cost of living [that] started to rally women to the picket lines in front of meat stores. Soon we heard her ringing voice at open air meetings, parades, city councils, and on the radio, urging housewives to unite against high prices.”⁵⁷⁵

For women, simply stepping onto a soapbox or ladder and putting themselves on display could bring accusations of wantonness or lack of proper feminine gender presentation. Karl D. Pancake described Southern California Communist women as “[running] all the way from the tall and severely angular type to befrizzled (sic)

Kaross, interview by Lucille Kendall for the California Historical Society’s Women in California Collection, 1977, DAF #2, https://archive.org/details/chi_00003, accessed 13 November 2022.

⁵⁷⁴ “Our Weekly Letter,” 12 November 1943, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/CIRC/63/01, LHASC; and Central Executive Committee, “Birthday Greetings to Isabel Brown,” 6 December 1944, CBGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/1/3, LHASC.

⁵⁷⁵ Pearl Alterman, “From Kitchen to City Council,” *Women Today* (July 1936): 9.

flappers who haven't passed high school age." Local organizer Ida Rothstein, he wrote, "affects to despise ordinary feminine wiles, wears her red hair in a loose knot on the back of her head and...has no use for lip stick, nail enamel, or rouge." According to Pancake, Rothstein also expressed a certain disdain for gendered social norms, as she believed that "happiness [did] not depend on a marriage certificate" and that the state should participate in the "raising of children."⁵⁷⁶ Here Rothstein demonstrated knowledge of both the Soviet 1918 Family Code that eased restrictions on divorce, marriage, birth control, and abortion and Alexandra Kollontai's assertion that under the dictatorship of the proletariat laws governing marriage should be replaced with regulations that defined the relationships "of the government to maternity...between mother and child, and...between the mother and the workers' collective."⁵⁷⁷ Neither Rothstein nor Pancake could have known that, in light of both a demographic crisis and a labor shortage, the Soviets would soon alter their family policies to encourage stability in marriage and family structure.⁵⁷⁸

According to many sources, violence went hand-in-hand with public speaking or demonstrations. Sam Darcy noted that in the 1920s and 30s, "gangs of hoodlums...roamed the streets of Harlem and the Bronx in New York City, armed

⁵⁷⁶ Pancake, "Ladies Who See Red."

⁵⁷⁷ Alexandra Kollontai, "Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations," in *Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Writings*, translated by Alix Holt, 1972 (Allison & Busby, 1977), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1921/theses-morality.htm>, accessed 13 November 2022.

⁵⁷⁸ Wendy Goldman, "Women, Abortion, and the State, 1917-1936," in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine D. Worobec, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991): 242-244. Goldman argues that even during the period when abortion and birth control were legal, the Soviet government never said that it was a woman's right, but rather a social necessity stemming from shortages of food, housing, and childcare. The state outlawed abortion in 1936 on the grounds that living conditions for women and children had improved, but Goldman cites the demographic crisis and the popularity of abortion as a form of birth control as the underlying reasons that led to this policy shift.

with all manner of weapons, smashing windows in Socialist and Communist headquarters, assailing street-corner meetings, slugging the speakers and committeemen, and breaking up public assemblies of radicals.” This, he continued, made concentration difficult for speakers who also had to be on the lookout for flying vegetables while “[shouting] above the din created by a very vocal if rarely intelligent opposition.”⁵⁷⁹ Mainstream newspapers gleefully recounted sanctioned violence against Communists, typically justified with accusations that “speeches became more and more threatening,” or radical orators encouraged otherwise peaceful demonstrators to attack police or property.⁵⁸⁰ In 1921, for example, Sheffield police charged Alphonso Wilson with “inciting persons to commit a riot and attempting to cause disaffection among members of the police force in a speech to a crowd of 5000.”⁵⁸¹

In Southern California Pancake found, “plenty of men and women who joyfully and fanatically accepted battle with the forces of law and order on any and all occasions,” suggesting that Communists welcomed such opposition despite the threat of bodily harm.⁵⁸² He would have observed the same in Harlem, where speakers like Richard B. Moore regularly competed with United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) orators at choice locations along Lennox Avenue, inviting sometimes violent

⁵⁷⁹ Samuel Adams Darcy, “The Storm Must Be Ridden” (unpublished manuscript, circa 1945), SAD MS, TAM.124, box 3, folder 16, WLA.

⁵⁸⁰ “Rioters Trapped: 100 Arrests at Liverpool,” *London Times*, 13 September 1921.

⁵⁸¹ “Communist Riots at Sheffield: More Arrests Yesterday,” *London Times*, 18 August 1921.

⁵⁸² Pancake, “Ladies Who See Red.”

opposition and the occasional arrest.⁵⁸³ So too did Pat Devine, who often set up his speaker's platform in Victoria Square Park, Bethnal Green, or drove up in a "loud-speaker van," choosing to confront the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in a community where they held sway.⁵⁸⁴ Communists often alerted police and the press about their plans, as did Benny Rothman for the Kinder Scout mass trespass in Derbyshire and members of the Conference for the Protection of the Foreign Born protesting US immigration policy on the steps of the Capital in Washington.⁵⁸⁵ Demonstrators in Washington also ignored orders to disperse and hurried to replace orators seized by law enforcement, thus ensuring their own arrests.⁵⁸⁶

The Party expected members to list these encounters in applications to labor schools, written nominations for Party office, and official Party "autobiographies" like David Ainley's admission, recounted with pride, that he had been arrested during the 1926 British General Strike and had been "fined small sums on a number of occasions for chalking and obstruction (when holding open-air meetings, etc.)."⁵⁸⁷ Maurice Ferguson, on the other hand, recited his activism and arrests in efforts to get

⁵⁸³ Naison, *Communists in Harlem*, 39; and "Arrest Richard B. Moore, Communist," *Chicago Defender*, 14 September 1929.

⁵⁸⁴ Special Branch Reports (8 September and October 1937), Records of the Secret Service, KV2/1573, TNA.

⁵⁸⁵ "Thousands Jam Avenue to See Communists in Demonstration: 14 Men and Girls Put Under Arrest," *Washington Post*, 7 March 1930; and "'Invasion' of Reds Swiftly Dispersed: Police Bombs Rout March of 500, Led by a Woman, in 'Battle' on Capitol Steps," *New York Times*, 2 December 1930. Though a melee ensued shortly after the protesters attempted to ascend the steps, the reporter noted that the camera crews assembled remained untouched by police and demonstrators, suggesting that both sides wanted the event memorialized on film.

⁵⁸⁶ "Arrest Richard B. Moore, Communist;" "Seize Reds at Negro Rally: Police Arrest Two Who Interrupt Protest on Porter's Lynching," *New York Times*, 12 April 1930; and "5000 Fight Police in Harlem Streets: Trouble Starts as Tear Gas Is Used to Halt an Unlicensed Scottsboro Protest Meeting," *New York Times*, 18 March 1934.

⁵⁸⁷ David Ainley, "Application to Labour School," CPGB MS, CP/CENT/PERS/1/1, LHASC.

compensation for his work on behalf of the Party and to help allay the court costs and lack of work during his time in prison, as well as moneys spent on Party work that came out of his own pocket. London was less than sympathetic, reminding the Manchester office that Ferguson received “the usual rate of Party organisers in the provinces, i.e. £4 per week,” and that the District was responsible for “expenses incurred while doing [District Political Committee] work, not the Centre.”⁵⁸⁸

The Party also expected members to return to the soapbox after encounters with police or vigilante groups. Arrested and convicted of violating Richmond, California’s anti-leafleting ordinance, Violet and Paul Orr resumed their activities outside the gates of the Standard Oil Company’s Martinez refinery once the ILD succeeded in having the verdict overturned.⁵⁸⁹ After her arrest on criminal syndicalism charges, Caroline Decker toured California speaking out against that law and encouraging audiences to contribute to Workers International Relief, the organization that provided assistance to striking workers in the form of food, clothing, and medical supplies.⁵⁹⁰ Police charged Maurice Ferguson with obstruction in late 1925, but he continued to hold open-air meetings during the coal miners’ strike the next year, receiving two months hard labor for his efforts.⁵⁹¹ Finally, reporters noted that Solomon Harper already had accrued a sizable rap sheet in the District of

⁵⁸⁸ Communist Party of Great Britain to Manchester D.P.C., 28 April 1927, Records of the Secret Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

⁵⁸⁹ Violet Orr interview, DAF #6.

⁵⁹⁰ “Mass Meeting,” Workers International Relief flier, 11 December 1933, RGASPI *fond* 515, *opis* 1 255, *delo* 3299.

⁵⁹¹ Special Branch Report, no date, Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA. Special Branch listed Wigan, Aspull, Lower Ince, and Atherton as sites of Ferguson’s open-air meetings that preceded his second arrest and Maryport, Workington, Whitehaven, and Platt Bridge as those that occurred after his release.

Columbia and other cities by the time of his arrest during the 6 March 1930 demonstration in front of the White House.⁵⁹² The cost of working for the CP and YCL will be expanded upon in a later chapter, as will violence perpetrated against employees, but suffice it to say that operatives rarely received proper payment for doing jobs that sometimes put their lives at risk.

Conclusion

Edith Dell's assertion at her trial to keep up the good fight despite harassment and arrest demonstrates the magnitude of Communists' commitment to the fight for a classless society. Much like her British counterpart Benny Rothman, Dell threw her body into that struggle with the knowledge that her actions could, and often did, land her in jail. So too did public speakers like Ida Rothstein, Sam Darcy, or Olive Budden, who regularly risked physical harm when they climbed atop a stepladder or shoddily constructed platform to denounce capitalism. None of these activists should be seen as outliers, however. On the contrary, their actions represented the ideal performance of Communism—public, physical, and occasionally fraught with danger.

⁵⁹² “Thousands Jam Avenue to See Communists in Demonstration: 14 Men and Girls Put Under Arrest,” *Washington Post*, 7 March 1930.

Chapter Four

Laboring Bodies

Introduction

SHIELDS remained at the office until 5.20 pm at which time he left alone and went by train from Leicester Square to Camden Town. Here he was beckoned by a woman who was waiting on the station platform and he at once left the train and joined her. The meeting was obviously pre-arranged, and the two people embraced each other in a manner which gave the other passengers a good deal of amusement.⁵⁹³

Agents following suspected CPGB covert operative Jimmy Shields continued their observation of his movements after meeting the unknown woman as the two boarded another train for Archway Station, had dinner, and then proceeded by bus to Muswell Hill, entering 30 Queens Avenue around 7:30 pm. Though unaware at the time, the “well built” woman with a “fresh complexion” and “shoulder length” dark hair who accompanied Shields that evening was Eileen Palmer, secretary for the CPGB International Department, the division charged with maintaining relationships with Communist parties in other countries and the British colonies and Dominions. She was also Jimmy Shields’s lover. MI5 believed, and rightly so, that this department provided cover for clandestine activities, with Shields and/or Palmer attempting to reestablish secret radio communication with Moscow, distributing Moscow subsidies, and acting as liaisons for several undercover operations in the greater London area.⁵⁹⁴ Once agents verified her identity two weeks later, the MI5 file that once focused primarily on Eileen’s husband Horace began to document not

⁵⁹³ Special Branch Report (7 November 1945), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA.

⁵⁹⁴ West, *MASK*, 216 and 228.

only Shields and Palmer's clandestine activities, but also a passionate love affair that did not end until Shields's death from "consumption" three and a half years later.⁵⁹⁵

These reports also documented the physical labor involved in trying to keep surveillance teams from discovering the true nature of their clandestine activities. During one three-day period, for example, Agent H. Hunter watched the operatives take circuitous routes when traveling to and from the office, on one occasion stopping at a "cheap, small café on Pond Street, well out of their way," before returning home to Muswell Hill. They also attempted to lose surveillance teams, with Shields apparently doing most of the physical labor when they were together. He either waited for every passenger to leave a bus before disembarking or exited first so that he could scrutinize passengers as they left the vehicle, and, on one occasion, boarded the "513 Trolley 'bus...got off again, looked around, and rejoined Palmer as the vehicle moved away." Once they reached the street, Shields "allowed Palmer to precede him, gazing into shop windows and obviously on the alert for would-be watchers."⁵⁹⁶ For her part, Palmer seemed less inclined to go to such extremes to hide her movements, taking a straightforward route the next day from Ludgate Circus to a Fleet Street residence before moving on to the No. 8 Stone Buildings, but she did pause at the top of the stairs before entering the building so that the agent could not "keep direct observation on her further movements." Hunter concluded his report by noting, "both Jimmy and his lady are becoming increasingly difficult to follow

⁵⁹⁵ Special Branch Reports (4 March 1947, 14 April 1949, and 8 June 1949), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA.

⁵⁹⁶ Special Branch Report (16 March 1946), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA.

satisfactorily. To continue close observation would be fatal, therefore I am reimposing watch as and when we have some chance of a successful outcome.⁵⁹⁷

Shields and Palmer had been using similar avoidance tactics for months, with varying degrees of success, as recorded conversations and agent reports documented the change in their relationship if not the full extent of their clandestine activities. MI5 knew that Shields moved into her flat in December 1945, that Horace continued to live at the same address, and that Jimmy returned to his wife and son a few months later but continued the affair with Eileen.⁵⁹⁸ In between gathering evidence of the affair, agents also made record of Eileen taking phone messages at CPGB headquarters, attending meetings at Marx House, acting as a messenger/courier for other CP operatives, and developing strategies for the Party's colonial work, all typical duties of a female CPGB employee.

Palmer's file is far from unique. In fact, it bears a striking resemblance to surveillance files of other CPGB operatives as well as those of their counterparts working for the CPUSA, especially those intimately involved with other functionaries. Laws such as the Alien Registration Act of 1940 in the US and the 1934 Incitement to Disaffection Act in the UK criminalized many of their activities, so operatives like Palmer had to put in more effort to conceal what, for them, amounted to political activism and not criminal behavior. Taken at face value, these files would have us believe that, for Communist operatives, wage labor meant going

⁵⁹⁷ Special Branch Report (16 March 1946), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA.

⁵⁹⁸ Special Branch Reports (January 1946, 16 February 1946, and 3 May 1946), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA.

to meetings, writing letters and articles, and speaking at different functions. For those like Shields and Palmer, paid employment also included secret meetings, establishment of spy rings and clandestine communications networks, and transportation of illicit documents and/or cash. Moreover, operatives often relied on membership dues, literature sales, speaking engagement donations, and, yes, “Moscow gold” to get paid for their work, all sources of funding that varied widely during periods of government suppression and flagging economies.⁵⁹⁹

Operatives employed many tactics to avoid detection by authorities, including the methods described in the above anecdote. Commonly referred to as tradecraft or countersurveillance, Communist operatives often learned the strategies and tactics of spying at the International Lenin or Wilson Schools in the Soviet Union. Some tactics, such as the adoption of often Anglicized pseudonyms, required little physical exertion beyond that required to keep track of numerous identification papers and to remember which people and organizations knew them by each name. But others—the circuitous routes taken on different modes of transport, frequent changes of address, and clandestine transportation of illegal funds and documents—weighed heavily on Communists’ bodies—as did the stress of not knowing when or if the Party could pay for their services. So too did efforts by Communist couples, married and otherwise, to retain some sense of familial cohesion when the Party deemed it

⁵⁹⁹ Joseph Starobin claimed that only 58% of members paid their dues in the first half of 1945, a period when wartime union wages were very high. Joseph Starobin, *American Communism*, cited in Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, 24.

necessary to send them to work in different locations or when engaged in covert activities.

The less dedicated may have faltered under such conditions—the constant strain of surveillance, the inconsistent wages, and the threat of imprisonment must have sent more than a few would-be revolutionaries packing. For this reason, this chapter focuses mostly on officers and other paid functionaries and not the average rank-and-file member whose voluntary labor could be withdrawn at any time. In his examination of Communist cadre, Harvey Klehr noted, “The inner core...[differed] from the outer...in its commitment and relationship to the party,” and by relationship, he meant their status as employees of the Party or one of its affiliated organizations.⁶⁰⁰ And while it is beyond the scope of this study, one cannot overlook the fact that such an association also negatively impacted their ability to seek employment with other political and labor organizations. Trade union activism is a secondary concern in this formulation of the laboring Communist body, but these women and men worked for wages just like any other member of the working class.

While many historians focus on Communists’ activities in various labor struggles, this chapter examines Communists as workers, employees of a minor political organization dedicated to workers’ rights whose working conditions often resembled those they fought to eradicate. They worked long hours, sometimes without compensation, and endured constant harassment by vigilantes and law enforcement. An analysis of surveillance files, in conjunction with oral histories,

⁶⁰⁰ Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, 7.

correspondence, Party documents, and testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee shows that working for the Communist Parties of Great Britain and the United States included not only the labor one would associate with any political party, but also the physical and emotional labor involved in countersurveillance and maintaining intimate relationships while under the watchful gaze of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and British Secret Service.

The sources for this chapter present some problems for the historian seeking the perspective of Communists working for the Party. Surveillance files, of course, offer the viewpoint of reporting agents, while testimonies before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) vary wildly between outright hostility to the proceedings and those from witnesses eager to distance themselves from so-called subversive activities. Each, however, offers valuable evidence of the unpaid labor required of Communist operatives. What can surveillance files and witness transcripts reveal about Communist strategies and tactics to hide their activities when this evidence demonstrates instances of failure rather than success? The answer lies in time and confusion—the time between Special Branch and FBI reports and the false leads and dead ends that kept agents scrambling for information—these are the marks of successful clandestine activity. How did Communists learn about surveillance, and what steps did they take to avoid detection? How did surveillance and countermeasures affect Communist bodies? What do these files reveal about heterosexual intimacies and the ways that Communist couples maintained their relationships under such stressful conditions? For the answers to these questions, we

must remember the central tenets of Communism, that of radical discipline and a commitment to the working-class struggle, one shared by activists who prized that obligation above all else, including their love for each other.

In the first section, I examine the physical labor of Communist activities—the countersurveillance methods employed and the sometimes-gendered division of labor among Communist covert operatives. The second section focuses on the emotional labor of radical activism, including reproductive choices made by Party couples in the first half of the twentieth century. Efforts to organize workers, keep some activities secret, and preserve loving relationships required employees of the Communist Parties of Great Britain and the United States to engage in physical, emotional, and almost always stress-inducing labor unlike their working-class contemporaries and always with the knowledge that someone could be watching or listening.

Communist labor

It is noted that the reference report indicates Phil Bart may be identical with Phil Bard reported (sic) a visitor in the Spanish Loyalist Forces in Spain in 1937. It is to be noted that a picture of Phil Bard indicates that this individual is a much younger man than Phil Bart, Organizational Secretary, and comparison of the picture gives no indication of similarity. Confidential Informant [redacted] of the Chicago Office, whose identity is known to the Bureau, was shown a picture of Phil Bart and he advised that to the best of his recollection this was not the individual he had met in Spain as Phil Bard.⁶⁰¹

For Communist operatives, the first step in avoiding detection often meant adopting pseudonyms, or Party names, though the practice began earlier in the United States and appears to have been more widespread than in Great Britain. In the

⁶⁰¹ FBI Report, Phil Bart, 100-22157, 1 October 1941.

aftermath of the 1919-1920 Palmer Raids, for example, CPUSA founder Charles Ruthenberg and other Communist leaders “survived by going underground, taking false names, communicating in code, [and] living clandestine lives,” much like their Bolshevik contemporaries.⁶⁰² The CPUSA then developed what it called “Rules for Underground Party Work,” a copy of which was seized by Bureau of Investigation (BOI, later FBI) agents during an illegal break-in at Party headquarters in 1921. Among the several rules regarding clandestine activities were warnings to avoid carrying the names and addresses of fellow Communists, “except in good code” and to keep one’s membership secret.⁶⁰³

The CPUSA promoted Americanization in the 1920s and 1930s, particularly focusing on naturalization and English-language proficiency in attempts to counteract their reputation as a foreign organization and to attract more native-born to the Party.⁶⁰⁴ When they immigrated from Poland to the United States, Phil Bart’s family may have followed the examples of other immigrants and changed their last name as a way to appear more “American.”⁶⁰⁵ While there are plenty of examples of Anglicized names among Communists in the United States, more important for this study was the number of aliases employed as a means of hiding one’s whereabouts and activities. Bart, for example, regularly used four different last names, and though

⁶⁰² Weiner, *Enemies*, 34. Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Leon Trotsky, and Grigory Zinoviev, for example, were all alias or what became known as Party names.

⁶⁰³ “Rules for Underground Party Work,” quoted in Weiner, *Enemies*, 48.

⁶⁰⁴ Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, 22; and James R. Barrett, “Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930,” in *History from the Bottom Up & Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017): 133.

⁶⁰⁵ FBI Reports, Phil Bart, 100-22157, 15 August 1941 and 16 September 1943.

Bard was not among them, it too provided him with some cover against FBI surveillance.⁶⁰⁶ A 1941 FBI report listed a total of nine different aliases used by Dorothy Ray Healey (born Dorothy Rosenblum), at the time an organizer for the United Cannery, Agricultural, Packinghouse, and Allied Workers of America (UCAPAWA) and under consideration for a position with the California Labor Board.⁶⁰⁷ Many reports on Healey and Bart included lists of known aliases, speculation about their true names, and, occasionally, some consternation from agents unable to discover their living arrangements.

Communists in Great Britain also employed aliases, especially after passage of the Incitement to Disaffection Act in 1934 made it a criminal offense to “maliciously and advisedly [endeavour] to seduce any member of His Majesty’s forces from his duty or allegiance.”⁶⁰⁸ This move toward more clandestine affiliation began in 1931 when the British government reconstituted MI5 as the Security Service and expanded its jurisdiction to include civilian as well as military targets, but at the time the CPGB seemed more concerned with those who, for “business reasons,” should not be known as members.⁶⁰⁹ While this report does not speculate about what those reasons might have been, it is possible that this policy was aimed at employees of British munitions factories, given that in 1938 Metropolitan Police arrested Percy

⁶⁰⁶ FBI Report, Phil Bart, 100-22157, 15 August 1941. The mistaken connection between Phil Bart and Phil Bard came via correspondence obtained by the FBI between Joseph and Charles Persily while the latter served in the John Brown Artillery Unit of the International Brigade. In a letter dated 7 August 1937, Charles wrote that Phil Bard and Max Bedacht visited his unit at Albacete, Spain.

⁶⁰⁷ FBI Report, Dorothy Ray, 100-18459, 29 July 1941.

⁶⁰⁸ Incitement to Disaffection Act, 1934, TNA, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/24-25/56/contents/enacted>, accessed 13 November 2022.

⁶⁰⁹ Special Branch Report (17 May 1932), Records of the Security Service, KV3/388, TNA; and Quinlan, *The Secret War*, 85-86.

Glading and broke up the Woolwich Arsenal spy ring.⁶¹⁰ Special Branch reports from this period include lists of new assumed names as well as evidence that the CPGB and its affiliated organizations began “destroying or hiding material, documents, names etc. on the instructions of the Centre.”⁶¹¹ British Communists most often used pseudonyms in correspondence with Party headquarters and spouses, especially when operating as couriers for the Comintern, attending a conference or the International Lenin School in Moscow, or doing Party work in the Empire.⁶¹² Some women went by their maiden names rather than their married ones, as was the case in correspondence between Lily Webb and husband Maurice Ferguson and between Olive Budden and Robin Page-Arnot after they married.⁶¹³

Secret Service agents attempting to verify the identities of radical activists included descriptions of their subjects, often using derogatory and sometimes racialized language when referencing a presumed Jewish Communist. Based on his demographic analysis of the Central Executive Committee over a thirty-year period, Harvey Klehr estimated that the CPUSA was dominated by its Jewish members, who accounted for between 23.5 and 44.7 percent of CEC delegates during that period. While Jews made up a considerable percentage of CPUSA members and cadre, the

⁶¹⁰ West, *MASK*, 20-21.

⁶¹¹ Special Branch Reports (5 April 1934), Records of the Security Service, KV3/388, TNA; and (16 April 1934), Records of the Security Service, KV3/389, TNA.

⁶¹² Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 263. All students took pseudonyms while attending the International Lenin School. Mancunian Ted Ainley used George Bernard Shaw.

⁶¹³ Special Branch Reports, “Jack Hall” to C.R. Woods (13 November 1929), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA; Lily Webb to M. Ferguson (February 1932), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA; and Lily Webb to Maurice (February 1932), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

same cannot be said of the CPGB in the first decades after its founding.⁶¹⁴ With the caveat that surnames, native languages, and country of birth serve as only “rough-and-ready identifiers,” Kevin Morgan estimates that Jews made up approximately ten percent of CPGB membership, largely from the second-generation of Jewish migrants and mostly concentrated in the “outstandingly gifted YCL cohort” in Manchester. By the late 1930s, many from that cohort graduated to district or national-level CP positions, including Mick Jenkins and David, Ted, and Ben Ainley.⁶¹⁵

In their descriptions, agents sometimes simply reported that a subject had a “Jewish appearance,” as was the case with Phyllis Schechter, Jenny Frankel, and her brother, International Brigade veteran Solomon, perhaps under the assumption that readers would know exactly what that meant.⁶¹⁶ Other agents employed coded language, though it is likely that agents understood Rosalie Turner’s “sharp features” and “rather long nose,” Frieda Devine’s “sallow” complexion, and Rose Schechter’s “dark, prominent nose” and “foreign appearance” to be indications of Jewish ethnicity.⁶¹⁷ The same could be said of the reporting agent’s opinion that a 1943 meeting at London’s Berners Hotel included mostly Jewish attendees, using language that covered a broad range of anti-Semitic attitudes. According to this agent, “some

⁶¹⁴ Klehr, *Communist Cadre*, chapter 2. Klehr used CP biographical information and relationships with early language and ethnic factions to determine that 71 of 212 CEC members were likely Jewish.

⁶¹⁵ Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 190.

⁶¹⁶ Special Branch Report (23 February 1942), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3064, TNA; and Special Branch Report (26 March 1942), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2934, TNA.

⁶¹⁷ Special Branch Report (9 November 1938), Records of the Security Service, KV3/392, TNA; and Special Branch Report (23 February 1942), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3064, TNA. According to some nineteenth-century writers, Jews had become so acculturated in language, hair, and skin and eye color that it was difficult to distinguish them from other Europeans. Hence the turn to that supposedly immutable physical characteristic—the Jewish nose—to describe these Communists. See Gilman, “The Jewish Nose: Are Jews White? Or, the History of the Nose Job” in *The Jew’s Body*, 169-193.

appeared to be alien,” others were “obviously well-to-do,” and still others were “obviously poor and of bedraggled appearance.”⁶¹⁸ In other instances, agents recorded the number of African Americans or estimated the number of Jews present at open air meetings. This was especially the case when the topic addressed concerns of those communities, such as Phil Bart’s showing of the film *The Negro Soldier* to Black servicemen in Indianapolis and Pat Devine’s confrontational street meetings in Victoria Square Park about the British Union of Fascists’ (BUF) presence in London’s East End.⁶¹⁹

Agents also took the opportunity to comment on the relative attractiveness of women subjects, such as the characterization of Minnie Marie D’Aprano as a stout woman with a sallow complexion and a “coarse and slovenly” appearance, Jenny Frankel as young and wearing too much lipstick, and Phyllis Schechter looking “sophisticated” despite, or perhaps because of, her “heavily made up” face.⁶²⁰ Claudia Jones apparently had “good teeth” and at least one FBI agent found her attractive, though the description of her as “well groomed” and “good looking” appeared under the heading “peculiarities,” which somehow makes his observations less complimentary to Jones and more an indication of his surprise at being attracted to an African American woman.⁶²¹ Such descriptions, no matter how stereotypical or racist, aided in determining where Communist operatives lived, a monumental feat

⁶¹⁸ Special Branch Report (1 February 1943), Records of the Security Service, KV3/399, TNA.

⁶¹⁹ FBI Report, Phil Bart-NYC-1, 100-22157, 22 August 1944; and Special Branch Reports (22 September, 3 October, and undated, 1937), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1573, TNA.

⁶²⁰ Special Branch Report (20 October 1931), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1869, TNA; Special Branch Report (26 March 1942), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2934, TNA; and Special Branch Report (23 February 1942), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3064, TNA.

⁶²¹ FBI Reports, Claudia Jones, 100-72390, 25 May 1942 and 19 May 1943.

for agents pursuing subjects liable to receive notices of transfer at any moment, using secondary addresses for correspondence, and/or moving frequently so as to elude discovery.

In addition to the use of pseudonyms, Communists eluded agents by setting up alternate addresses for mail delivery and by sending envelopes containing two letters to that address. While working as an organizer in and around Manchester in the late 1920s, Maurice Ferguson received payment from the National Office within letters addressed to Mrs. Allen and Mrs. Mee, both women living at addresses different from those occupied by Ferguson and his wife.⁶²² This, of course, meant that Maurice or Lily spent some time and effort to get his wages. Most correspondence between the Fergusons and the Manchester District Political Committee or CPGB headquarters did not employ this method, demonstrated by numerous intercepted letters wherein Ferguson complained about using personal money for Party work, and responses from the Center denying him raises or reimbursements for expenses.⁶²³ The single exception to this, at least with regards to those obtained by Special Branch, was a letter sent to the Secretariat “under cover to Miss Nancy Williams” explaining why Ferguson thought the CPGB should pay for bicycles that he and Lily used for Party work.⁶²⁴ These intercepted letters and the Special Branch reports that accompany

⁶²² Special Branch Reports (13 January 1928, 27 January 1928, 3 February 1928, and February 1928), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

⁶²³ Special Branch Reports (25 April 1927, 28 April 1927, January 1928, 28 February 1928, 13 May 1928, 2 July 1928, 11 December 1928, 22 July 1929, 2 September 1929, and 4 September 1929), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

⁶²⁴ Special Branch Report (no date), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

them do not indicate if Lily was on the CPGB payroll or if her work amounted to unpaid labor for the Party.

Many such letters came from CPGB operatives working in other countries, but the Secret Service had only to require that the postal service retain all letters from certain locations to work around the use of pseudonyms and/or secondary addresses. When the CPGB sent students to the Lenin School or delegates to the VII World Congress of the Communist International, for example, the Special Branch authorized the postmaster general to “detain, open, and produce...all postal packages and telegrams addressed to ‘Any Name,’ Hotel October, Moscow.”⁶²⁵ This allowed them to see letters from Rose Cohen to Olive Parsons delivered via Eva Reckitt, Olive Budden to W.M. Holmes sent to Herr Otto Moritz, and Frieda Devine to Nell sent in an envelope addressed to Elsie MacMeaghan. Ever cognizant that these might be intercepted, Moscow-based Communists frequently wrote about their comrades using initials or aliases in attempts to hide their activities. Cohen, for example, mentioned “Bud” when referring to Olive Budden, while Budden told Holmes that after receiving his letter from “G” she “passed [it] onto our mutual friend at once.” She further explained that she intended to see a mutual acquaintance but kept their identity secret by reminding Holmes that this person kept “you and T. talking til 6 in the morning, and later worried us by insisting on wearing a straw hat.”⁶²⁶

⁶²⁵ Special Branch Report (July 1935), Records of the Security Service, KV3/390, TNA.

⁶²⁶ Special Branch Reports (13 November 1927 and 15 May 1931), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA; and Special Branch Report (21 October 1933), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA.

Sometimes these aliases helped Communists to transfer locations without alerting the authorities, usually resulting in some confusion among agents diligently working to follow their movements. Chicago agents could only speculate about Phil Bart's living arrangements for a short period of time, and only found out where he resided when they discovered his marriage to Constance Strauss and subsequent use of her last name in dealings with their landlady and on official paperwork for a bank account. The landlady, Mrs. Hunt, proved to be incredibly helpful, as she told agents about seeing copies of the *Daily Worker* and other CP literature in Constance's apartment, as well as a large amount of money "lying around." Though technically not an illegal organization at the time, this information demonstrates the Party's concern about Bart and Strauss's failure to follow the rule about hiding any "incriminating documents or literature."⁶²⁷ Hunt's greatest contribution to agent inquiries, however, was the fact that Bart had recently purchased a 1941 Black Plymouth Coach.⁶²⁸ This intelligence empowered the FBI to monitor his movements outside of Chicago and to notify agents in Indianapolis, St. Louis, and other cities within District 8 of the CPUSA.⁶²⁹ Similarly, when Indian authorities requested an "up-to-date list of office bearers and members of the Communist Party of Great Britain" and affiliated organizations, Special Branch could only respond that London District Organizer and CEC member Douglas Frank Springhall used "various

⁶²⁷ "Rules for Underground Party Work," quoted in Weiner, *Enemies*, 48.

⁶²⁸ FBI Report, Phil Bart, 100-22157, 4 December 1941. Regarding the necessity to keep documents somewhere besides his room, Joe Koide told HUAC interrogators, "You know how nosy those landladies are. I didn't want anything hanging around." *Hearing Before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-third Congress, First Session, December 5, 1953* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954), 3425.

⁶²⁹ FBI Report, Phil Bart, 100-22157, 4 December 1941.

addresses in London; most frequently” at a place in Grays Inn Road, and William Gallacher appeared “to have no known fixed abode” in London, although he spent most of his time there.⁶³⁰

Though she worked mostly in the Harlem section of New York City between 1941, when the FBI opened her file, and 1947, Claudia Jones managed to prevent agents from discovering both her background and her living arrangements for five years. A combination of different aliases and some misinformation in the *Daily Worker*, *Amsterdam News*, and other local newspapers sent agents chasing down several erroneous leads in Virginia and upstate New York.⁶³¹ In addition to the several aliases she used in her personal and professional life, Jones also thwarted FBI attempts to locate her by providing fake home addresses to property managers, the Social Security Administration, and the post office.⁶³² Agents finally began piecing together her life history once they discovered that Claudia Vera Cumberbatch graduated from Harlem’s Wadleigh High School in 1934, though it took them more than a year to figure out that some of their information related to her sister Yvonne.⁶³³ Because they read Communist literature, the secret services knew addresses for CPGB and CPUSA offices, as well as those of their affiliated organizations, so the fact that Gallacher, Jones, and Bart could keep their living arrangements secret for

⁶³⁰ Special Branch Report (22 August 1934), Records of the Security Service, KV3/389, TNA.

⁶³¹ FBI Reports, Claudia Jones, 100-72390, 30 March 1942, 1 March 1944, and 5 May 1944.

⁶³² FBI Reports, Claudia Jones, 100-72390, 13 January 1942, 2 December 1942, 17 March 1943, 26 January 1944, 1 March 1944, and 11 December 1945

⁶³³ FBI Reports, Claudia Jones, 100-7390, 11 December 1945, 24 September 1946, and 18 March 1947.

any amount of time implies some achievement in preventing detection as they made their way to and from work each day.

Once the FBI or Special Branch located a target's residence, trash covers (the term for warrants giving agents permission to rifle through someone's garbage), interception of mail, wiretaps, and bugs followed, as did interviews with the neighbors. In the US, there was also the possibility of a break-in since the FBI and Director J. Edgar Hoover cared little about the legality of their intelligence work. So, Communist operatives had to take care when speaking on the phone or in person; they needed to hide their activities from potential informants living nearby; and they had to destroy—not merely toss in the bin—any document that might provide evidence against them. By 1949, the Philadelphia FBI office had forty-two sources of information on Bart's movements and activities, including reports from confidential informants and field agents, wiretaps, trash covers, photographs, and films. Though understaffed and reliant on local constables for surveillance, MI5 only needed to file a simple request for a Home Office Warrant (HOW) to obtain recordings of telephone conversations at any number, including all extensions at Party headquarters and the home numbers of its operatives. After Shields died in April 1949, agents cancelled the HOW on Eileen's home phone, for example, only to reinstate it a few months later once her continuing involvement in undercover work became clear.⁶³⁴

⁶³⁴ Special Branch Reports (April 1949, 14 April 1949, 1 September 1949, and 2 September 1949), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA. Margaret Gadian claimed that Special Branch opened her mail "at least up until about 1960." Margaret Gadian oral history, TAPE/307, WCML.

If they wished to avoid being followed, operatives needed a related but different set of skills. Wigs, hats, and turned up collars could assist them in eluding tails, as could detailed knowledge of city streets and public transportation, but operatives who did not own a personal vehicle had to be physically capable of walking quickly, changing direction frequently, and hopping on and off buses and trains in an instant, as Palmer and Shields' behavior in the introduction to this chapter demonstrates. Agents following Phil Bart in Philadelphia noted that he appeared "very evasive and attempted to conceal his identity by pulling his hat down over his eyes and putting his overcoat collar up around his neck." Such behavior undoubtedly informed Bart's description in a later section, where, under the heading "peculiarities," the agent wrote that the subject appeared "somewhat flatfooted, [walked] rapidly, and [had] a nervous manner." At no time does the report indicate that this characterization could have been used to describe almost anyone who knew that FBI or Secret Service agents had them under surveillance. All of this was genuine physical labor that added hours to each working day and contributed to increasing levels of stress on Communist bodies. In fact, the simple act of *being* a Communist could be detrimental to one's health, as a letter from Sam Darcy to the CPUSA National Office indicates:

W. Dart, a comrade of about 45 years old who openly says that he cannot appear in demonstrations or mass meetings and that he is afraid of the police and is a natural coward. During the War he was a conscientious objector and got such bad treatment at Alcatraz that it has broken his spirit. On the basis of his plea along these lines he has been regularly excused from all work where militancy is required.⁶³⁵

⁶³⁵ Sam Darcy to Central Committee, CPUSA, 3 February 1931, RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 2282.

The next chapter will go into more detail about the emotional and physical suffering endured by Communist functionaries, but Dart's "natural" cowardice suggests a paranoid, nervous comrade who would have been unlikely to survive intense surveillance or questioning. It is little wonder that Darcy excused him from actions that could have resulted in his arrest.

Labor of Movement

Though Claudia Jones did not live at some of the places she put on official documents, that does not in any way suggest that Communists were a sedentary lot. In fact, they moved frequently, either to elude the secret services, to begin working for the CP in another region, or, possibly, to avoid paying rents they could ill afford. Regardless of their reasons, Communists knew that employment with the Party "required a constant readiness" to take on more or different work, transfer districts, or begin working for the national office.⁶³⁶ Special Branch, for example, believed that Maurice Ferguson moved nineteen times between 1927 and 1936, several more if counting his mother's various addresses in and around London and his time at the Lenin School in 1929-1930. In 1931 alone, Ferguson lived at three different locations in Birmingham and used a fourth for correspondence. The CPGB had him on the move again in 1936, sending him from Bradford to London and, finally, to the London suburb Twickenham.⁶³⁷ His wife Lily only moved with him when CPGB leaders deemed it necessary to transfer both to a new District, evidenced by a 1932

⁶³⁶ Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 116.

⁶³⁷ Special Branch Reports (various dates), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

letter from the Secretariat proposing that Maurice engage in a month of “experimental work on the *Daily Worker*” while Lily took over his duties as Birmingham Organizer.⁶³⁸ Though Ferguson complained excessively about some of these transfers, the British example in no way compares to that of American Communists asked by the Secretariat to move thousands of miles from family and friends, as they did for L. Martin when the National Office transferred him from the San Francisco Workers International Relief (WIR) office to work for the WIR in Chicago or Sam Darcy in 1930 when they transferred him from New York to California. No stranger to being uprooted, in the previous five years, Darcy (and sometimes his wife Emma) worked for the CPUSA in New York, San Francisco, China, Moscow, and the Philippines and had gone on several speaking tours before returning to New York City to help organize the 6 March 1930 Hunger March.⁶³⁹ An embittered Darcy later claimed that a dispute with Earl Browder led to what he called his “expulsion” to California, an assertion with some merit, given similar discussions among leaders in the CPGB over the fates of often disagreeable functionaries like Pat Devine and Maurice Ferguson.⁶⁴⁰



Figure 14: Caroline Decker with migrant farm workers. Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley. Permission not yet granted.

⁶³⁸ Special Branch Report, Secretariat to Comrade (3 August 1932), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

⁶³⁹ “Minutes of Buro Meeting, Communist Party of the United States, District #13,” December 26, 1929, RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 1793; and “Biography,” SAD MS, TAM.124, box 3, folder 8, WLA.

Even when stationed in one location, the question of movement presented challenges for CP operatives, many of whom could not afford a bus ticket, much less a motorcycle or car. After stints working for the WIR in Kentucky and Tennessee and the CP in Pennsylvania and Southern textile towns, Caroline Decker joined a “Free Tom Mooney” bus caravan to get to California, where she met the actor Will Geer and future husband Jack Warnick. Often Decker relied on the kindness of strangers in her work as Organizer for the Canning and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU), catching rides, borrowing cars, and/or hitchhiking her way up and down California’s Central Valley. Asked about the dangers involved, particularly to her assertion that she sometimes hitchhiked alone and at night, Decker replied, “An awful lot of courage comes from the ignorance of youth.”⁶⁴¹

Interstate bus systems and hitchhiking were dominant modes of transportation for Paul and Violet Orr as well. When they returned to the Bay Area after a two-year period living in Moscow, Paul hitched rides to catch the ferry to San Francisco and the office of the Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU), while Violet either took the bus or hitched a ride to the FSU office in Oakland. When a local travel agency asked Violet to go on a fact-finding mission to the Soviet Union in 1932, she had to speak at FSU functions to raise money for the bus fare to New York and again upon her return to the United States. The couple even hitchhiked over 300 miles from San Francisco to Tehachapi Women’s Prison to visit inmates Louise Todd and Caroline Decker and

⁶⁴⁰ Samuel Darcy interview, <http://www.albany.edu/talkinghistory/samdarcy/sam-darcy-zahavigiorgio-12-03-1998.mp3>; accessed 3 September 2014.

⁶⁴¹ Decker interview, DAF #4-8.

to one of California's Japanese internment camps to see Nori, Violet's former colleague at the *People's World*.⁶⁴²

Maurice Ferguson, on the other hand, used a bicycle to travel to meetings in the villages west and north of Manchester. And, according to letters he sent to CPGB headquarters, he put in quite a lot of miles each week. In efforts to get a pay raise and reimbursement for the bicycle and its maintenance, he sent multiple letters to the Center with detailed information about his daily activities. For example, in a January 1928 letter, he claimed that month to have attended twenty-nine organizational meetings in places like St. Helens, Bamfurlong, and Garswood Hall, each one-way journey requiring between thirty minutes and an hour by bicycle. In another letter titled "Report of personal activity for week ending May 13, 1928," Ferguson stated that after working in the office all day on Wednesday, he cycled 20 miles from Wigan to Blackburn for an evening conference.⁶⁴³ If Ferguson is to be believed, these were not anomalies, but typical of his work life, demonstrated again by a third letter showing his movements in June and July that also included visits to the Manchester passport office in anticipation of his forthcoming trip to Moscow and the International Lenin School.⁶⁴⁴ A 1931 operation to alleviate his suffering from hemorrhoids

⁶⁴² Orr interview, DAF #4, #5, and #15.

⁶⁴³ Margaret Gadian oral history, TAPE/331, WCML. Estimated time and mileage obtained via Google maps. In her oral history, Margaret Gadian complained about the amount of time her husband spent working as a district organizer in Lancashire. The CPGB only paid him £6.50 each week, and she rarely saw him at night because he did administrative work during the day and traveled to meetings "all over Lancashire" every night without a car or bicycle. She also said, "He sometimes went without wages," and the couple relied on friends for supplemental food and clothes for their children.

⁶⁴⁴ Special Branch Reports (January 1928, 13 May 1928, and 2 July 1928), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

suggests that cycling continued to be his primary means of transportation once he became District Organizer for Birmingham.⁶⁴⁵

Agents may have had an easier time following an operative on a bicycle, especially when the subject obliged them with detailed lists of his movements, but not so for those following Communists in cities with ample transit options. In an anonymous interview, a former intelligence agent revealed that, in an ideal surveillance operation, a single target on foot required four agents, while a person traveling by car required five vehicular tails.⁶⁴⁶ Though agents successfully stayed with Phil Bart, Eileen Palmer, and Jimmy Shields on many occasions, there is obviously no evidence for the days in which they succeeded in dodging their shadows. And while it is conceivable that some of Palmer and Shields' behavior can be attributed to their affair, it is more likely that they knew the Secret Service monitored their activities and changed them whenever possible, suggesting that they followed the "Rules" to lose any surveillance on the way to meetings or appointments, even when they simply went from home to the office.⁶⁴⁷ Maurice Ferguson's case notwithstanding, many Communists knew they were being followed,

⁶⁴⁵ Special Branch Reports (June 1931, July 1931, 2 July 1931, 30 July 1931, August 1931, 8 September 1931, 10 September 1931, 18 September 1931, 19 September 1931, and October 1931), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

⁶⁴⁶ Quinlan, *The Secret War*, 47. This, of course, depended on the number of agents available at a location at any given time. Prior to the 1926-1927 general strike, for example, Scotland Yard employed only 136 men in Special Branch, and therefore relied on local constables and volunteer associations, many of the latter peopled by members of ultra-right groups like the British Empire Union and the Economic League.

⁶⁴⁷ Special Branch Reports (9 November 1945, January 1946, 16 March 1946, 4 March 1947, and April 1949), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA; and "Rules for Underground Party Work, quoted in Weiner, *Enemies*, 48.

and they also knew that agents bugged their telephones, rifled through their garbage, employed confidential informants, and read their mail.⁶⁴⁸

Awareness of wiretaps at national and district offices led operatives to seek out different locations to conduct their work, with varying degrees of success. In his testimony before HUAC, seaman James Kendall gave some indication of the work involved in arranging these meetings. CP waterfront organizer Alex Treskin, without giving any details, asked Kendall to meet at the corner of Broadway and Stockton in San Francisco's Chinatown neighborhood on an August 1946 Saturday morning. From there Treskin escorted him to a Masonic Temple and a gathering of CP members from various maritime unions. Perhaps HUAC interrogators had no knowledge of this event when they interviewed Kendall, but he certainly piqued their interest once he revealed that a pair of men guarded both the inner and outer doors and listed International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) leader Harry Bridges as an attendee.⁶⁴⁹

Though the FBI and the Secret Service tended to have at least one confidential informant at these meetings, agents also tried to gain entry to adjoining rooms when possible, and the CPUSA and CPGB put in measures to thwart such attempts, as they did at Kendall's meeting and one at the Berners Hotel in London.

I kept discreet observation in the vicinity of the Berners Hotel. Access to the meeting room was impossible, and it was evident that the

⁶⁴⁸ Quinlan, *The Secret War*, 127. In the 1920s, the CPGB and Moscow had two moles working for Scotland Yard who gave them ample warning about counterespionage, investigations, and the methods used by field agents.

⁶⁴⁹ James Kendall testimony, *Hearing Before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-third Congress, First Session, December 5, 1953* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954).

organisers were taking the utmost precautions to preserve secrecy—the only entrance to the Reading Room was in a narrow corridor, and any person lingering there was immediately scrutinized by stewards from the meeting room, whilst other stewards kept watch for any ‘suspect’ in the hotel foyer.⁶⁵⁰

Special Branch did, however, access the room after the meeting adjourned and, though they believed “all evidence of a political gathering had been removed,” they still collected every scrap of paper left behind. Perhaps most importantly for future investigations, the officers discovered the organizer’s preferred car service and his frequent use of the Berners for these types of meetings.

With prior knowledge of meeting locations, transportation, and typical schedules, agents could plan more extravagant stakeouts. By 1944, for example, the FBI knew the make and model of Phil Bart’s car and his preferred hotel when staying in Indianapolis. This gave agents the time to bug Bart’s room and listen while he met with local Indianapolis labor activist Elmer Johnson and Walter Frisbie, the Indiana State Secretary-Treasurer for the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) Political Action Committee and the CIO Industrial Union Council. There they heard the men discussing plans to garner more African American support by broadcasting instances of *de facto* racism in Indiana and to have CP members accompany Black patrons to area restaurants and bear witness to refusals of service.⁶⁵¹ Similarly, once MI5 discovered that Eileen Palmer used her mother’s car to run errands with Bob Stewart, they followed it to addresses in Chelsea, Brickwood, and Welwyn Garden City and coordinated with the Hertfordshire Constabulary to maintain surveillance of known

⁶⁵⁰ Special Branch Report (1 February 1943), Records of the Security Service, KV3/399, TNA.

⁶⁵¹ FBI Report, Phil Bart, 100-22157, 22 August 1944.

Communists living in those areas.⁶⁵² Without such knowledge, surveillance teams could only name those entering a room or building and speculate about others, as two officers following Peter Zinkin did when they observed Harry Pollitt and other members of the CPGB Executive Committee arrive for a meeting at Conway Hall in London's Red Lion Square. The agents also noticed others, like *Daily Worker* chief editor Douglas Hyde, at the end of the meeting, and concluded that attendees made sure to enter and exit through different doors.⁶⁵³

At various times, both the CPUSA and CPGB hid their membership rolls or had some members remove themselves from those lists for covert purposes. Even in the best of times, operatives in charge of membership felt the need to keep those lists secret from prying eyes, like North London Sub-District Organizer David Gibbons reportedly keeping member records in an attaché case that he always carried with him. Sam Darcy's secretary Katherine Rodin recalled with glee that she successfully prevented anti-communist vigilantes from obtaining CPUSA District #13 member lists by attaching them to a string and dangling them from her apartment window. "They tore everything apart. You see, they thought I had party records, which I did have. But I hung them out of the window. They took all the beds apart and threw them on the floor and took the dresser drawers out looking for records." Rodin

⁶⁵² Special Branch Reports (30 January 1951, 1 February 1951, 2 February 1951, 8 February 1951, 9 February 1951, 15 February 1951, 28 February 1951, 30 March 1951, 13 April 1951, 14 April 1951, 23 April 1951, 12 June 1951), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2705, TNA.

⁶⁵³ Special Branch Report (19 November 1941), Records of the Security Service, KV3/398, TNA.

claimed that in their search for the hidden membership list “the damn fools” missed \$60.00 in CP dues also hidden in her home.⁶⁵⁴

The CPUSA’s status as an illegal entity came to fruition with passage of more and more targeted legislation in the early days of the Cold War, prompting Communists who had not been detained to regroup as a completely underground organization. This restructuring compounded the daily physical toll on the most committed Communists and resulted in the loss of thousands of members, especially among trade unionists who, under the terms of the newly instituted McCarran Act, were now required to swear loyalty to the United States to retain their status within AFL and CIO unions. In his report on the state of the Party at the 1950 National Committee Plenum, Organizational Secretary Henry Winston blamed the “unprecedented drive and ceaseless attacks” by the FBI and loyalty oaths for the loss of members among steel, packinghouse, maritime, and transport workers. Those that remained had to hide their membership at all costs, including from each other, because, as the Smith Act trials and HUAC hearings demonstrated, the Party was riddled with undercover agents and confidential informants, and one could never be sure if, given the opportunity, that trusted comrade might turn states’ evidence. To that end, Confidential Informant T-20 told the reporting agent that he believed the

⁶⁵⁴ Special Branch Report (3 December 1936), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3346, TNA; and Katherine Rodin, interviewed by Lucy Kendell for the California Historical Society’s Women in California Oral History Project, 15 April 1976, transcript, 17-18, Labor Archives and Research Center, San Francisco State University, California (hereafter cited as LARC).

National CP headquarters held “no such [member] records,” nor did he think any membership list could be found at any CP office in the country.⁶⁵⁵

By 1950, the CPUSA instituted new policies that ostensibly ensured secrecy, and these measures required even greater physical commitment of its members. An informant embedded in the Queensbridge Club of Queens, NYC shared this new organizational structure with the FBI, reporting that they would no longer meet as a group, would only meet with their assigned group captains, and would only know other members by assigned numbers. “Only two people will be present at the oral registration of another

comrade,” the informant said, so that “after a time no more than a maximum of five people will know what anyone else is doing or will know anyone else’s position.”⁶⁵⁶ When the

Bryant Club Organizer asked

an informant to contact another club member, she insisted the meeting be in person and told the CI to be prepared to swallow the tiny slip of paper containing the name

| Section | | REGISTRATION FORM | | | | | | | | | | |
|-----------|------------|-------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|
| G R O U P | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| Members | Registered | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 1. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 4. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 5. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 6. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 7. | | | | | | | | | | | |

1. Male or Female
 2. Housewife
 3. Negro or white
 4. Industrial Worker (specific industry)
 5. Unemployed
 6. White collar
 7. Professional
 8. Student
 9. Others (Specify)
 10. Union (CIO, AFL, IWD.)
 11. Dues paid thru Dec. plus Convention assessment

Figure 15: CPUSA Group Registration Form, Kings County Communist Party, Brooklyn, FBI Report, New York 100-80638-3, 18 November 1950. Permission not yet granted.

⁶⁵⁵ FBI Report, New York 100-80638-3, 19 July 1950.

⁶⁵⁶ FBI Report, New York 100-80638-3, 28 September 1950. This system resembled one undertaken by the CPGB in 1932 in which officials would be assigned numbers that would be used in correspondence, literature, etc. Special Branch Report (1932), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1783, TNA.

of that comrade, “as was done in Hitler Germany.”⁶⁵⁷ In addition to the clandestine registration and communication system, this new organizational structure also included an elaborate system for dues collection—all face-to-face meetings with two people—that ostensibly kept track of which members remained in good standing with the Party.⁶⁵⁸

Women’s labor

Collection of dues brings up the gendered nature of job assignments, as it appears to have been largely the responsibility of women members, and though an elected position, typically an unpaid one. An early-1930s pamphlet produced by the National Office of the YCL called “Dues Does It! A Manual for Branch Dues Secretaries” illustrates this point, as it encouraged young women to use their sexuality to get members—here distinctly gendered male—to pay their dues. Following a letter from YCL National Administrative Secretary Henry Winston, readers are introduced to “the pleasant looking girl—or fellow, sitting next to the attendance secretary” at the entrance to YCL branch meetings and invites them to “see how she works.”

“She” is advised:

‘Hey—how about paying up?’ is not a very friendly approach. The smile that refreshes—will go a long way toward showing your member that it’s not only dues in which you’re interested. He’s more than just John Jones—prospective dues customer No. 1. He’s a fellow branch member, lives near you. You’re interested in him. Smile when you say—‘Dues, Johnny?’⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁷ FBI Report, New York 100-80638-3, 12 August 1950.

⁶⁵⁸ FBI Report, New York 100-80638-3, 12 November 1950.

⁶⁵⁹ “Dues Does It!”

In addition to her duties as Sam Darcy's personal secretary, Katherine Rodin claimed to oversee dues collection for District 13, a job that entailed more travel and less flirting than this YCL pamphlet suggests. Because of the real danger that the district headquarters would be ransacked by vigilantes, Darcy instituted a system of collection at various "stations," private homes and small businesses where members sent dues that Rodin later collected, a task that she recalled had her "running around all the time."⁶⁶⁰

Women also acted as financial secretaries, administrative assistants, and, most importantly for this study, local and international couriers for the CPUSA, CPGGB, and Comintern. As a teenager, Caroline Decker participated in the 1930 Hunger Marches in New York and Pittsburgh by holding onto the Unemployed Council's money because, as she put it, she looked like "your neighbor's daughter."⁶⁶¹ District 13 Organizer Sam Darcy enlisted Rodin to deliver messages to William Z. Foster when he visited San Francisco, and again to radical longshoremen during the 1934 Maritime and General Strike.⁶⁶² An informant told Special Branch that King Street operated an internal courier system that consisted of three envelopes on Harry Pollitt's desk, one each for Ben Bradley, R.W. Robson, and Tom Campbell, who received them from "Margaret," Agnes Aitken, and an unknown female courier every day.⁶⁶³ In the late 1920s, money from the Comintern for the CPGGB and National Minority Movement came via Andrew Rothstein, who picked it up in Berlin and then

⁶⁶⁰ Rodin interview, transcript, 15, LARC.

⁶⁶¹ Decker interview, DAF #4.

⁶⁶² Rodin interview, transcript, 15 and 19, LARC.

⁶⁶³ Special Branch Report (20 May 1938), Records of the Security Service, KV3/392, TNA.

traveled to Paris, where he met Olive Budden, Rose Cohen, and LaTorr, one of whom brought thousands of US dollars to the UK for exchange and disbursement.⁶⁶⁴

Budden worked as a courier for a number of years, once getting stopped in Dover with League Against Imperialism literature, but her work pales in comparison to that done by Frieda Devine, who traveled extensively on behalf of the Comintern in the early 1930s.⁶⁶⁵

Of course, Rothstein was not the only male courier operating for the CPGB or CPUSA—John Reed, Jack and Morris Childs, Robin Page-Arnot, Jimmy Shields, and Robert Robson, among others, all acted in this capacity—but the Comintern appears to have thought that women could make these journeys without arousing suspicion, evidenced by their frequent requests for the CPGB to send more women students for training at the Lenin and Wilson Schools and the occasional order to “send a woman repeat a woman to Paris to fetch suitcase for Bombay and tube for you.”⁶⁶⁶ Though these women received payment for their aboveboard jobs, this work—sometimes as simple as wearing bedroom slippers instead of high heel shoes while distributing literature under cover of darkness—fell outside the realm of a typical secretary, accountant, or office manager.⁶⁶⁷ It required them to be inconspicuous in their

⁶⁶⁴ Special Branch Report (10 September 1928), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA.

⁶⁶⁵ Special Branch Report (31 January 1929), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, January 31, 1929, TNA; Special Branch Reports (April 1933, 21 April 1933, and 1934), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA; and West, *MASK*, 48, 49, 73, and 144. Reports on Devine’s movements indicate that on at least one occasion, she traveled from England to Moscow via Rajajoki, Russia; Turku, Finland; Stockholm, Sweden; Copenhagen, Denmark; Paris, France; Basel, Switzerland; Feldkirchen, Germany; and Breclav, Petrovice, Zebzydowice, and Stolpce.

⁶⁶⁶ Special Branch Report (10 July 1937), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3063, TNA; Special Branch Report (10 September 1928), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA; Weiner, *Enemies*, 28; Klehr et al, *Soviet World*, xxiii; and West, *MASK*, 133, 134, 137, 141, 177, and 183.

⁶⁶⁷ Rodin interview, transcript, 22, LARC.

appearance and movements, employ clandestine tradecraft on each leg of the journey, communicate in several languages, avoid confrontations with custom agents, government officials, and/or vigilantes, and be prepared to enact contingency plans if thwarted by those agents.

Emotional Labor

WEST, please inform immediately PAT, that FREDA returned safely. Soon she will leave for LONDON. ABRAHAM.⁶⁶⁸

When CPGB radio operator Stephen J. Wheeton, codenamed WEST, received this message from Jakob Mirov, alias ABRAHAM, Frieda Devine had been working as a courier for the Comintern for several years while husband Pat worked for the CPGB in London and Ireland. Pat joined Frieda in Moscow sometime in May 1933, and by October, she wrote a friend with the news that she would soon give birth to their first child. A January 1934 letter from that same friend indicates that Frieda had suffered a miscarriage or stillbirth, yet Frieda's subsequent movements show that this tragedy had not slowed her down in the slightest, as she returned to her courier duties by February.⁶⁶⁹ Still, the above personal message sent in 1935 over the Comintern's secret radio network suggests that Pat worried not only about his wife's physical safety, but also her health. More importantly for this study, Frieda's miscarriage and this communiqué demonstrate not only the physical labor of radical activism, but also the emotional labor endured by Communist couples often separated by Party directive. It also points to central Marxist theories about marriage and children,

⁶⁶⁸ West, *MASK*, 7 February 1935, No. 16, 144.

⁶⁶⁹ Special Branch Reports (21 October 1933 and 24 January 1934), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA.

particularly regarding women's activism and bodily autonomy. Communist couples like the Devines existed in a world where women ostensibly could choose to have children, combine work and motherhood, or remain childless, though personalities and entrenched gender ideologies often meant that reality diverged significantly from the ideal.

As has been demonstrated in the previous chapters, to be a professional revolutionary entailed total commitment of the mind and body. The totality of operatives' immersion in Party activities came with immersion in Party doctrine, whatever that philosophy happened to be in the moment, and this included decisions about marriage and reproduction. As Caroline Decker put it, "Our personal lives were integrated with our political lives. Our political lives came first."⁶⁷⁰ When questioned about marriage and reproductive choices made by Communists in the United States, Ida Rothstein told a *Los Angeles Times* reporter:

The mere fact that a marriage certificate has been issued to a man and woman means nothing. The Russian soviets have common sense enough to see that happiness does not depend on a marriage certificate and that the raising of children should be a part of the duty of the state. The state would furnish experts to feed and train children and we would have a much better race.⁶⁷¹

Rothstein echoed the sentiments of Marxist theorists and the actions of the Soviet government, who, in the decade following the 1917 November Revolution, took measures to remove some of the inequities in tsarist laws governing intimate relationships. They made it easier and cheaper for all Russians to obtain marriage

⁶⁷⁰ Decker interview, DAF #10.

⁶⁷¹ Pancake, "The Ladies Who See Red."

licenses or divorce certificates, and formally recognized common law marriages. They also legalized contraceptives and, for a time, abortions.⁶⁷² These regulatory modifications originated from the Marxist conviction that the religious and social institution of marriage required substantial alteration for it to remain relevant in the workers' republic. Alexandra Kollontai believed that the traditional family structure had been eroding for decades, particularly when both parents and one or more children were forced to participate in the wage economy. In her analysis, the industrial revolution had systematically transformed the family from a reproductive support network to the "primary economic unit of society," which she and other Bolshevik writers considered superfluous in the new socialist state. Kollontai applauded the Russian government's new divorce policies that allowed women to free themselves from abusive relationships and cautioned those women afraid of change to "seek and find support in the collective and in society, and not from the individual man."⁶⁷³

And yet, Communist operatives got married and had children. They married for fellowship as much as for love and looked for partners who shared their belief in a socialist future. They had frank discussions about reproduction that centered on women's desires to remain active in the Party and used contraceptive devices and abortion when necessary to maintain the agreed upon family size. Many endured family separations for the Party and remained childless for the Party. Those who had

⁶⁷² Rebecca L. Davis, "'Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry': The Companionate Marriage Controversy," *The Journal of American History* (March 2008): 1146.

⁶⁷³ Kollontai, "Communism and the Family."

children sometimes endured criticism for that decision and, like Kollontai, occasionally left their children with relatives or strangers to continue their work.⁶⁷⁴ In doing so, Communist couples privileged the movement over individual desires, and many, though not all, remained steadfast in the belief that women's bodies were their own.

Working Together, Separately

Two-operative families meant that the Party essentially became the third member of the marriage, as questions that affected operatives' economic, professional, and private lives were funneled through formal and informal Party channels. For example, as warrants accumulated for the arrest of CPUSA labor activist Eugene Dennis (then known as Frank Waldron) in the early 1930s, he went into hiding while his wife Peggy continued doing Party work before learning of the Party's decision to relocate the family to Moscow.⁶⁷⁵ The Comintern transferred the Dennis family to keep Eugene out of jail, but this was only one variable that influenced resolutions to transfer operatives. At times transfers came when the leadership responded to the need for fresh bodies because of arrest, sickness, or heightened union and strike activity in different regions. Other times reshuffling occurred when CPUSA or CPGB officials attempted to counter dysfunctionality by relocating problematic members. Soon after arriving in the Bay Area in 1930, Sam Darcy, who himself believed he had been "exiled" to California, embarked on a

⁶⁷⁴ Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist: The Life of Aleksandra Kollontai* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

⁶⁷⁵ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 56.

campaign to rid the district of any remaining followers of Jay Lovestone or Leon Trotsky, but he also reorganized units and sections, moving certain operatives into less powerful positions, or separating what he described as cliquish elements.⁶⁷⁶

The Party often made these decisions with little regard for family separation. As mentioned, the CPGB transferred Maurice Ferguson to the *Daily Worker* in 1932 and left his wife Lily in charge of organizing in Birmingham. A few years later, they did the same to the Devines, leaving Pat in Ireland while Frieda moved to London, presumably to begin working for the Women's Department.⁶⁷⁷ Helen Winter said that family separation for work-related reasons was a common factor in her childhood, so CPUSA or Comintern business that kept she and husband Carl apart did not faze her. And they worked for the Party separately on numerous occasions. He spent several months in Moscow before she joined him, and then, when the Comintern sent him back to the States, they transferred Helen to Lebanon to "serve as contact there with some of the movement organization people."⁶⁷⁸ Similarly, Caroline Decker had no problem with frequent separation from first husband Jack Warnick. "My first marriage was kind of part of my whole organizing life," she recalled, and it consisted of infrequent liaisons either at his place in San Jose (and later Sacramento), California, or wherever she happened to be organizing for the CP-

⁶⁷⁶ Darcy to Central Committee, 16 January 1931, RGASPI *fond* 515, *opis* 1 *delo* 2282; and Sonia Baltrun Kaross, "Statement of the Oakland Section Buro to the District #13 and the CC of the Communist Party," 22 January 1931, RGASPI *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 2499.

⁶⁷⁷ Special Branch Report (3 August 1932), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA; Special Branch Report (22 September 1936), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA; and West, *MASK*, 3 June 1936.

⁶⁷⁸ Helen Winter interview, transcript, Alfred Wagenknecht and Hortense Allison and Helen and Carl Winter Family Papers, TAM.583, box 3, folder 43, WLA.

affiliated Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union.⁶⁷⁹ These are not isolated cases, as Olive Budden and Robin Page-Arnot, Simon and Sophie Gerson, Horace and Eileen Palmer, Grace and Max Granich, and many other couples experienced family separation while working for the Communist Party.⁶⁸⁰

Letters preserved by their families or intercepted by the Secret Services reveal the anguish of being separated from their loved ones while remaining committed to the working-class struggle and the Communist Party. Grace Granich, covering the 1945 San Francisco Conference for the *People's World*, enjoyed her return to the city by the bay but admitted to being “restive...despite my interesting work—I think about you too much.”⁶⁸¹ For his part, Max withstood their separation for a while, but after it extended beyond her original contract, he warned that if she did not return soon, “I’ll go out and get meself so stinkingly drunk that it will take a couple of months to wash out the smell.”⁶⁸² While traveling in South Asia with birth control advocates Margaret Sanger and Edith How-Martyn, Eileen Palmer came down with dysentery, which made her “a bit homesick” and wanting a “cuddle” from Horace, but she assured him that she was fine and still intended to have tea with several local

⁶⁷⁹ Decker interview, DAF #11.

⁶⁸⁰ Special Branch Reports (10 July 1926 and 1934), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA; Special Branch Reports (February 1929 and 1931), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1783, TNA; Sophie Gerson to Simon Gerson, undated; undated; 6 June 1929, 13 August 1929, 13 September 1929, 20 February 1930; 12 February 1931; 20 February 1931; 7 April 1931; and 12 April 1936; SGSG MS, TAM.401, box 1, folders 2-11, WLA; Simon Gerson interview, Communist Party of the United States Oral History Collection, OH.065, WLA; Special Branch Reports (14 June 1935, 15 November 1935, 6 December 1935, and 9 December 1935), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA; and Grace Granich to Max Granich, 1945; 9 April 1945; and 1945; and Max Granich to Grace Granich, 1945, Grace and Max Granich Papers and Photographs (hereafter GMGPP), TAM.255, box 1, folder 6, WLA.

⁶⁸¹ Grace Granich to Max Granich, no date, GMG MS, TAM.255, box 1, folder 6, WLA.

⁶⁸² Max Granich to Grace Granich, no date, GMG MS, TAM.255, box 1, folder 6, WLA.

CP operatives.⁶⁸³ Finally, Olive Budden and Robert (Robin) Page-Arnot traveled extensively on behalf of the CPGB, *Daily Worker*, and Comintern in the late 1920s and early 1930s and somehow managed a love affair through correspondence and intermittent cohabitation that resulted in marriage once Arnot's wife died in 1934.⁶⁸⁴ Though the CPGB kept him busy with meetings, speaking engagements, writing assignments, and a trip to Glasgow, he yearned to return to Moscow and his love. In the middle of a five-page letter telling Olive about all this activity, he declared, "Today I particularly long to see you, and I shall be heartily glad if that becomes a fact soon."⁶⁸⁵ Page-Arnot asked the CPGB and Comintern for permission to return to Moscow, a request they granted a few months later.

Party responses to personal requests for transfers complicate the notion of Comintern control over functionary lives and give some perspective on when individualistic thinking was acceptable to Party leaders. Reactions to these requests varied according to prevailing conditions, but they seemed overall to be positive when addressing the needs of couples. Much like Page-Arnot, the CPGB eventually agreed to transfer Pat Devine back to the London district to be with his wife Frieda.⁶⁸⁶ Likewise, the CPUSA allowed Karl Yoneda to follow Elaine Black after the International Labor Defense (ILD) moved her from Los Angeles to the San Francisco office. To be sure, his ability to speak and write Japanese worked in his favor, as the

⁶⁸³ Special Branch Report (11 January 1936), Records of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA. According to the language of the period, "cuddle" here could mean anything up to and not including intercourse. See Simon Szreter and Kate Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England, 1918-1963* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 128-130.

⁶⁸⁴ Special Branch Report (1934), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA.

⁶⁸⁵ Special Branch Report (4 November 1931), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1765, TNA.

⁶⁸⁶ Special Branch Report (18 April 1936), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1573, TNA.

Party's Japanese language newspaper, *Rodo Shimbun*, maintained offices in the city.⁶⁸⁷ The Party also honored Rudy Lambert's wish to assist in Louise Todd's defense by moving him out of trade union work and into the Southern California ILD office when she began serving time for perjury at Tehachapi Women's Prison in 1935.⁶⁸⁸

But sometimes the Party, for whatever reason, chose not to take into consideration the needs of its operatives. Peggy Dennis resented the organization department's failure to "[consider] assignments collectively" for Gene and herself when they returned from Moscow. She moved with him to Wisconsin and worked without pay until a position for her became available.⁶⁸⁹ In an interview, Lily Webb criticized the CPGB for expecting that she would help husband Maurice Ferguson, stating emphatically that when they hired him to organize in Lancashire, "the Party secured not one but two full-time workers."⁶⁹⁰ An even better example would be the situation created by Pat Devine's reassignment to London in 1936. Though the district consisted of many branches that could have benefitted from Devine's leadership, the CPGB chose to transfer him to Islington, where he served on the Borough Committee with his wife Frieda and her former lover David Michaelson, head of that branch. She had agreed to give Pat another "trial" even though she was "more attracted [to] 'Hobby'" and did not think it would end well because she had

⁶⁸⁷ Elaine Black Yoneda, interview by Lucy Kendall for the California Historical Society's Women in California Oral History Project, 1976-1977, transcript, 23, Elaine Black Yoneda Collection, box 4, folder 4, LARC.

⁶⁸⁸ Todd interview, DAF #10.

⁶⁸⁹ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 88.

⁶⁹⁰ Quoted in Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 161.

told Pat about the affair, and the three continued to be thrown together for Party work.⁶⁹¹ Apparently Pat passed the test, because in January 1937, Frieda wrote that they were on “perfect terms again” and expecting a child in May.⁶⁹²

Long-distance relationships conducted through the mail allow us to see how romance intermingled with Party work could result in emotional turmoil and conflict. This fusion of the personal and political could greatly amplify feelings, as Caroline Decker suggested, making separation much more difficult for the parties involved. In a letter written over the course of three days, British delegate to the VII World Congress Lewis Jones complained that he had not received any letters from Mavis Llewellyn in the three weeks since he had arrived in Moscow. He worried that her silence amounted to some sort of “valuable training” and implored her “not to prolong it unduly as the suspense is tending to sap any energy and political initiative.”⁶⁹³ When the CPGB recalled Rose Schechter to London, her paramour and coworker at International Press Correspondence (Inprecorr) Fritz Runge wrote impassioned letters that expressed his joy that she had chosen him, his sadness at her departure, and his fear that he could not safely visit her in the UK. Runge continued to send Schechter love letters after her 1941 marriage to Henry Sampson Grant, assuring her of his enduring devotion: “*Je t’embrasse, chérie, bien tendrement—je n’ai pas encore oublié les ‘dimples.’*” (“I kiss you very tenderly darling. I haven’t

⁶⁹¹ Special Branch Reports (22 September 1936 and 28 September 1936), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA.

⁶⁹² Special Branch Report (13 January 1937), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA.

⁶⁹³ Special Branch Report (25 July 1935), Records of the Security Service, KV3/390, TNA.

forgotten the dimples yet.”)⁶⁹⁴ Without corresponding letters from Rose, it is difficult to determine if she still harbored the same feelings toward him.

In other situations, the fusion of the personal and the political appeared to be the root cause of marital problems. Sophie Gerson, rarely in the same city as husband Simon during the early days of their relationship, at one point accused him of conditional love based on her “status in the movement.” This prevented her from expressing any doubts about the movement or their comrades, she wrote, for fear that she would lose his respect and his love. At the time only 21 years old and a veteran of Communist actions in Passaic, New Jersey and Gastonia, North Carolina, Sophie claimed to lack “ambition” or the “energy for [the] work” and wanted regular employment and the chance to “live and enjoy life” with her beloved Si.⁶⁹⁵ Sophie did not leave the Party, nor did she stop her trade union activism, as she participated in another textile strike in Passaic a few years later while Simon organized workers in Philadelphia. A brief reunion in New York ended with an argument, and back in New Jersey, Sophie wrote, “Married life is not one long series of [goodbyes]...but one long series of compromises and forgiveness.” She hoped that they could “avoid all such quarrels” going forward.⁶⁹⁶

Unlike Sophie and Si, whose marriage weathered these crises, other Communist couples imploded amid shifting priorities, infidelities, and alcohol abuse.

⁶⁹⁴ Special Branch Reports (July 1938, 30 July 1938, 1938, 1938, and 24 April 1939), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3063, TNA; and Special Branch Reports (23 February 1942 and 9 October 1942), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3064, TNA.

⁶⁹⁵ Sophie Gerson to Simon Gerson, June 1929, September 1929, September 1929, 20 February 1930, and 7 April 1931, SGSG MS, TAM.401, box 1, folders 2, 4, 6, 8, and 11, WLA.

⁶⁹⁶ Sophie to Simon Gerson, 12 April 1936, SGSG MS, TAM.401, box 1, folder 5, WLA.

Louise Todd felt a “responsibility” to do something about the economic crisis and allowed her “personal life [to become] subordinate to the greater needs of the radical movement.”⁶⁹⁷ Her first argument with then-husband Fred Doyer came about when she expressed her desire to resume working after their honeymoon. Though he eventually acquiesced, their marriage continued to be “fraught with tremendous pressures because of [her] participation in the movement, which became all-encompassing,” and they separated in 1934.⁶⁹⁸ During WWII, Joan McMichael’s husband and Gabriel Carritt’s wife filed for divorce, with Carritt cited as co-respondent in the former and Mary Sheridan Jones in the latter, a tangled web of infidelity that worried Carritt’s brother Michael, who, a bemused agent reported, believed this “major scandal” would be “very harmful to the Party” and make Jones’s flat “no longer ‘safe’ for Party purposes.”⁶⁹⁹ Finally, when Elaine Black returned to work after giving birth to her first child, her employment as an International Labor Defense operative brought new challenges for her young family. Unlike her previous jobs, the ILD required her to be ready at a moment’s notice to bail out political detainees, but when her first husband, Ed, got home, “he wanted dinner ready, and the table set—whether [she] was working or not.” Still, Elaine claims they separated in

⁶⁹⁷ Todd interview, DAF #16.

⁶⁹⁸ Todd interview, DAF #3, #7, and #13.

⁶⁹⁹ Special Branch Report (6 June 1941), Records of the Security Service, KV3/396, TNA. A few months later, an agent reported that Michael Carritt used Jones’s flat as a “pied á terre,” which suggests that the confidential informant either mistook Michael for his brother Gabriel or was not aware that the CPGB used the flat for covert operations. Special Branch Report (6 September 1941), Records of the Security Service, KV3/398, TNA.

1932 because of his drinking and infidelity and not because of any conflict over the demands of her job.⁷⁰⁰

Reproductive Labor

You have several times mentioned the fact that you are ‘terrified’ when you see what changes occur in women who have babies. I’m wondering whether this means that you are losing some of your early enthusiasm for having a child after the war. However that may be, I don’t intend to press you one way or the other. I have always felt that having a child was something that so profoundly affected a woman’s life, that she, and she alone, should be the one to make the decision as to whether or not she desires to subject herself to it. I don’t expect that this question will be up for immediate action after the war, but sooner or later it will be on our agenda. You should be thinking about it now.⁷⁰¹

The Communist Party held conflicting views about children and motherhood, and during the first decades of its existence, discouraged women cadre from having them. Though Elsa Dixler maintained, “American Communists were...trapped by their vision of women as mothers above all else,”⁷⁰² the Party simultaneously exalted motherhood and praised the contributions of childless women operatives. As Dorothy Healey so succinctly put it, “Who could think of a revolutionary having a child? We couldn’t take time off; it was unthinkable.”⁷⁰³ Si Gerson agreed, recalling that during the Depression, “it was...not kosher for a professional revolutionary to have children,” so he and Sophie waited until 1939, by which time “it was sort of legitimate...for Party people” to have them.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ Black interview, transcript, 137-139.

⁷⁰¹ Herb Lerner to Ruth Lerner, 30 November 1944, HL MS, TAM.194, box 1, folder 8, WLA.

⁷⁰² Elsa Jane Dixler, “The Woman Question: Women and the American Communist Party, 1929-1941” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974), 181.

⁷⁰³ Healey, *California Red*, 38.

⁷⁰⁴ Simon Gerson interview.

And yet, as Dixler also argued, Party literature continuously depicted women in their traditional occupations as wives and mothers, sometimes in direct contrast to images and stories about women’s militancy.⁷⁰⁵ The CPUSA Women’s Department published several newspapers and magazines targeted at women during the 1930s that illustrate this point. For example, photos in the February 1930 issue of *The Woman Worker* show women in violent confrontation with New York City police officers,



Figure 16: “There is no unemployment,” *The Woman Worker*, February 1930. Permission not yet granted.

while a political cartoon about rising unemployment depicts a homeless mother holding one of her three children as she sits dejectedly among the family’s belongings.⁷⁰⁶

While typical of Party press that sought to demonstrate both working-class strength and victimhood, these images also

reflect the Party’s conflicting attitude toward women during this period. Radicals in the US had a history of honoring women elders in the movement with the title “Mother,” as in Mother Jones, “Mother” Bloor, and “Mother” Mooney, among others.

⁷⁰⁵ “The Upturn,” *Western Worker*, 29 May 1933 and “The First Check,” *Western Worker*, 11 December 1933. The former centers on the higher costs of commodities under NRA standards. The latter depicts a father attempting to balance the family budget with the proceeds from his “forced labor paycheck” while his wife and children look on.

⁷⁰⁶ “Women Fight Police at City Hall Demonstration,” “W.T.U.L. Demonstration,” and “There is no unemployment,” *The Woman Worker*, February 1930.

And the press frequently omitted their given names in advertisements, articles, and photograph captions, reducing post-menopausal women to their former reproductive function even as it added weight to their symbolic status as elders.⁷⁰⁷ The honorific “mother,” however, seems to have had no counterpart in Great Britain.

As the 1930s ended, Party organs, including those geared towards women readers, tended to soften their coverage of women’s militancy, opting to include fashion advice, recipes, and feel-good stories about motherhood, usually within the context of Party work. This coincided with changes in Soviet women’s magazines like *Rabotnitsa*, as Lynne Attwood has shown.⁷⁰⁸ In a 1939 series on “prominent women,” the *Daily Worker* assured readers that, when at home, Marjorie Pollitt— noted CPGB speaker and organizer and wife of General Secretary Harry—was “simply ‘mother’ to two bonny children,” though they added that she had not “allowed” motherhood to “interfere seriously with [her] public work.” Renowned radical athlete Florence Birchenough, in an article from the same series, wrote that athletics had prepared her for “the real business of life,” getting married and having a child, though she also made readers aware of her continuing political and athletic engagement. Similarly, an article on Mary Zuk in the renamed *The Woman Today* bore the title, “From Kitchen to City Council,” leaving out Zuk’s union activism between homemaking and city government. Described in the first sentence as a “small bright-eyed mother of two children,” Zuk, according to writer Pearl

⁷⁰⁷ “A Fighting Mother,” *Western Worker*, 15 March 1932; and Pamphlet, “Free Earl Browder! Banquet and Program in honor of Mother Ella Reeve Bloor,” SAD MS, box 2, folder 29.

⁷⁰⁸ Lynne Attwood, *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women’s Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-1953* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999).

Ackerman, demonstrated to Dodge and the United Auto Workers that “a mother can organize and still take care of her family.”⁷⁰⁹ These newspapers, it must be acknowledged, also provided vital information about family planning, advocated for more birth control clinics, and included articles by women physicians on women’s “hygiene” and changes in the law regarding the dissemination of birth control information and devices.⁷¹⁰

Interviews

conducted for the California Historical Society’s Women in California Oral History Project reveals that individual circumstances as much as Party directives contributed to reproductive decisions for Communist couples in the 1930s and



Figure 17: Women Fight Police at New York City Hall, *Woman Worker*, February 1930. Permission not yet granted.

1940s. Louise Todd, who chose not to have children because of the economic crisis and her dedication to the revolutionary struggle, claimed to have made this decision with both husbands.⁷¹¹ As a member of the California Executive Board of the CP, she recalled that women (including Dorothy Healey in 1943) often asked for her

⁷⁰⁹ Pearl Alterman, “From Kitchen to City Council,” *The Woman Today*, July 1936.

⁷¹⁰ Dr. Hannah Stone, “Summer Hygiene for Women,” *The Woman Today*, July 1936; and Dr. Cheri Appel, “Birth Control Advances,” *The Woman Today*, February 1937.

⁷¹¹ Todd interview, DAF #13.

opinion about combining motherhood with Party work, and she advised them to have children if their marriages were equitable.⁷¹² Caroline Decker, who did not have children while married to fellow CAWIU organizer Jack Warnick, said, “If I had had children, I would not have been doing what I was doing. It’s that simple.”⁷¹³ Finally, Paul and Violet Orr decided against adoption for financial reasons, but also because children would have impeded Violet’s chance “to be a part of the larger life of society.”⁷¹⁴

For these women, professional and political objectives trumped any desire to procreate, at least during the time in which they were most active in the Party. Without similar interviews with Communist women in Great Britain, it is difficult to determine with any degree of certainty how they felt about childbirth during the same period, but Tamara Rust and Salme Dutt did not have children, and Isabel Brown only had one.⁷¹⁵ Moreover, announcements about lectures on birth control and abortion alongside advertisements for birth control devices and books in the *Daily Worker* suggests that they at least held similar views on family structure and women’s bodily autonomy.⁷¹⁶

⁷¹² Todd interview, DAF #17.

⁷¹³ Decker interview, DAF #9.

⁷¹⁴ Orr interview, DAF #14.

⁷¹⁵ Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 178.

⁷¹⁶ “Birth Control Literature”, *Forward*, 5 March 1921; “A Word to Ladies!”, “Birth Control, Absolutely Free”, “Absolutely Free”, and “A Married Woman Should Know”, *Daily Worker* (UK), 18 and 24 January 1930; “Free to Ladies!”, “Birth Control, Absolutely Free”, and “Given Away, Birth Control for 1931”, *Daily Worker* (UK), 14 August 1931; “Free to Ladies!”, “Free to Ladies!”, and “Given Away”, *Daily Worker* (UK), 28 February 1933; Janet Chance, “Abortion Law Reform,” Marx House Sunday Lectures, *Daily Worker* (UK), 25 September 1937; and “Birth Control for 1939” and “Birth Control, Absolutely Free with Sample”, *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 January 1939.

Because of the stigma associated with motherhood, CP women used birth control obtained from Sanger Clinics in the US or one of the clinics in the UK operated by the Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress (CBC) or the Society for the Provision of Birth Control (SPBC) if they could afford it or less reliable “feminine hygiene” products if they could not and resigned themselves to illegal abortions when necessary.⁷¹⁷ This did not place them on the periphery of Depression-era reproductive practices, but at the center of a transitional period in the history of birth control and abortion in the United States and Great Britain. By mid-decade condoms could be purchased in dime stores, “rubber shops,” and mail order catalogs in some states and counties or obtained from door-to-door salespeople. In a time when other businesses failed at alarming rates, the contraceptive industry averaged \$350 million per year in sales by 1935, which means that Communist women who purchased contraceptive devices unconsciously contributed to one of the decade’s most profitable capitalist endeavors.⁷¹⁸



Figure 18: Birth Control Advertisements, *The Daily Worker* (UK), 7 January 1939. Permission not yet granted.

⁷¹⁷ The Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress operated facilities more commonly known as Scopes Clinics.

⁷¹⁸ Rickie Solinger, *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive Politics in America* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2005), 126. For information on contraceptive practices in the UK, see Barbara Brookes, *Abortion in England, 1900-1967*, second edition (London: Routledge, 2013); Kate Fisher, *Birth Control, Sex, and Marriage in Britain, 1918-1960* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Szreter and Fisher, *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution*.

Though many women might refrain from speaking about reproductive practices, especially abortion, Party literature and some activities, along with the number of children produced, suggest that many sexually active Communists used some form of birth control or abortion to limit fertility. Both *Daily Workers* included advertisements for questionable abortifacients in the early 1920s, and they and *The Woman Today* began promoting healthier, more scientific means of controlling family



size as the birth control movement gained traction later that decade.⁷¹⁹ In the 1930s, Eileen Palmer embarked on a trip through British South Asia with birth control advocates Margaret Sanger and Edith Martyn-How, ostensibly as the latter’s personal secretary, but MI5 believed this provided cover for work with the

Figure 19: Birth Control Advertisement, *Daily Worker* (US), 25 October 1924. Permission not yet granted.

⁷¹⁹ For examples in the radical US press, see Margaret H. Irish, “Childbirth—A Woman’s Problem,” *The Working Woman*, May 1933; “Birth Control Knowledge Needed,” *The Working Woman*, November 1934; Grace Hutchins, “Birth Control: This Knowledge is Desperately Needed,” *The Working Woman*, August 1935; and Dr. Cheri Appel, “Birth Control Advances,” *The Woman Today*, February 1937. The December 1935 issue of *The Working Woman* was only four pages long and, beyond announcing changes in the magazine’s title and format, is entirely dedicated to support of H.R. Bill 5600, a bill that would have consolidated various state birth control laws into a single, federal statute. Dr. Appel’s report on a recent birth control conference included a rebuke of eugenicists like presenter Dr. Himes. “We agree with the doctor that there should be widespread dissemination of scientific birth control advice, both for health and economic reasons, but certainly not because of differences in intellectual levels of the population.”

Communist Party of India on behalf of the CPGB and Comintern.⁷²⁰

In the 1930s the abortion rate also increased among women “of every social strata” who often cited the need to continue working as one reason for this decision.⁷²¹ Rickie Solinger estimates that between twenty-five and forty percent of pregnancies in the US ended in abortion during this period, while D.V. Glass reckons that women had the procedure 68,000 times in the UK in 1935. Given that Glass based his findings on reports submitted by the British Medical Association, that latter number must be considered a conservative assessment.⁷²² Like their mainstream counterparts, Communist women used contraception and abortion to limit their fertility in efforts to retain their status as workers and as professional revolutionaries. Dorothy Healey, who had the first of three abortions at the age of 16, said, “It was just taken for granted that we would have [them].”⁷²³ Elaine Black had an abortion at the beginning and, when a diaphragm proved ineffective, at the end of her first marriage.⁷²⁴ Dennis also had several abortions—one of them in Moscow while it was still legal, but she had to apply for permission from a Party bureaucrat before getting the procedure.⁷²⁵ No woman interviewed for the Working Class Movement Library was asked about their reproductive practices, but it is likely that they, like Communist women in the United States, used abortion as another means of limiting family size.

⁷²⁰ Special Branch Reports (9 December 1935 and 6 January 1936), Reports of the Security Service, KV2/2507, TNA.

⁷²¹ Leslie J. Reagan, *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 135.

⁷²² Solinger, *Pregnancy and Power*, 118; and Brookes, *Abortion in England*, 29.

⁷²³ Healey, *California Red*, 38.

⁷²⁴ Black interview, transcript, 134 and 142.

⁷²⁵ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 102.

Healey's assertion about the inability to take time off seems to be about shifting priorities after childbirth, but she could have been referring to the danger associated with soapbox oration, demonstration, and picketing, all Communist activities that frequently brought them into contact with violent, anti-communist police and vigilantes. For example, Sonia Baltrun Kaross claimed to have suffered a miscarriage while in a Philadelphia jail during the 1920 Palmer raids.⁷²⁶ For her part, Healey recalled two instances where pregnancy interfered with farm worker organizing, one when, as a nineteen-year-old YCL organizer, fellow activists decided she needed to be bailed out to go to Los Angeles for an abortion, and the other when she had a miscarriage following a botched abortion during the 1938 Kern County, California cotton strike. The effects of the miscarriage resulted in a trip to the hospital, but Healey said that even "under the best of circumstances" strike activity could be "physically and emotionally exhausting."⁷²⁷ The emotional labor and stress of Comintern courier work may have been the reason that Frieda Devine experienced a miscarriage in 1933, but as mentioned, she returned to work almost immediately after the event.⁷²⁸

As Caroline Decker indicated, children created problems for women activists, whose families and partners often expected them to quit their Party jobs, or, at the very least, to stay away from potentially dangerous actions. After continuous prodding from her husband, Peggy Dennis consented to have a child, with the

⁷²⁶ Kaross interview, DAF #2.

⁷²⁷ Healey, *California Red*, 49-50 and 67-68.

⁷²⁸ Special Branch Reports (3 April 1933, 21 October 1933, 24 January 1934, and 2 February 1934), Reports of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA.

stipulation that she could remain a professional revolutionary. Once she had Tim, to her increasing dismay, her husband, mother, and Party superiors put constraints on her activities. “Not getting arrested meant staying out of street actions or public meetings. I taught classes, wrote leaflets, served on committees that planned actions for others who would get arrested. I felt guilty.”⁷²⁹

Other Communist mothers encountered outright hostility from coworkers. Jean Jefferson wrote to a friend in England, “I did not realise how difficult things would be with a child.” She had moved to Paris to work for the *World News and Views*, and upon arrival, Jefferson received little emotional support from her colleagues at Interprecarr, one of whom referred to her infant daughter as Jean’s “new monster.”⁷³⁰ Sonia Kaross opted to take her daughter along to Section meetings when necessary, much to the annoyance of her fellow comrades in Oakland, California.⁷³¹ In fact, in 1931, the incoming organizational secretary objected to the child’s presence enough to file a complaint with the national office, telling R. Baker that, “The [Section Organizer] is very weak. She has a sick daughter who absorbs as much of her time as the party does.”⁷³² Louise Todd noted that comrades often ridiculed new mothers for trying to get out of doing Party work and saw mothers in the CP as reflections of working mothers everywhere—under-supported and often victims of chauvinism, but still dedicated to making better futures for their children. To that end, she enlisted in several united front campaigns for government-sponsored

⁷²⁹ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 41-42.

⁷³⁰ “Jill” to Mrs. G. Aitken, 27 October 1938, Reports of the Security Service, KV2/2809, TNA; and Fritz Runge to Rose Schechter, 26 July 1938, Reports of the Security Service, KV2/2809, TNA.

⁷³¹ Kaross interview, DAF #2.

⁷³² K. Ilmoni to R. Baker, 30 August 1931, RGASPI *fond 515 opis 1 delo 2319*.

childcare centers and included this as part of her election platform when she ran for San Francisco supervisor.⁷³³

To prevent such criticisms, and to continue their activism, some radical women operatives left their children in the care of others, following the examples of Alexandra Kollontai, Ella Reeve “Mother” Bloor, and others.⁷³⁴ With a child and no extended family in the United States, union organizer Louisa Moreno trusted CPUSA officials to find someone to care for her daughter Mytyl so that she could continue working.⁷³⁵ Like Moreno, Elaine Black felt that she could not properly care for her daughter while working for the ILD, and left Joyce with her grandmother for three years. She resented Elaine’s abandonment and ran away several times to live with her biological father.⁷³⁶ Though Frieda Devine took a leave of absence from CPGB headquarters during her second pregnancy, she was off on assignment to Paris with R.W. Robson before Pat Jr.’s first birthday. Secret Service reports of her movements make no mention of a child, so we must assume that Frieda left him behind with his father or some other caregiver.⁷³⁷ Finally, the Soviet government made this parenting decision for Peggy and Gene Dennis and insisted that their son remain in Moscow

⁷³³ Todd interview, DAF #17.

⁷³⁴ See Clements, *Bolshevik Feminist*; and Ella Reeve Bloor, *We Are Many* (New York: International Publishers, 1940).

⁷³⁵ Ruiz, “Una Mujer sin Fronteras,” 1-20.

⁷³⁶ Black interview, transcript, 26 and 67-69.

⁷³⁷ Special Branch Reports (28 April 1937, 28 February 1938, and 17 May 1938), Reports of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA. In an unpublished autobiography, Brewster said that there were whispers among her Lancaster women comrades that she could not “be bothered to look after [son Pat Devine, Jr.] like we do.” Quoted in Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 178.

when they returned to the United States after their tenure with the Comintern ended.⁷³⁸

Though some might criticize the Dennis family, and Peggy in particular, for adhering to this Comintern directive, their decision must be examined within the context of increasing surveillance of suspected Communist operatives in the United States. The family could have (and did) take on new aliases upon their return, but they could not hide the fact that this English-speaking couple had a young son who only spoke Russian. Any neighbor, teacher, or other casual acquaintance with anti-Communist sentiments would have surely seen this as a red flag and grounds for reporting Peggy and Gene to local and federal authorities. All efforts to hide their identities and movements would have been in vain, and the Dennis family would have found themselves under surveillance once again.

Despite having progressive ideas about women's bodies, reproduction, and their value to the movement, the Communist Party and its members tended to view childrearing as women's work. Eugene Dennis and her parents wanted Peggy to have a child, and they promised that she would be able to continue her activism yet relegated her to support roles once she gave birth. As this example demonstrates, mothers served a political purpose as rhetorical devices, but many in the Party believed that actual motherhood reduced women's ability to be totally committed to the movement. In this sense, during the Depression some individuals in the CPGB

⁷³⁸ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 86.

and CPUSA viewed reproductive labor as an either/or scenario—women could either produce children or they could produce results for the Party.

Conclusion

Difficult decisions came with the job. All Communist operatives, regardless of title or income, had to make choices that at times negatively impacted their living arrangements, personal relationships, and family structure. This took discipline and a commitment to the work that went well beyond that required for most other occupations. By signing on as paid employees, Communist operatives consented to work longer hours for less pay and did so with the knowledge that Secret Service and FBI agents, along with the Comintern, would take a greater interest in their personal lives. Communist couples submitted to directives that kept them apart and sometimes chose to limit their family size for the sake of the movement. Most importantly, paid employees of the CPUSA and CPGB understood that the job marked their bodies, like a scarlet letter, as antithetical to capitalism and British and American social norms, inviting not only governmental surveillance, but also legal and extralegal violence.

Chapter Five

Suffering Bodies

Introduction

Comrade J.M. Adhikari, a Communist and valued Labour leader in Bombay, has just succumbed to prolonged illness. After a brilliant academic career, he threw himself into labour politics in 1928, to fill the breach created by the mass arrests of labour workers in connection with the Meerut Conspiracy Case. In 1929 he was editing *Kranti*, the leading Marxist journal of that day. He gave his best to the education and organisation of workers. He had, in the course of his work, to undergo periods of imprisonment. His ailing health was completely shattered by the strain of arduous work and the rigours of prison life.⁷³⁹

In 1938, readers of the International Brigade's *Volunteer for Liberty (VFL)* learned of the death of Dr. Jagannath M. Adhikari, the brother of Dr. Gangadhar M. Adhikari, Meerut defendant and Secretary General of the Communist Party of India (CPI) from 1933 to 1935. Jagannath had been arrested in 1934 in a "round-up" of Bombay labor leaders that included CPI activists "Mrs. Dange, W.B. Kulkarni, P. Kankule, Mahomed Saheed, Nazimah, and Suriya Vansi," all charged with violating Section 3 of the Bombay Special (Emergency) Powers Act, 1932.⁷⁴⁰ Section 4, Sub-Section (1) of the Act included a provision allowing for the "control of suspected persons," meaning anyone who challenged British imperial rule. In response to appeals to remove this clause and allow Jagannath to seek medical treatment in Europe, the Home Member declared it a necessity to keep tabs on "Communist

⁷³⁹ "Death of a Comrade," *Volunteer for Liberty*, 13 January 1938.

⁷⁴⁰ "Bombay Labour Leaders' Round-Up," *Times of India*, 25 May 1934; and "Disqualification of School Board Members: Debate on Special Powers Bill: Shorthand Reports of Speeches Delivered in Vernacular," *Times of India*, 15 October 1935.

agitators,” especially those “chemists and druggists who refused to do business during the civil disobedience movement,” and declined to revise the terms of Jagannath’s sentence.⁷⁴¹ J.M Adhikari suffered from hemophilia and, according to the National Hemophilia Foundation, treatment in the 1930s consisted of whole blood and/or plasma transfusions, so the Home Member was likely correct in stating that doctors in Bombay could treat him as well as any in Europe. But to the editors of the *VFL*, his continuing detention amounted to cruel and unusual punishment that “hastened his end. He had gifts that would have proved invaluable in the constructive age—but in our times his great gifts invited for him internment and premature end.”⁷⁴²

While it is probable that readers of the *VFL* knew of Gangadhar because of his status as a revolutionary fighter, leader of the CPI, and Meerut defendant, it is unlikely that many would have known about his brother Jagannath, as he did not feature in news articles about the Meerut prisoners or their trial. Jagannath, along with R.M. Jambhekar, edited the Marathi version of *The Communist Manifesto* (*Kamyunista Jahirnama*) that had been translated by his brother Gangadhar and other Meerut prisoners.⁷⁴³ In fact, the *Daily Worker* (UK) focused more on the suffering endured by Communists in Europe and the United States over conditions of working people and nationalists in British imperial spaces.⁷⁴⁴ India and Meerut were the

⁷⁴¹ “Disqualification of School Board Members;” and “Internment of Mr. Adhikari: Question Asked in Bombay Council,” *Times of India*, 24 March 1936.

⁷⁴² “Death of a Comrade;” National Hemophilia Foundation history of bleeding disorders, <https://www.hemophilia.org/bleeding-disorders-a-z/overview/history>, accessed 9 February 2022.

⁷⁴³ Juned Shaikh, “Translating Marx: *Mavali*, Dalit and the Making of Mumbai’s Working Class, 1928-1935,” *Economic & Political Weekly* XLVI, no. 31 (30 July 2011): 65-73.

⁷⁴⁴ See, for example, “Jail Though Proved Innocent: Appeal for Mooney and Billings Fails,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 3 December 1930; “Two More Negroes Lynched: London Seamen Join Fight for

exceptions, no doubt due in part to the prominence of former MP Shapurji Saklatvala and Clemens and Rajani Palme Dutt in the British Communist movement and to the fact that three white men—Ben Bradley, Philip Spratt, and Lester Hutchinson—were among the thirty-one charged with crimes against the empire.⁷⁴⁵ But such an assertion is beyond the scope of this study and would require more research into decisions made by *Daily* editors.

Regardless, J.M. Adhikari's obituary is but one example of the radical press's use of both real and fictive damaged and dead bodies for political purposes. Many of these bodies were representations of suffering Communists, Jews, Blacks, or other oppressed workers, but sometimes, as in the case of Jagannath, the radical press highlighted the suffering endured by actual members of the CP or one of its affiliate organizations. They also brought into sharp focus the damage done to working-class bodies by industrial labor, war, and the economic instability of the 1930s, especially in articles, political cartoons, and photographs related to the activities of the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) in the UK and the Unemployed Councils

Scottsboro Boys," *Daily Worker* (UK), 8 August 1931; and "Scottsboro Frame-Up Protests," *Daily Worker* (UK), 17 August 1931.

⁷⁴⁵ During their trial and incarceration, the *Daily Worker* (UK) published numerous articles about conditions in the prison, efforts to raise money for their defense, and profiles of several of the defendants. Examples include, "Gandhi Ends the 'Peace' Negotiations: Final Reply Rejects Viceroy's Offer" and "The Workers Can Free Themselves: Appeal for the Meerut Prisoners," *Daily Worker* (UK), 6 September 1930; "Flogged and Left Lying in Burning Indian Sun: Ghastly Brutality of British Authorities in Meerut Jail, Anti-Imperialist League's Charge," *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 October 1930; "'We Are Being Gagged'—A Meerut Prisoner: Appeal from an Indian Jail," *Daily Worker* (UK), 28 October 1930; "Free Meerut Prisoners! Another Protest Against Government's Brutality," *Daily Worker* (UK), 26 September 1930; "Saklatvala Speaks to I.L.P.: Policy on India: A Bradford Meeting," *Daily Worker* (UK), 1 November 1930; "Second 'New Year' in Meerut: Prisoners in Bad Need of Help," *Daily Worker* (UK), 1 January 1931; "Fight to Free the Meerut Prisoners," "Who Are the Meerut Prisoners? Thirty-One Fighters for the Working-Class," "The Crime of the Meerut Prisoners: Their Trial Part of the Attack on the U.S.S.R.," "Facts about the Meerut 'Trial,'" and "Life in Meerut Jail," *Daily Worker* (UK), 21 March 1931; and "Six Meerut Prisoners out on Bail: Demand Unconditional Release of All!" *Daily Worker* (UK), 29 May 1931.

(UC) in the US.⁷⁴⁶ Through their use of these bodies, Communists sought, in many respects, to undermine capitalist and governmental attempts to hide bodies broken by industrial labor and/or war.⁷⁴⁷ Propaganda aside, Communist operatives suffered as much, if not more, than the average unemployed man or woman during the Great Depression. As mentioned in the previous chapter, employment by the CPUSA or CPGB was not a guarantee of wages, and it often meant physical suffering at the hands of law enforcement, British Union of Fascists (BUF) thugs, or any number of other “patriotic” groups determined to keep socialism from establishing a foothold in the US or UK.

Communists expected to suffer—they were told as much by Soviet novelists, theorists, and propagandists. Many Stalinist realist novels and films translated for and shown to an English-speaking public were “filled with damaged male bodies” whose injuries sometimes accumulated alongside their rise through the party ranks, giving observers the idea that New Soviet men and women would be rewarded for

⁷⁴⁶ See Emanuel Nicholas Bourges Espinosa, “Managing Industrial Discontent in Britain, 1927-1930: The Industrial Cooperation Talks and the Segregation of the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement,” *Labor History* 62, nos. 5-6 (2021): 742-761; Leab, “‘United We Eat’;” and Pivens and Cloward, *Poor People’s Movements*.

⁷⁴⁷ For more on industrialists and governments hiding damaged working-class bodies, see Edward Slavishak, “Hiding and Displaying the Broken Body,” in *Bodies of Work*, 224-264; and Field, *Working Men’s Bodies*. For more on the American and British governments’ treatment of injured veterans, see Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*; Gabriel Koureas, *Memory, Masculinity, and National Identity in British Visual Culture, 1914-1930: A Study of ‘Unconquerable Manhood’* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007); and Jessica Meyer, “‘Fit Only for Light Work’: Disabled Servicemen and the Struggle for a Domestic Masculinity,” in *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 97-127. On the use of injured and dead bodies in photography, political cartoons, and memorials, see Thomas Fahy, “Worn, Damaged Bodies in Literature and Photography of the Great Depression,” *The Journal of American Culture* 26, no. 1 (March 2003): 2-16; Elizabeth Faue, *Communities of Suffering and Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); and Verdery, *Political Lives*.

their sacrifices.⁷⁴⁸ Likewise, when Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhensky urged readers of *The ABC of Communism* to rise and save the world from the “horrors of capitalism” and imperialism, they admitted that this would not be an easy task. “The worker may suffer defeat in individual battles, and even in individual countries. But the victory of the proletariat is no less certain than the ruin of the bourgeoisie is inevitable.”⁷⁴⁹ This, then, was an organization at war—not necessarily a “hot” war, but a war for the hearts and minds of the working class.

Any war involves a measure of suffering—sometimes physical deprivation (rationing of food, for example) and sometimes physical injuries—and the most committed Communists enlisted in this war fully aware that they would suffer in this fight. And suffer they did, willingly and resolutely. They gave up promising careers or decent wages during an economic slump and depression. They faced down violent opposition from vigilante groups, anti-Communist individuals, and so-called “Red Squads” formed by law enforcement agencies. And, finally, many endured short- and long-term periods of incarceration—some for crimes against the state—but others for such innocuous offenses as soapbox oration, sidewalk chalking, and leafleting. It is the latter that concerns us here—not those convicted of spying for the Soviet Union or fomenting revolution in the US or UK, but the rank-and-filers who suffered for participating in the everyday activities of Communist agitation. Spies differed from the average Communist in several distinct ways, most notably in the dangers

⁷⁴⁸ Kaganovsky, *How the Soviet Man was Unmade*, 3 and 22.

⁷⁴⁹ Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/bukharin/works/1920/abc/index.htm>, accessed 6 December 2022.

associated with undercover work, but also in that espionage agents received more financial, logistical, and legal support from the Comintern apparatus. The average Communist soap box orator, on the other hand, could not always count on the same level of support from the CPUSA or CPGB for the simple reason that during periods of intense suppression, the CP did not always have the funds or people to provide it.

This chapter is divided into two sections, one on depleted bodies and one on punished bodies. In each section, I first examine the rhetoric of suffering in the Communist press and then put those examples in conversation with the suffering endured by members of the CPUSA and CPGB. While it is difficult to gauge Communist responses to the rhetorical figure of the suffering worker in the radical press, several expressed sentiments like Caroline Decker, who, when asked about gendered wage disparities in California's agricultural sector, said:

Too many people were starving, too many people were out of work. There were too many gut-level needs, so that the role of the female my god was just not all that damn important. She was starving with everybody else. I think she was a more equal partner then because she was subjected equally to all the miseries. Misery was equal, so the role of women was not on the agenda at that time. Historically, it didn't mean anything. Not in the working classes.⁷⁵⁰

Perhaps some Communists needed images of suffering workers to help them make sense of or endure physical suffering, but they only needed to look up from the newspaper, to get in the trenches with the unemployed and poorly paid workers to see real deprivation. So, for most, the prospect of arrest and/or physical violence while in pursuit of a more equitable society must have seemed like a small price to pay, and

⁷⁵⁰ Decker interview, DAF #8.

the Communist press and Communist policies certainly encouraged this level of activism. Arrests and prison time were badges of honor among Communists, so they expected to suffer for the cause, at least in the decades before arrest led to serious jail time or deportation. Many, many Communists spent some time in jail or prison, and a study of that would take up several books, so this chapter will only focus on physical suffering endured by select rank-and-file operatives.

Depleted Bodies

The Great Depression provided Communist pundits with ample source material to demonstrate the failings of capitalism and liberal democratic governments. Thousands roamed the United States and Great Britain looking for work, moved into makeshift shacks after losing their homes, and formed into winding, snakelike lines outside relief agencies and soup kitchens. The CP used photographs and created poems, short stories, and political cartoons highlighting this apparent failure of capitalism and, through these rhetorical devices, urged the unemployed to organize themselves and demand that governments take drastic and necessary measures to alleviate their suffering.

As has been demonstrated in other scholarly works on gender in the first half of the twentieth century, the body became, in essence, a propaganda tool by which political organizations, social movements, and religious groups conveyed specific, often conflicting, gendered and racial messages in support of their individual

agendas.⁷⁵¹ Early twentieth century city boosters in Pittsburgh, for example, commissioned public works of art that gendered the industrial city male and linked the region to working class masculinity long after global economic systems drew the city's businesses offshore, while memorials to British World War I veterans worked to reinscribe prewar gender ideologies through the commemoration of elite white masculinity.⁷⁵² New Deal art administrators similarly used public sculptures and murals to establish and reaffirm acceptable gender roles and expression in fictive accounts of American expansionism in attempts to bolster the country's flagging national identity.⁷⁵³ Likewise, Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration employed members of the burgeoning advertising sector to sell to young, unemployed men the idea that in unskilled manual labor they could renew their "diminished manhood."⁷⁵⁴ The combined forces of capital and British and American governments, one could argue, succeeded in these endeavors by reinforcing collective narratives of patriotism and gender.

To accomplish this, city boosters, corporations, and government officials found it necessary to downplay or outright hide certain realities that would have shattered those narratives. Both Edward Slavishak and Christina Jarvis peel back the veneer of physically imposing manhood established by boosters and political operatives to reveal the broken and injured bodies of early twentieth century steel

⁷⁵¹ See Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*; and Donna B. Knaff, *Beyond Rosie the Riveter: Women of World War II in American Popular Graphic Art* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012).

⁷⁵² Slavishak, *Bodies of Work*; and Koureas, *Memory, Masculinity, and National Identity*.

⁷⁵³ Melosh, *Engendering Culture*.

⁷⁵⁴ Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*.

workers and World War II soldiers carefully hidden from public view.⁷⁵⁵ Likewise, beneath the nation-building project of World War I memorials in Britain existed a quest to control unacceptable masculinities—the radical, the mentally and physically infirm, and the homosexual, as Koureas demonstrates.⁷⁵⁶ Still, certain groups turned those collective narratives on their heads, equating physical strength with labor militancy, or making the broken body a symbol of strength in the face of adversity and as a metaphor for “eroded optimism and opportunity.”⁷⁵⁷

The political cartoonists and photographers who contributed to the CPUSA and CPGB press employed similar strategies to those of Depression-era photographers and labor unionists, depicting working-class men and women as either “strong or weak” depending upon the message they wished to convey.⁷⁵⁸ Most often the Party’s newspapers used allegorical images of radical masculinity and



“THOU SHALT HAVE NONE OTHER GODS BUT ME”

Figure 20: “Capitalism,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 26 March 1930. Permission not yet granted.

⁷⁵⁵ Jarvis, *The Male Body at War*, chapter 5; and Slavishak, *Bodies of Work*, chapter 6.

⁷⁵⁶ Koureas, *Memory, Masculinity, and National Identity*.

⁷⁵⁷ Faue, *Community of Suffering & Struggle*, 71; Fahy, “Worn, Damaged Bodies,” 3; and Richard Steven Street, “Lange’s Antecedents: The Emergence of Social Documentary Photography of California’s Farmworkers,” *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (August 2006): 400. Street argues that the new documentary style of photography “centered on people” and “stressed the interrelationship of content, form, text, audience, and publication in the service of larger social matters.”

⁷⁵⁸ Fahy, “Worn, Damaged Bodies,” 10.

femininity to foster passion and commitment to socialism among an audience receptive to the notion of the CP and its affiliated mass organizations as muscular, militant working-class men and women, but they also employed the rhetoric of victimization, particularly when lambasting government relief and jobs programs during the Third Period. Moreover, published photographs of broken radicals' bodies, though ostensibly suggestive of physical weakness, also showcased radicals' strength despite overwhelming opposition. As with hegemonic gender discourses, Communists defined the parameters of radical masculinity and femininity in comparisons with the "Other," the forces of capitalism and imperialism that linked manhood and womanhood with consumerism, parenthood, and hierarchical social structures. In what ways did Communist collectivist ideologies affect visual representations of radical gender? How did these radical gender narratives compare to the lived experiences of Communist operatives? Though a comprehensive examination of these questions is beyond the scope of this chapter, it does highlight the ways that Communist gender construction diverged from dominant narratives and places them within the context of what James Gilbert called "crosscurrents to the mainstream."⁷⁵⁹

In *The ABC of Communism*, Bukharin and Preobrazhensky wrote, "The workers are enchained by hunger. Hunger compels them to hire themselves out, that is, to sell their labour power. There is no other solution for the worker; he has no

⁷⁵⁹ James Gilbert, *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 218.

choice.”⁷⁶⁰ In a capitalist state, they continued, “*Unemployment must always exist,*” for this enables industry to “extract more gold from some of the workers while...the superfluous workers are thrown into the street.” This “reserve army of [unemployed] labour” allowed capitalists to keep the employed from protesting their oppression for fear that they might be replaced.⁷⁶¹ That fear constituted part of what Bukharin and Preobrazhensky called “spiritual subjugation,” the emotional and educational forces that served the needs of capital. This shaping of working-class minds operated alongside “brute force”—the military, national guard, prisons, and strikebreakers regularly employed by industry or the State—to ensure disunity among workers and keep them focused not on their common grievances but on their individual well-being.⁷⁶²

Beginning in the 1920s in Great Britain and the 1930s in the United States, that “reserve army” swelled as businesses of all kinds closed and/or cut hours, wages, and the number of employees in attempts to weather the economic storm, and the spiritual subjugation of workers—the belief in the myths of meritocracy and upward social mobility—began to crumble. Like CPGB member Jack Dash, many workers began to look outside of their personal circumstances to examine the underlying reasons for widespread poverty. “The greatest teacher of all...has been unemployment and poverty,” Dash recalled in an interview conducted for Molly Andrews’ study on politics and aging. “Poverty’s the greatest teacher, provided you

⁷⁶⁰ Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

⁷⁶² Ibid.

want to understand why you're poor."⁷⁶³ Dash, orphaned at fifteen and impoverished for much of his childhood, called this "gut socialism," the experience of radicalization as a response to physical deprivation.⁷⁶⁴ Another informant from the same study, Walter Gregory, joined the CPGB because it "was a party of action." He preferred to "street chalk [or] go on a demonstration" rather than "wait for a member of Parliament to get up and make a pretty speech" about poverty and unemployment.⁷⁶⁵

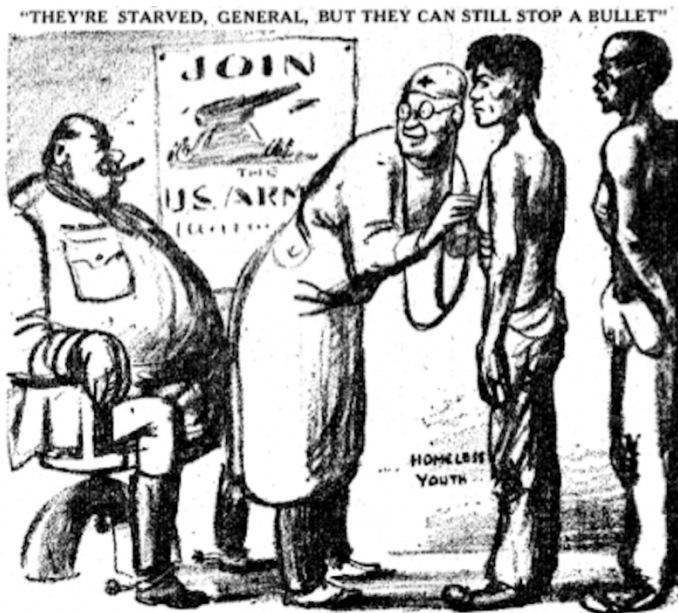


Figure 21: "They're Starved, General, But They Can Still Stop a Bullet," *Western Worker*, 22 May 1933. Permission not yet granted.

In her study of the Minneapolis labor movement, Elizabeth Faue found that Left-leaning political cartoons showed "brawny" workers "[possessing] the saintly qualities of heroism and self-sacrifice," while capital's engorged "body suggested waste, impotence, and emasculation."⁷⁶⁶ This

juxtaposition of corpulence and muscular masculinity appears to have been a

⁷⁶³ Quoted in Molly Andrews, *Lifetimes of Commitment: Aging, Politics, Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 120.

⁷⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 113-114.

⁷⁶⁵ Quoted in Andrews, *Lifetimes of Commitment*, 116-117. In their study of poor people's movements, Frances Fox Pivens and Richard A. Cloward described these as moments when the poor cease believing that they deserve to be poor, and they arise in anger when they "perceive the deprivation and disorganization they experience as both wrong and subject to redress." Pivens and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, 6 and 12.

⁷⁶⁶ Faue, *Community of Suffering*, 74 and 82.

common theme in labor-Left culture during this period, as Communist cartoonists in both the United States and Great Britain turned to this symbolism frequently. The laziness of the parasitic class and the excesses of capitalism, for example, were made plain by obese bodies wrapped in clothing unsuitable for labor. In various depictions, jowly, beady-eyed capitalists and/or politicians lynched young African American men, denied cannery women living wages, strolled uncaringly past an overcrowded Labour Exchange or Black

body hanging from the rafters, and stared defiantly toward the viewer, denouncing Communist “materialism”, or demanding religious devotion.⁷⁶⁷ Many times the bosses appeared incapable of supporting their massive frames and either sat

THE HALL IS DECORATED

By Fred Ellis

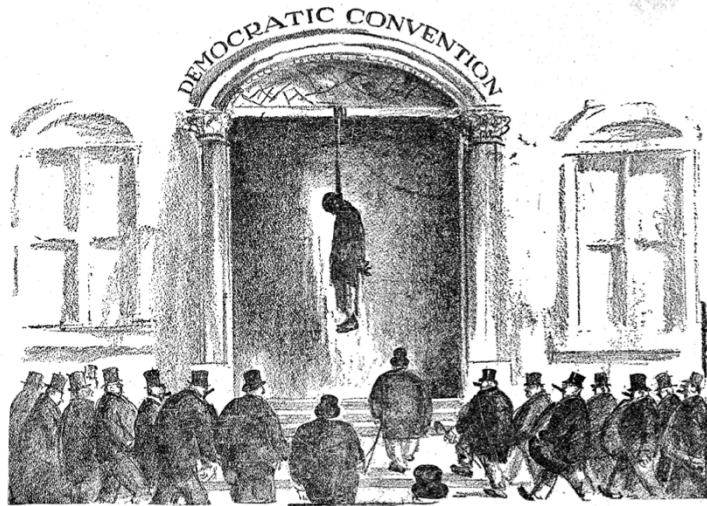


Figure 22: Fred Ellis, "The Hall is Decorated," *Daily Worker* (US), 22 June 1928. Permission not yet granted.

or leaned upon a cane lest they stumble under the enormous weight of their own greed. Moreover, they cowered in the presence of righteous radical masculinity.

It is important to remember that these stories and images typically did not focus on Communists but on the unemployed masses, the single young men without

⁷⁶⁷ “Fight Lynch Terror,” *The Young Worker*, 9 June 1930; Kane, “The ‘Independent’ Labour Party,” *Daily Worker* (UK) 17 February 1930; “To Win—Organize and Fight!” *Western Worker*, 3 July 1933; “What I Can’t Stand in the Communists Is Their Materialism,” *Western Worker*, 15 August 1932; Alf, “Thou Shalt Have None Other Gods But Me,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 26 March 1930; and Fred Ellis, “The Hall is Decorated,” *Daily Worker* (US), 22 June 1928.

any job prospects, and the mothers and their children who sought government assistance. Political cartoons about economic insecurity and rampant hunger, for example, often did not feature the symbols or slogans of the Communist Party. Instead, they depicted embodiments of capitalism, usually in the form of corpulent excess, in contrast to the emaciated bodies of the unemployed or working poor. One such cartoon in California's *Western Worker* took aim at Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Civilian Conservation Corps, a New Deal program designed to give young men work but whose regimented

organization looked a bit too much like military training to the CP.⁷⁶⁸ It depicted an obese general—his body straining against the confines of an office chair—overseeing a medical examination of



Figure 23: Ryan Walker, "Unemployment Insurance--Not Fake Charity," *The Working Woman*, December 1930. Permission not yet granted.

two "homeless youth" who would serve as cannon fodder for the impending imperialist war. Standing bare-chested with bulging ribs exposed, the young white man and his African American counterpart stare defiantly past the doctor at the well-fed officer, knowing that their fate is in his hands.

⁷⁶⁸ "They're Starved, General, But They Can Still Stop a Bullet," *Western Worker*, 22 May 1933.

Ryan Walker employed similar imagery in a *Working Woman* (US) political cartoon lambasting capitalist-led charities who categorized relief applicants as deserving or undeserving of financial assistance. Published in 1930, this image served as a critique of President Herbert



Figure 24: Maro, "Mr. Bumble," *Daily Worker* (UK), 1 November 1934. Permission not yet granted.

Hoover's policies that placed the onus on state and local governments, religious foundations, and non-governmental relief agencies to provide financial assistance to the newly impoverished.⁷⁶⁹ Again, we see wealth portrayed as obesity, this time a jowly couple enrobed in furs speaking with a mother and her two small children, all shivering beneath tatty blankets and coats. The corpulent woman—an obvious stand-in for moneyed do-gooders—peppers the mother with questions about the family's economic situation after informing her that the case is under investigation.⁷⁷⁰

⁷⁶⁹ Cohen, "Adrift in the Great Depression," in *Making a New Deal*, 213-250; Ellis W. Hawley, "Herbert Hoover, Associationalism, and the Great Depression Relief Crisis of 1930-1933," in *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, eds. Donald T. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998): 125-146; Olmsted, *Right Out of California*, 24-25; and Susan Ware, *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), xiii-xiv.

⁷⁷⁰ Ryan Walker, "Unemployment Insurance—Not Fake Charity," *The Working Woman*, December 1930. Pivens and Cloward noted, "The dole was anathema to the American spirit of work and self-sufficiency. Therefore, it should be dispensed to as few as possible and made as harsh as possible to discourage reliance upon it." Pivens and Cloward, *Poor People's Movements*, 41-42.

In Britain, commissions like the Minister's Advisory Committee on Nutrition and the British Medical Association issued reports in the early 1930s that, to the CP, reduced working-class families to numbers on a chart and their health to percentages of protein and calories.⁷⁷¹ Maro, a political cartoonist for the CPGB's *Daily Worker*, chose to critique those committees and their focus on the minimum nutrition required to maintain "working capacity," equating the so-called experts to that paragon of virtue, Mr. Bumble, the head of the poorhouse in Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. As

"He Maketh Me To Lie Down In Green Pastures"



Herbert Morrison proposes a "Green Belt" round London

Figure 25: Maro, "He Maketh Me to Lie Down in Green Pastures," *Daily Worker* (UK), 28 January 1935. Permission not yet granted.

one well-fed capitalist weighs a miniscule bit of food, a second bends down to poke at a child's belly while Mr. Bumble denounces the youngster for wanting more.

Another Maro cartoon protested London County Councillor and Labour Party stalwart Herbert Morrison's proposal to create a green zone around the city when the

funds for such an undertaking could have been better spent alleviating suffering of the poor. Emaciated workers, some without clothing or shoes, kneel in this imagined landscape, feeding like livestock in a pasture. As two attempt to abscond from this

⁷⁷¹ "The Nation's Health," *London Times*, 15 September 1933; "Mr. Bumble," *Daily Worker* (UK), 11 January 1934; and "Minimum Diet for a Man: Divergent Views Reconciled, A Sliding Scale," *London Times*, 16 May 1934.

degrading scene, Morrison screams, “Eat your damn grass!” at one while a police officer hauls the other off to jail.⁷⁷² In both this and the previous cartoons, capitalism—exemplified in the rotund bodies of government, charity, and the military—dominates the frame, offering stark contrast to the emaciated bodies of the unemployed. Moreover, they served as visual reminders that working-class bodies belonged, not to the souls that resided in them but to the individuals and institutions who profited from their labor.

By contrast, the radical press depicted Communists as masters of their environment in larger-than-life perspectives. Like members of the mainstream labor press, radical journalists used manhood and the inherent strength in muscular working-class bodies to remind members that the CP collective body could accomplish



Figure 26: "The Agricultural Workers Answer!" *Western Worker*, 28 August 1933. Permission not yet granted.

more than individuals could. The workers of the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL), Friends of the Soviet Union (FSU), or the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union (CAWIU) in the US loomed large over the landscape they intended to conquer or the masses that they led to enlightenment.⁷⁷³ So too did those in the UK

⁷⁷² Moro, “He Maketh Me to Lie Down in Green Pastures, *Daily Worker* (UK), 28 January 1935.

⁷⁷³ “Hail National Youth Day,” *The Young Worker*, 30 May 1933; and “A Trade Union Unity League On Every Job!” *Western Worker*, 7 August 1933.

who fought against homegrown fascism, politicians, and government suppression of the Communist press.⁷⁷⁴ Much like New Deal commissioned artworks showing robust workers as lords and masters of both the untamed frontier and industrial landscapes, these workers rolled up their sleeves, forearms rippling as they marched heroically forward to confront imperialists and the boss class.⁷⁷⁵ Communist operatives may not have enjoyed professional and physical mobility, but these images, by depicting actual forward movement, gave radicals the impression that they were leading an economic, political, and social revolution. Moreover, this forward



Figure 27: Maro, *Neither Lions, Rats, Nor Skunks*, *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 January 1934. Permission not yet granted.

momentum coupled with the symbolism of rolled sleeves suggested that Communist operatives did not shy away from physical exertion or violent confrontation, marking them as antithetical to the parasitic elite who fed off the labor of others. At times, the acronym of a mass organization appeared on the clothing or body of the worker, indicating that this manly body represented not an individual radical, but the collective strength of the CPGB, CPUSA,

⁷⁷⁴ Maro, "Neither Lions, Rats, Nor Skunks," *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 January 1934; and Maro, "They Lie in Vain—The March Goes On," *Daily Worker* (UK), 25 January 1934.

⁷⁷⁵ "Strike! —Demonstrate! —Fight the Boss Class!" *The Young Worker*, 1 May 1930; and "All Hail National Youth Day," *The Young Worker*, 30 May 1933. For more on New Deal gender iconography, see Barbara Melosh, *Engendering Culture*.

Boss Tricks Cannot Break Workers Ranks



Figure 28: "Boss Tricks Cannot Break Workers Ranks," *Western Worker*, 23 October 1933. Permission not yet granted.

and their affiliated organizations.⁷⁷⁶

Men of color, so often subjected to emasculation and racialization in the

mainstream press, could look to Communist

newspapers for more positive, manly depictions. At the time, the Communist Party and International Labor Defense demonstrated a commitment to racial solidarity by applying limited financial resources and significant time in the defense of nine African American young men wrongfully accused of rape in Scottsboro, Alabama and by providing legal services for foreign nationals threatened with deportation. The Party also sought to eliminate "white chauvinism" within its ranks and expelled members found guilty by local control commissions. One could argue that these efforts were little more than thinly veiled recruitment drives, but the fact remains that at this time the Party was one of the few white organizations willing to challenge entrenched and legislatively sanctioned racism. By simply depicting men of color as manly and not as infantilized, racialized, or feminized caricatures, Communist artists

⁷⁷⁶ "A Fighting Mother," *Western Worker*, 15 March 1932; "A Trade Union Unity League on Every Job!" *Western Worker*, 7 August 1933; and "The Agricultural Workers Answer!" *Western Worker*, 28 August 1933.

not only acknowledged their masculinity, but they also defined it in relation to the “Other” by positioning them next to manly white radicals.

Cartoonists in the US occasionally depicted African American manhood, like that of white radical masculinity, in relation to the emasculated obese bodies of capitalists, but more often in relation to other workers. Group settings gave artists the opportunity to emphasize the importance of cross-racial coalition building in the CAWIU, UC, and ILD, and to that end they portrayed male workers of color as masculine equals to their

white comrades.⁷⁷⁷ It must be noted, however, that more often than not, artists situated white male CP operatives and strike leaders at the front of these group images or centered within the frame unless the



Figure 29: "Smash the Barriers!" *The Young Worker*, 7 July 1930. Permission not yet granted.

cartoon’s message specifically dealt with grower efforts to use racial discord to undermine striker resolve.⁷⁷⁸ This had the perhaps unintended effect of implying that radical white men of the UC and CAWIU would lead people of color out of poverty.

This is less evident in drawings regarding the ILD fight to free the Scottsboro Nine or

⁷⁷⁷ “Boss Tricks Cannot Break Workers Ranks,” *Western Worker*, 23 October 1933; and “Join the Parade;” “Answer Rolph’s Insults;” and “Spread the Strike! Build the Union!” *Western Worker*, 24 May 1933.

⁷⁷⁸ “Boss Tricks Cannot Break Workers Ranks” shows three muscular workers representing the three races involved in the cotton harvest.

to end lynching, as artists deployed John Henry imagery of oversized, muscular African American men wielding sledgehammers or pickaxes.⁷⁷⁹

When depicting people of color, radical British political cartoonists appear to have focused, not on the South Asians, Caribbeans, and Arabs living in the UK, but on those in the colonies. Like images of Blacks in the US press, these seem to have been largely positive representations of muscular masculinity, such as the larger-than-life “Indian masses” facing down British imperialists and their Indian collaborators drawn by MacDonald in May 1934.⁷⁸⁰ By this time, most of the Meerut defendants had been released and, at a December 1931 conference, the CPI had reorganized itself and elected Dr. G.M. Adhikari General Secretary. This was followed by a meeting on 4 February 1934 wherein delegates from the Girni Kamgar Union, Lal Bavta Girni Kamgar Union, and Young Workers League voted to support the All-India Textile Workers’ Conference’s call for a general strike. Over the course of the next few months, government repression of Indian trade unionists and nationalists increased significantly, including the arrests of G.M. Adhikari’s brother Jagannath the day after this political cartoon appeared in the *Daily*. The Government of India formally outlawed the party on 23 July, citing Part II, Section 16 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1908.⁷⁸¹

⁷⁷⁹ “Smash the Barriers!” *The Young Worker*, 7 July 1930; and “Hack It Down!” *Young Worker*, 9 May 1930.

⁷⁸⁰ MacDonald, “The Tide of Revolution is Rising,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 24 May 1934.

⁷⁸¹ “The Indian Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1908,” <http://legislative.gov.in>; Habib Manzer, “British Measures Against Indian Communists, 1934-1937,” *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 64 (2004): 777-778; Chowdhuri, *Leftism in India*, 91; and “Bombay Labour Leaders’ Round-Up,” *Times of India*, 25 May 1934.

When the All-India Congress seized control of the Madras Presidency in the 1937 elections, political cartoonist Gabriel, in the spirit of the Popular Front, celebrated this achievement with another depiction of Indian muscular masculinity in the form of a shirtless drummer performing with future Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Depicted playing the pungi, Nehru glances up bemusedly at Governor-General and Viceroy of British India Victor Alexander John Hope, 2nd Marquess of Linlithgow, wearing the regalia associated with his many titles and holding “Britain’s Constitution of Bondage for India,” none of which protect him from the snake charmer’s music.⁷⁸² It is unfortunate, however, that in a critique of British imperialism Gabriel relied on this common racist trope about South Asians.

Much like the racial component of the CAWIU political cartoon, when not commenting on specific female concerns, cartoonists normally placed women behind white men or employed the gendered rhetorical strategies of marriage and motherhood, using what historian Barbara Melosh termed the “comradely ideal.”⁷⁸³ Although cartoonists depicted them

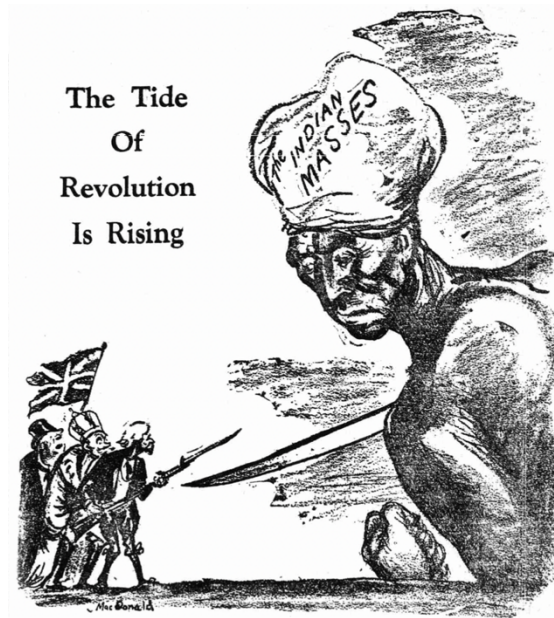


Figure 30: MacDonald, "The Tide of Revolution is Rising," *Daily Worker* (UK), 24 May 1934. Permission not yet granted.

⁷⁸² Gabriel, "Indian Elections," *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 March 1937.

⁷⁸³ "Spread the Strike;" "Join the Parade;" "Answer Rolph's Insults;" and Melosh, *Engendering Culture*, chapter 2.

however, CP imagery changed to one of muscular femininity, as in the 3 July 1933 cartoon of a lean, stern-faced woman cannery worker.⁷⁸⁶ In this positive example of a woman displaying typically masculine behavior, a solitary CAWIU worker demands that cannery operators, state labor officials, and politicians adhere to the federal women's minimum wage laws. Whereas Faue might have seen in her solitude an indication of labor's reluctance to gender the labor movement and class warfare as female, I argue that the CP often portrayed their male members as underdogs in a similar fashion, as lone warriors in a battle with the forces of capitalism.⁷⁸⁷ Yet these men and women never represented individual desires, efforts, or accomplishments. Though this cannery woman was not tattooed with the acronym or symbol of the union, she, like her male counterpart in figure 26, stood for the collective strength of the CAWIU. Moreover, much like the gendered rhetoric of World War II propaganda encouraging women to contribute to the war effort through enlistment or wage work in the defense industry, this image showed radical union women when masculine behavior was not only acceptable, but necessary in the fight for economic and political justice.⁷⁸⁸

⁷⁸⁶ "To Win—Organize and Fight!"

⁷⁸⁷ Faue, *Community of Suffering*, 89. For an example of a solitary male worker, please refer to figure 26.

⁷⁸⁸ Knaff, *Beyond Rosie*, 10 and 16. Knaff called this process a "circular dynamic," in which cartoons and comics demonstrated acceptable ways that women could assume masculine traits while still maintaining those characteristics that marked them as female.

Despite these images of militant masculinity and femininity, membership in the Party, especially employment by the CPGB or CPUSA, often meant an acceptance of economic and physical deprivation while working for a socialist future. To be sure, many gave up educational opportunities and/or promising careers to do so. John Cornford left Cambridge University to fight (and die) with the International Brigade in Spain, and David Ainley dropped out of the University of Manchester to work fulltime for the YCL. When he discovered that YCL work interfered with his



Figure 32: “Spread the Strike! Build the Union!” *Western Worker*, 24 May 1933. Permission not yet granted.

studies, Ainley wrote in 1950, he asked the League’s Executive Committee for advice, and they told him to “throw up [his] scholarship.” The Centre objected to this plan, but Ainley had “burned [his] books and could not resume [his] scholarship.”

Despite this obvious sign of his commitment, the YCL did not put him on the payroll for another two years.⁷⁸⁹

After teaching English in Moscow for several years, Stanford University and

⁷⁸⁹ According to his obituary in the *Cambridge Review*, John Cornford had an “exceptional” career at university, receiving the Trinity College Open Major Scholarship at age sixteen and the Earl of Derby Research Scholarship upon his graduation from Cambridge. When he left England to fight with the newly formed International Brigade, he thanked his tutor for the “tremendous personal kindness and interest” shown to him and resigned his scholarships. He was killed in action the day after his twenty-

Columbia Teachers College graduates Paul and Violet Orr gave up professions as educators for jobs with the Friends of the Soviet Union.⁷⁹⁰ When Sam Darcy asked Louise Todd to join him in the offices of CPUSA District 13, she did not hesitate to quit her lucrative position as secretary in the Radio Corporation of America's international division.⁷⁹¹ Caroline Decker told an interviewer that it made no sense to continue her education or to think about a future career when even doctors and lawyers were in the breadlines. She followed her older sister to the coalfields of Kentucky to work for Workers International Relief before moving to California to organize migrant farm workers with the Cannery and Agricultural Workers Industrial Union.⁷⁹²

None of these jobs came with sufficient or even guaranteed wages. Hence, we see intercepted letters like the ones mentioned in the previous chapter from Maurice Ferguson and Lily Webb asking for extra money to



Figure 33: Buchan, "Cable Street," *Daily Worker* (UK), 6 October 1936. Permission not yet granted.

first birthday. Pat Sloan, ed., *John Cornford: A Memoir*, 178-180 and 248-250; and David Ainley self-narration, LHARC.

⁷⁹⁰ Orr interview, DAF #4 and #5.

⁷⁹¹ Todd interview, DAF #7. Todd recalled that she made \$25/week working for RCA and only \$10/week working for CPUSA District #13.

⁷⁹² Decker interview, DAF #4.

cover expenses, or Jean Jefferson, awaiting that first paycheck from International Press, pleading with her friend G. Aitken for a loan.⁷⁹³ Decker recalled that she made \$7 each week working as the secretary for Pittsburgh's District Organizer and should have received the same wage as a CAWIU organizer, but she had to help raise that money. Without the financial assistance from sympathizers, she admitted, "I think most of us would have starved to death."⁷⁹⁴ Even students invited to attend the International Lenin School (ILS), whose families were promised remittances, sometimes went without until arrangements could be made. While she waited for payment from the Comintern, Bessie Dickinson was told by her husband Harold,

"you [have] to carry on as best you

can on what you obtain there."

Bessie went on the dole until money arrived, but, Harold warned, she should "expect a reduction [in those payments] before very long."⁷⁹⁵

In fact, low pay or no pay

seemed a typical Communist

policy, or, at the very least, part of



Figure 34: "To Win—Organize and Fight!" *Western Worker*, 3 July 1933. Permission not yet granted.

⁷⁹³ Special Branch Reports (13 January 1928, 27 January 1928, 3 February 1928, and February 1928), Reports of the Secret Service, KV2/3200; and Special Branch Report (27 October 1938), Reports of the Secret Service, KV2/2809, TNA.

⁷⁹⁴ Decker interview, DAF #7.

⁷⁹⁵ Special Branch Report (28 November 1930 and 22 February 1931), Reports of the Secret Service, KV2/1796, TNA.

Communist culture during the 1930s. The CPGB “Handbook for Party Members,” for example, stated this explicitly when discussing the Party’s new organizational structure. This consisted of an Organising Bureau and a Political Bureau, each having a Bureau Chief that oversaw seven or eight departments. Each of these departments had a “separate organising secretary (unpaid)” who was required to submit weekly reports and to attend Executive Committee meetings when necessary. In addition to organizing and overseeing the work of their department, these unpaid operatives had to “carry out the ordinary clerical work by means of organised voluntary assistance.”⁷⁹⁶ This meant that member registration, dues collection, creation and distribution of literature, and countless other activities depended on the generosity of members who spent much of their time engaged in wage labor, looking for employment, or applying for government relief. It should come as no surprise that more often than not Communist women took on these duties.

By the time the Soviet Union entered World War II, and Communist parties began supporting the war effort, Robert W. Robson had had enough, telling Jean Jefferson and Jimmy Shields that the CPGB needed to let go of what he called “this old-fashioned complex.”

If a comrade’s doing a job let’s pay the comrade. We’ve got to get away from that old-fashioned outlook which was necessary at one time but today is holding the Party back....it simply means that George Allison could starve in Sheffield and the engineering Party members saw nothing wrong in that, and he did literally starve.⁷⁹⁷

⁷⁹⁶ Communist Party of Great Britain, “Handbook for Party Members,” 1923; Marxists.org, https://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/britain/partyled/1923/handbook_org.htm, accessed 13 November 2022.

⁷⁹⁷ Special Branch Report (23 June 1943), Reports of the Secret Service, KV2/2810, TNA. Robson joined the Executive Committee in June 1925 following the arrests of twelve CPGB leaders. The son

Jefferson had apologetically asked for a small raise, and Robson wasted no time in telling her—and the SIS agents listening in—that she should not be ashamed of wanting a decent wage for her work, and CP officers should not be expected to “live in a bloody little place and be very economical and wear an old sports coat.” In fact, he continued, “If I must live in Poplar to be a Communist and go to a bloody Italian café for my meals...then, I don’t consider that has anything to do with politics.”⁷⁹⁸ Though Robson certainly did not intend for CP operatives to join the ranks of the bourgeois middle class, this monologue demonstrates that there existed within Communist circles the belief that some measure of suffering had to be endured in the revolutionary struggle for a more equitable society.

Though the Party would be loath to admit it, representations of emaciated young men more closely resembled the bodies of Communist functionaries, as the all-encompassing nature of their commitment to working-class struggles only exacerbated the effects that malnourishment and government-sanctioned harassment had on radical bodies. In a letter to Max Bedacht written in the second year of his

of an ironworks laborer, Robson worked as an organizer for the Independent Labour Party before joining the Communist Party in 1923. The CPGB appointed him organizer for London in 1925 and national organizer in 1926. He served on the EC again from 1929 until 1935 when he left to assume a role in the CPGB’s underground work. According to John McIlroy and Alan Campbell, Robson “remained on the payroll for the rest of his active life.” McIlroy and Campbell, “The Leadership of British Communism,” 10 and 22-23.

⁷⁹⁸ Special Branch Report (23 June 1943), Reports of the Secret Service, KV2/2810, TNA. In 1943, Poplar was a poor working-class borough in London’s East End situated between three bodies of water, the river Thames to the south, the river Lea to the east, and the Limehouse Cut Canal to the west and north. Already suffering from the effects of a two-decades-long economic slump, Poplar endured considerable bombing during World War II, and, by war’s end, suffered the loss of approximately 18% of its residential and commercial structures. See John Marriott, “Recession, Mass Culture, and the Entrepreneurial Spirit, 1920-1939” and “Fascism and War, 1920-1945,” in *Beyond the Tower: A History of East London* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011): 269-321.

tenure as California's District 13 Organizer, Sam Darcy noted with little fanfare that his involvement in the effort to free political prisoner Tom Mooney, organize local and state hunger marches, publish the *Western Worker*, and get the Communist Party included in upcoming elections had resulted in an exhaustion-fueled illness.⁷⁹⁹ He later described his activities during the 1934 longshoremen's strike as a "taxing life physically and often harrowing on the nerves."⁸⁰⁰ This, and Robson's diatribe about poor George Allison starving in Sheffield while working for the CPGB, seem hyperbolic until compared with Adhikari's obituary and a *New Masses* profile of Harlem activist Claudia Jones that noted with little fanfare that her YCL mentor Jimmie Ashford "worked himself to death a couple of years ago."⁸⁰¹

Darcy's frenetic schedule can be partially explained by the Party's desire to be all things to all workers, but the limited number of paid functionaries meant that at certain times, there was no one else to do the job. While Darcy traveled to the US national office in 1931, Morris Rapport wrote to him about the lack of sufficient manpower for an approaching unemployed conference, noting, "the only one available is Hogardy who is sick and will have to go to the hospital. [Elmer] Hanoff and I are trying to prevail on him to wait until after the conference." He also reported that Cooper in the Los Angeles office "took sick," and because the rest of the LA personnel had been imprisoned, Rapport anticipated that he would be traveling south to take over that section for a while.⁸⁰² If many operatives like Hogardy put off trips

⁷⁹⁹ Sam Darcy to Max Bedacht, 27 November 1932, SAD MS, TAM.145, box 1, folder 16, WLA.

⁸⁰⁰ Samuel Adams Darcy, "The Storm Must Be Ridden," SAD MS, TAM.145, box 3, folder 21, WLA.

⁸⁰¹ FBI Report, Claudia Jones, NY 100-18676, 11 December 1945.

to the hospital for the sake of the movement, it is not surprising that some of them, including Darcy, felt old before their time.⁸⁰³

This appears to have been the case in both countries. For several months in 1931, Maurice Ferguson exchanged letters with the Centre requesting that he be removed as Birmingham District Organizer, citing the need for hemorrhoid surgery. They declined to do so, opting to make Lily Webb interim head while Ferguson was in hospital and bringing in Tom Roberts during Ferguson's convalescence in the country. The following year when the CPGB ordered him to spend a month working for the *Daily*, the CPGB again made Webb temporary organizer for Birmingham, who later claimed the Party never paid her for this work.⁸⁰⁴ Similarly, Peggy Dennis, the wife of future CPUSA General Secretary Eugene and a paid operative in her own right, recalled doing unpaid labor for the Party at various points in time.⁸⁰⁵

This, of course, could have meant that the CPGB and CPUSA lacked the funds to pay Dennis and Webb, but it also reveals certain cracks in the Party's position on the woman question. Louise Todd described the Party's work in this area as "lip service," more "agitational" than "substantive," but she thought that individual women who were "ambitious and aggressive in their work" did get promoted.⁸⁰⁶ Yet

⁸⁰² Morris Rapport to Sam Darcy, undated, SAD MS, TAM.145, box 1, folder 33, WLA.

⁸⁰³ Sam Darcy to Max Bedacht, 27 November 1932, SAD MS, TAM.145, box 1, folder 16, WLA. Darcy was commenting on the death of a comrade named Louis who he had speculated would live "forever if anyone would." When he wrote that he "didn't realize [he] was getting so old," Darcy had just celebrated his 28th birthday.

⁸⁰⁴ Special Branch Reports (June 1931, July 1931, July 1931, 5 August 1931, 8 September 1931, 10 September 1931, 18 September 1931, October 1931, and 3 August 1932), Reports of the Secret Service, KV/3201, TNA.

⁸⁰⁵ Dennis, *Autobiography*, 89.

⁸⁰⁶ Todd interview, DAF #5.

women operatives like Todd often served as support staff; they worked as secretaries or within the organizational departments in charge of membership and dues, positions that were even less likely to be paid. None became District Organizers during the life of the Comintern, and only those with prior standing in socialist circles—women like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Anita Whitney in the US or Helen Crawford and Isobel (sometimes spelled Isabel) Brown in the UK—attained important positions in national leadership.⁸⁰⁷

The previous chapter touched on the strain of constant surveillance in conjunction with poor wages, and evidence shows that some operatives could not withstand the pressure—the long hours and threats of bodily harm led some to request leaves of absence and others to disappear altogether. The CPGB gave David Ramsey a less stressful job after he suffered a “temporary breakdown in health, a breakdown caused by devotion to...party work,” while Comrade Daniels, an organizer in Los Angeles, “disappeared for a whole day” after the CPUSA refused to grant him a leave of absence. In his report to the National Office, temporary District Organizer Morris Rapport acknowledged that when he left for Los Angeles, Daniels was not in the best of health and weighed at most 107 pounds. A “few weeks hard work” resulted in a

⁸⁰⁷ Morgan et al, *Communists and British Society*, 160-161; McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of British Communism, 1923-1928,” 35; and McIlroy and Campbell, “Leadership of American Communism,” 1924-1929,” 49-51. Helen Crawford came to the CPGB via the Left Wing of the Independent Labour Party. She served on the Politburo for one year. According to Kevin Morgan, this was a response to pressure from the Comintern. Isobel Brown was a founding member of the CPGB whose husband, Ernest, served on the CEC in the 1920s, and she held various Party posts in addition to her job as an English teacher. The CPUSA CEC was all male from 1924 to 1927. Female members of the CPUSA CEC in the tumultuous year of 1929 included clothing worker Lena Chernenko, Organizer Anna David, and textile worker Ellen Dawson.

breakdown of sorts, and Morris speculated that Daniels' temporary desertion was an attempt to "force the District Committee to send him some help."⁸⁰⁸

Perhaps most interesting about these two cases is what transpired next. Ramsey, whose undercover work for the CPGB made him a stranger to many in the community, chafed at his apparent demotion to a less important position. He told as much to William Gallacher, who suggested he take it up with the Secretariat, the body consisting of the General Secretary and heads of the Organisation and Political Bureaus that oversaw day-to-day operations of the CPGB. And though he had requested three months off, Daniels returned to the Los Angeles office after a single day, a day in which he spent some time composing a letter apologizing for his actions.⁸⁰⁹ These are both secondhand accounts in letters to CPUSA and CPGB headquarters, so the evidence must be read with a measure of skepticism, but in each case, the men seeking or seizing time away from the struggle expressed regret, guilt, and perhaps even some embarrassment about the need for it.

Daniels went AWOL, if only for a day, because he believed the District Organizer for California would deny his request, a belief supported a few months later by Sam Darcy's actions regarding beleaguered comrade Charles Bakst. In June 1931, the CPUSA National Office received a letter from Bakst appealing Darcy and Rapport's decision to grant him a week off rather than the month he wanted. At the

⁸⁰⁸ Special Branch Report (27 November 1928), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1869, TNA; and Morris Rapport to the Secretariat of the Communist Party of the USA, 3 March 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opus 1, delo 2282*.

⁸⁰⁹ Special Branch Report (27 November 1928), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1869, TNA; and Morris Rapport to the Secretariat of the Communist Party of the USA, 3 March 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opus 1, delo 2282*.

time a member of the District Secretariat and Committee, Bakst objected to Darcy's demand for a doctor's note because this might have exposed him as a fraud to relief agencies who believed him to be unemployed. In pleading his case, Bakst stated that he intended to remove himself from both positions and wrote, "My nervous system is naturally a reflection of my physical condition and...I don't consider myself fit to fill either post." He ended by criticizing those who regarded his request as a "vacation" or who thought he would "develop into a slum-proletariat," another term meaning lumpenproletariat or social parasite.⁸¹⁰ In a subsequent letter defending his decision, Rapport claimed that Bakst intended to spend a month in "the jungles," the contemporary term for homeless encampments, though it seems implausible that a sick person would prefer roughing it over two weeks respite at a supportive comrade's farm.⁸¹¹ The Central Executive Committee agreed with Rapport and Darcy, telling Bakst,

Your request for a leave of absence on the basis of bad health is something that concerns the responsible leadership of the District. You cannot simply demand a blank leave of absence for a month. The District Secretariat is entitled to know how you expect to spend this month so that you can regain your health and return to your activities in the Party.⁸¹²

Eventually, Bakst agreed to take his leave on the farm, much to everyone's relief. Still, the Committee wondered about his initial reluctance. "*If Comrade Bakst is really sick,*" they wrote Rapport, "this should give him an opportunity to go

⁸¹⁰ Charles Bakst to CC, 27 June 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opus 1, delo 2282*. It is interesting that Bakst would worry about comrades thinking of him as a social parasite when he was apparently receiving government relief while working for the CPUSA.

⁸¹¹ Morris Rapport to CC, 30 June 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opus 1, delo 2282*.

⁸¹² CC to Charles Bakst, 6 July 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opus 1, delo 2319*.

someplace where he can regain his health. However, this does not mean that such a leading comrade can simply walk off any time he desires.”⁸¹³

Women operatives, too, experienced the occasional, stress-induced breakdown, but there seems to be very little evidence that the CPGB and CPUSA denied their requests or chastised them for needing time off. Caroline Decker recalled that writer Ella Winter allowed her to recuperate at her Carmel, California ranch whenever she needed a break from organizing for the CAWIU.⁸¹⁴ However, Kathryn Olmsted found that then-husband Jack Warnick sometimes joined her, so these “vacations” might have been as much conjugal visits as respites from the fields.⁸¹⁵ Women who made formal requests for time off did so with apologies and regret like the men mentioned previously. In an intercepted letter written just six weeks after she had complained to Dave Springhall about her inability to perform all the tasks that he had assigned her, Rose Schechter became ill and was prescribed bed rest by her doctor. When she passed along this information to Norah Brown, Schechter wrote, “I am extremely sorry to be and to have been so useless just recently. I shall try to make up for it as soon as possible.”⁸¹⁶ Frieda Devine apologized in a similar fashion when she informed the CPGB head office that she required some time off lest her health deteriorate even further. “I am feeling absolutely ill and worn out and just can’t carry on as I am doing,” she wrote. “I’m

⁸¹³ Org. Dept., CC to Maurice Raport, 6 July 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opus 1, delo 2319*. Emphasis mine.

⁸¹⁴ Decker interview, DAF #8.

⁸¹⁵ Olmsted, *Right Out of California*, 79.

⁸¹⁶ Special Branch Reports (20 May 1936 and 7 July 1936), Records of the Security Service, KV2/3063, TNA.

very sorry about it, but it is best I stop for a while now than carry on and have a real breakdown.”⁸¹⁷

The absence in Secret Service files of intercepted letters denying their requests, taped conversations of people denouncing Schechter and Devine for making them, or evidence that they returned to work sooner than they wanted suggests that the CPGB granted them leave with little or no fanfare. Unfortunately, available FBI files do not include wiretap transcripts or intercepted letters, so it is difficult to assess the CPUSA position on this matter. However, evidence of complaints about women’s reproductive and childcare choices does offer some indication of men’s (and some women’s) feelings regarding mothers in the movement, and some male comrades may have felt that women’s need for rest and recuperation merely demonstrated that their weaker constitutions made them ill-suited for the rigors of Party work.⁸¹⁸ Regardless, we can say with some measure of certainty that there was a stigma associated with taking leaves of absence, that other comrades looked down upon those who did, and that both male and female paid operatives were likely to think twice before making these kinds of requests.

Punished Bodies

The first meeting we had was November 7th, a unemployed meeting. We attempted to have it on the courthouse lawn. My part was just to put out the leaflets and be in the crowd. You just had certain people to play a certain part. Everybody didn’t get exposed. The first speaker attempted to speak, his name was Turner. He was a young white fellow, a Birmingham-raised [Alabama] boy. They arrested him.

⁸¹⁷ Special Branch Report (26 January 1953), Records of the Security Service, KV2/1545, TNA.

⁸¹⁸ Kaross interview, DAF #2; and K. Ilmoni to R. Baker, 30 August 1931, RGASPI, *fond 515, opus 1, delo 2319*.

Then a young white woman went up to speak after they drug him off the lawn, was named Alice, they drug her down. That meeting wasn't a success.⁸¹⁹

While it is true that Communists endured economic and physical deprivation, especially if they worked for the Party and its insufficient wages, it is also true that industrialists, law enforcement, and governments in Great Britain and the United States fought vigorously to discourage their activities. Municipal governments passed laws against obstruction of entryways, leafleting, picketing, speaking without permits, and the catchall “breach of the peace” (called disturbing the peace in the US), all for the purposes of limiting radical activism and protest. A favorite in the US was the vagrancy law. This regulation, designed in part to funnel African Americans and other people of color into the prison pipeline and convict lease system, allowed police to arrest anyone who could not show proof of employment. In 1865, every Southern state enacted a law against vagrancy, and many passed others limiting changes in employment for African Americans. Vaguely defined, “vagrancy” allowed law enforcement to arrest anyone under any pretense.⁸²⁰ Westward expansion in the antebellum period, including construction of the nation’s railroads, and economic depressions in the 1870s and 1890s led other states to follow suit and enact “tramp laws” and vagrancy laws like those in the South. These would be used

⁸¹⁹ Hosea Hudson and Nell Irvin Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life as a Negro Communist in the South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 127.

⁸²⁰ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: The New Press, 2012), 28 and 31; Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor Books, 2009), 53-54 and 124; and Alexander C. Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (New York: Verso, 1996), 72 and 169. Alexander Lichtenstein noted that vagrancy could net a sentence of between thirty days and one year in prison.

to stifle soapbox oration and organizing efforts by members of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Western cities, towns, lumber camps, mines, and migrant farming communities in the early decades of the twentieth century.⁸²¹ Though usually misdemeanors, many convicted of these crimes had no other recourse but to serve time in jail because they could not pay the fines.

Violent suppression of labor activism in the United States began in the second half of the nineteenth century, when industrialists hired the Pinkerton Detective Agency and similar private companies to infiltrate shop floors and unions and undermine organizing efforts. Such practices continued well into the twentieth century, with vigilante groups hired by corporate organizations like the Industrial and Farmers Alliances that attempted to put down strikes in California in the 1930s.⁸²² The reemergent Ku Klux Klan, now with a broadened list of enemies that included Catholics, Jews, unions, radicals, and immigrants, assisted in the effort by terrorizing political dissidents, labor activists, and foreign nationals of all kinds.⁸²³ Similar

⁸²¹ Decker interview, DAF #11; Matthew S. May, *Soapbox Rebellion: The Hobo Orator Union and the Free Speech Fights of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1909-1916* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2013); Joanna Dyl, "Transience, Labor, and Nature: Itinerant Workers in the American West," *International Labor and Working-Class History* no. 85 (Spring 2014): 97-117; Laura Weinrib, *The Taming of Free Speech: America's Civil Liberties Compromise* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); and Ahmed White, "The Crime of Radical Industrial Unionism," *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 31, no. 4 (2019): 225-237. Vagrancy laws were used with some frequency in IWW battles for free speech. Law enforcement sometimes started with a charge of vagrancy and then elevated it to criminal syndicalism, as they did for Caroline Decker and other CAWIU organizers.

⁸²² Weiner, *Enemies*, 14; Kathryn Olmsted, "British and US Anticommunism Between the Wars," *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no. 1 (2018): 89-108; Olmsted, *Right Out of California*; David F. Selvin, *A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strikes in San Francisco* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996); and Robert Weiss, "The Emergence and Transformation of Private Detective Industrial Policing in the United States, 1850-1940," *Crime and Social Justice* no.9 (Spring-Summer 1978): 35-48.

⁸²³ Kathleen Blew, *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

groups existed in the UK, including British Fascisti, the Imperial Fascist League, and, most famously, Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. And in both countries, veterans' organizations like the American and British Legions sometimes operated alongside law enforcement to deter radical activism.⁸²⁴

Communists were often subjected to physical harassment, sometimes solely by these anti-Communist civilian groups, but frequently with the tacit approval or active involvement of law enforcement. On some occasions the police simply arrested speakers, but sometimes they engaged in severe, usually unprovoked,



Figure 35: "Strike Leaders Beaten, Jailed," *Western Worker* (US), 3 July 1933. Permission not yet granted.

violence against Communists and anyone who happened to be in the vicinity. Hosea Hudson described an Unemployed Council

⁸²⁴ On the British fascism, see Paul Stoker, "'The Imperial Spirit': British Fascisms and Empire, 1919-1940," *Religious Compass* 9, no. 2 (2015): 45-54; Matthew Worley, *Oswald Mosley and the New Party* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Thomas P. Linehan, "'On the Side of Christ': Fascist Clerics in 1930s Britain," *Politics, Religion, & Ideology* 8, no. 2 (2007): 287-301; Thomas P. Linehan, *East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-west Essex* (London: Frank Cass, 1996); and Daniel Tilles, *British Fascist Antisemitism and Jewish Responses, 1932-1940* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014). For police and British Legion anti-communist violence, see Peter Catterall, "The Battle of Cable Street," *Contemporary British History* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 105-132; and Richard C. Thurlow, "The Straw that Broke the Camel's Back: Public Order, Civil Liberties, and the Battle of Cable Street," *Jewish Culture and History* 1, no. 2 (1998): 74-94. On the practice of employing temporary gamekeepers to prevent trespasses, see Peter Donnelly, "The Paradox of Parks: Politics of Recreational Land Use Before and After the Mass Trespasses," *Leisure Studies* 5, no. 2 (1986): 211-231. On the Economic League, see Arthur McIvor, "'A Crusade for Capitalism': The Economic League, 1919-1939," *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 4 (1988): 631-655 and Olmsted, "British and US Anticommunism Between the Wars."

meeting that took place on the steps of the North Birmingham, Alabama courthouse where the crowd consisted of unemployed whites and Blacks and others who, out of apparent curiosity, paused for a moment to find out why they had gathered there. According to Hudson, the police did not discriminate when they drew their batons. “They were just ordinary white people,” he remembered. “That’s where they learnt their lesson. They learning (sic), many of them that day, that they were no more than the Negroes in the eyes of the ruling class of Birmingham [Alabama] and their police.”⁸²⁵ Hudson could say this—could make comparisons between anti-Black violence and police brutality against radicals—because he had firsthand experience of it as an African American Communist working in Alabama in the 1930s.

Rather than hide bodies broken in confrontations with anti-Communist forces, the radical press instead prominently displayed those bodies as living symbols of their commitment to working class struggles. Some accounts celebrated radical strength and determination to hold fast despite overwhelming opposition, while others lamented the damage done to already depleted manhood and womanhood. An ILD pamphlet on the arrests and convictions of CAWIU organizers in California’s Imperial Valley, for example, described a meeting where a diverse group of workers told of “starvation and sickness...and...long hours of bitter toil under a scorching sun.” Each of these men vowed to “fight under their union’s militant guidance.” That fighting spirit had been tested immediately, as armed vigilantes and police stormed the building, conducted a “violent search,” arrested over one hundred of

⁸²⁵ Hudson and Painter, *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson*, 137.

They Asked For Food—And Got This!



Figure 36: "They Asked for Food--And Got This!" *Western Worker* (US), 30 January 1933. Permission not yet granted.

them, deported most foreign nationals, and charged thirteen with violating California's criminal syndicalism law.⁸²⁶ These "brutally exploited" Mexican, Japanese, Filipino, and African American field hands, author Frank Spector wrote, sometimes "[drop] dead from sunstroke and sheer

exhaustion," yet they demonstrate their mettle each season with strikes and other "rumble[s] of protest" over wages and working conditions.⁸²⁷

As mentioned, the CP considered the struggle for economic justice to be class warfare, and the Communist press often provided photographic evidence that they had indeed been in a violent skirmish. One such image in California's *Western Worker* shows CAWIU organizers Mike Marvos and Pat Calihan looking almost giddy despite obvious injuries to their heads and faces. According to the caption, deputy sheriffs broke Calihan's jaw using the butts of their rifles, and Marvos received the same treatment in his attempt to rescue Calihan. Though probably in considerable pain, both men appeared happy to have survived their foray on the

⁸²⁶ Frank Spector, "Story of the Imperial Valley," International Labor Defense, Reference Center for Marxist Studies Pamphlet Collection, PE.043, box 13, folder 1, WLA.

⁸²⁷ Ibid. The San Francisco-based publication *Pan-Pacific Monthly* featured a shorter but no less complimentary article and included a photograph of the men, all wearing their Sunday best, standing outside the courtroom. Harrison George, "American Farm Workers Battle," *The Pan-Pacific Monthly: Official Organ of the Pan-Pacific Trade Union Secretariat*, June-July 1930, CPGB MS, CP/CENT/INT/73/04, LHASC.

frontlines of the war against capitalist exploitation of the working class.⁸²⁸ This image of bloodied and bandaged Communists demonstrated radical men's willingness to sacrifice their bodies for the sake of the labor movement while simultaneously showing the viciousness of the other side.

So too did the photograph of four members of a Los Angeles Unemployed



Figure 37: "Gallagher and Others Beaten by 'Red Squad,'" *Western Worker* (US), 27 February 1933. Permission not yet granted.

Council (UC) who joined ninety-six others in a protest over relief distribution at the local welfare office. By staging demonstrations against governmental agencies that controlled their economic fates, the UC offered alternative sites for gender construction to men who had lost the primary means by which they created and maintained their masculinity.⁸²⁹

Demonstrators clashed with members of William F. "Red" Hynes's red squad, and Robert Myers, John Hester, Fred Daniels, and William Coper were subsequently beaten and arrested. Taken after their release, this three-quarter image shows Myers, Hester, and Coper swathed in bandages, each sporting facial lacerations and puffy jawlines. The framing is key in that it allows the viewer to see that Daniels, Hester, and Coper also had bloodied and swollen hands, an indication that these three at least gave as good as they got. Only Daniels avoided the gaze of the camera, which could have been an

⁸²⁸ "Strike Leaders Beaten, Jailed," *Western Worker*, 3 July 1933.

⁸²⁹ Faue, *Community of Suffering*, 82.

attempt to avoid recognition or a sign that he was in considerable pain. Combined, the four faces show determination, humility, discomfort, and calm.⁸³⁰

Images of bloodied unemployed and union organizers contrasted sharply with bespectacled radical intellectuals like writer Lincoln Steffens, yet sometimes they were one and the same. To show the ruthlessness of the Los Angeles police department and its



Figure 38: "Fascist Politics!" Stepney Communist Party flier, 4 July 1932. Permission not yet granted.

government-sanctioned red squad, the editors repeatedly published an image of International Labor Defense (ILD) attorney Leo Gallagher, whose round glasses seemed to have survived the beating that he and other LA liberals suffered during a protest over a raid on the local John Reed Club.⁸³¹ Though Gallagher never joined the Communist Party, in many ways he embodied the spirit of radical masculinity—intelligent, committed to the legal defense of the working class, and unafraid to challenge the inhumane policies of the Los Angeles police department.

⁸³⁰ "They Asked for Food—And Got This!" *Western Worker*, 30 January 1933; and "L.A. Red Squad Club, Throw Bombs at Men Asking for Charity," *The Spokesman*, 27 January 1933. *The Spokesman* also published this photograph in their 9 February edition.

⁸³¹ "Gallagher and Others Beaten by 'Red Squad,'" *Western Worker*, 27 February 1933. Founded in October 1929 by the editors of and contributors to the radical literary magazine *The New Masses*, members of the John Reed Club dedicated themselves to the creation of art with "explicit social and political content." For more, see Virginia Hagelstein Marquardt, "'New Masses' and John Reed Club Artists, 1926-1936: Evolution of Ideology, Subject Matter, and Style," *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 12 (Spring, 1989): 56-75; and Eric Homberger, "Proletarian Literature and the John Reed Clubs, 1929-1935," *Journal of American Studies* 13, no. 2 (August 1979): 221-244.

In 1930s London, Communists frequently battled against members of the British Union of Fascists (BUF), and they did so intentionally and with vigor. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Pat Devine relished the opportunity to match wits with BUF soapbox orators, occasionally setting up his own platform within sight of theirs in Bethnal Green's Victoria Park, a green space adjacent to the borough of Hackney, a BUF stronghold in London's East End.⁸³² When the CPGB learned that Mosley planned a BUF rally in Trafalgar Square on 4 July 1932, the Stepney branch (another East End borough) urged people to protest against the use of this space by a "band of ruffians" who would attack innocent young men like the unnamed teenager in figure 38. This flier, intended as a letter to be sent to the Home Secretary, explained that, following a BUF meeting, about 20 Blackshirts attacked this 15-year-old Jewish boy. It describes the beating as brutal, continuing after the young man lost consciousness, and resulted in abrasions, bruising, and the potential loss of an eye. This incident, as reported, was an act of racist violence and not about this young man's political affiliation, but it serves the same rhetorical purpose as news articles about anti-Communist vigilantism because it features an image of a battered worker staring defiantly into the camera, resolutely facing down his enemies.⁸³³

Like their counterparts in the US, the CPGB often encountered police officers who sympathized with their opponents and either stood idly by or actively participated in the melees. During the 1936 Battle of Cable Street, CPGB historian

⁸³² Marriott, *Beyond the Tower*, 305-306. John Marriott suggests that BUF popularity in Hackney was the result of increased internal migration of Jewish families from older areas of settlement in the East End.

⁸³³ "Fascist Politics!" CPGB MS, CP/CENT/SUBJ/04/04, LHASC.

Noreen Branson recalled that law enforcement protected BUF Blackshirts from anti-fascist demonstrators, including clearing the way for their marches by way of “baton charges” and mounted police. Yvonne Kapp and Joyce Goodman agreed, remembering that day in London’s East End as a “series of terrifying onslaughts” by mounted police who “[charged] into the defenceless crowd again and again,” their horses trampling over women in a scene of “absolute terror.”⁸³⁴

Evidence of police and vigilante brutality served the dual purposes of casting radical men as both manly and powerless. By promoting what Elizabeth Faue called a “romantic and heroic perception of violence” in photographs and articles about labor militancy, the CP placed a masculine stamp on their activities and supplied proof for their readers that the radical labor movement was indeed engaged in a war against a formidable enemy.⁸³⁵ Though each bloody lip and broken jaw signaled defeat, in actuality the battered faces of these men demonstrated the cowardice and inhumanity of capitalist forces, and in some respects emasculated the victors while boosting the masculinity of the vanquished.

When the *Daily Worker* (UK) reported that a “hooded band of ruffians” had abducted CPUSA operatives Bob Minor and David Levinson near Gallup, New Mexico, they took pains to make this distinction. Kidnapped and driven to the desert, where they were beaten until “bleeding heavily and almost unconscious,” Minor and

⁸³⁴ Catterall, “Battle of Cable Street,” 109, 126, and 127. See also, “New Fascist Demonstration,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 2 January 1930; “Fighting Unemployment: Utmost Brutality to Stop Marchers: Manchester Struggle in the Streets, Seven Arrested” and “London’s Big Rally: Thousands March to Tower Hill, Police Attack,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 March 1930; and “Fighting Unemployment—Reports from the Centres,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 8 March 1930.

⁸³⁵ Faue, *Community of Suffering*, 73.

Levinson refused to allow this injustice to prevent them from continuing the good fight. Though left to die in an unfamiliar and hostile environment, the two survived thanks to the kindness and assistance of a Navajo man who helped them get medical treatment and a ride back to town.⁸³⁶ This, then, was the ultimate example of radical masculinity, persistence in the face of great adversity and the willingness to accept defeat in the individual battle in the hopes of winning the war.⁸³⁷

Anti-Communists' methods of discouraging radical agitation varied from verbal and physical harassment to arrest and incarceration, the latter frequently part of either/or sentences that gave defendants the option of paying a fine or spending time in jail. Sometimes comrades chose the latter because, as Bob Lovell reportedly told a judge, they "did not subscribe to [those] forms of capitalist justice."⁸³⁸ After the police arrested the CPGB leadership in 1925, Lovell became the de facto head of the CP-affiliated International Class War Prisoners' Aid (ICWPA) and a leader in the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM). This was his second arrest in four months, the first for an ICWPA demonstration at the American Embassy protesting the shooting of textile strikers in Gastonia, North Carolina, and the second for his participation in an NUWM demonstration in Abertillery, Wales. The judge in his first trial bound him over on two sureties of £30, meaning that he suspended Lovell's sentence on the condition that he "keep the peace for six months."⁸³⁹ In

⁸³⁶ "Hooded Fascists in Murder Attack on U.S. Red Leaders," *Daily Worker* (UK), 6 May 1935.

⁸³⁷ Bukharin and Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*.

⁸³⁸ "Police Arrest Bob Lovell: Sequel to Demonstration Against Gastonia, Class 'Justice,'" *Daily Worker* (UK), 8 February 1930.

⁸³⁹ Crown Prosecution Service, "Binding Over Orders," <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/binding-over-orders>, accessed 13 November 2022.

some respects like bail in the US court system, this was an order that Lovell obviously ignored. £60 was roughly the equivalent of £2747 in 2017 or \$5270 today, an exorbitant amount of money for breaching the peace or obstructing the entrance to a building. In other words, Lovell's comment about the capitalist court system may have been sincere, but he probably did not have such a large sum of money lying around the house, and so he went to jail.

And Lovell was not alone in facing this tough decision, as judges in the US and UK typically levied heavy fines and sentences on Communists, trade unionists, and other so-called "radicals." ILD secretary Elaine Black recalled that she paid tens of thousands of dollars to bail out striking workers during the 1934 San Francisco maritime and general strike, usually \$1000 for each charge of vagrancy or picketing and much more for assault on a policeman or strikebreaker. Police even arrested Black as she attempted to bail out several workers, charging her with vagrancy, despite her obvious employment with the International Labor Defense. Within days dozens of prisoners, including Black and Margaret Marshall, began a "hunger and bath" strike in protest over Elaine's unwarranted arrest. Acting Police Chief James Boland reportedly told the prisoners that he did not care if they starved themselves, but they would "take a bath daily if it [had] to be administered with a fire hose."

The strikers acquiesced to the bathing directive and continued the hunger strike for several days, but instead of reducing Black's bail, the judge raised it to \$2200, or about \$46,500 today. Judge Ames later convicted her of vagrancy and sentenced Black to six months in prison. "I was not convicted of vagrancy," she told

reporters, “I was convicted because of my political beliefs.”⁸⁴⁰ Contrast these ridiculous sureties with the fines levied against those convicted of assaulting Communists. Maurice Hobbs was arrested for assaulting 80-year-old white Alabaman W.H. Cole while the elder man was selling copies of the *Daily Worker* (US). Though he pled guilty to the charge, the judge “remitted” his \$1 fine, calling Hobbs’ actions “justifiable.”⁸⁴¹

The ILD, of course, paid Black’s bail because of her important position within the organization, but as was often the case during heightened strike activity, the legal defense organization had to make tough decisions about where to use their limited funds. Which imprisoned comrade needed medical attention that necessitated their release? Did the CP or an affiliated organization need a particular comrade free so they could continue their radical activism? While it is tempting to argue that the CP and ILD chose which comrade to bail out and which to leave in prison for propagandic reasons, there were multiple factors involved in these decisions, not the least of which was how much money they had available to pay these fines.⁸⁴²

Following the arrests of Comrades George Allison, Shepherd, and Frank Paterson for incitement to mutiny at Invergordon in 1931, the CPGB sent a letter to all districts

⁸⁴⁰ “Reds Start Hunger and Bath Strike: Bay City Police Chief Says They May Eat or Not But Must Bathe,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 August, 1934; “Women Join Red Food Strike: Men Jail Inmates Still Stay Hungry But Yield on Bathing Attitude,” 6 August, 1934; and “Red Given Jail Term in Bay City: International Labor Aide, Convicted of Vagrancy, Will Fight Case,” *Los Angeles Times*, 16 August, 1934.

⁸⁴¹ “Spreads Scottsboro Literature: Beaten,” *The Spokesman*, 23 March, 1933.

⁸⁴² Special Branch Report (25 September 1940), Records of the Security Service, KV3/395, TNA. At least one agent believed this of the CPGB. In a report on activities of David, Ted, and Ben Ainley and Harold and Bessie Dickinson during textile strikes in Northern England, he posited, “The Party is undoubtedly trying to urge the government to make martyrs of them, and it will only play into their hands if we move too early.”

indicating that they could no longer afford to pay bail money or fines. “If a Comrade...is given the chance of being bound over or going to prison, he must choose the imprisonment,” they wrote, “as his acceptance of binding over would seriously handicap his work, if carried out, and if his pledge is broken it might bring the Party into disrepute.” The CPGB also advised comrades to collect money for the ILD and not individual prisoners, so that the legal defense teams could distribute money according to the best interests of the Party.⁸⁴³ The *Daily Worker* (UK) followed up this report with an appeal for funds from readers, saying that, in addition



Figure 39: "ILD Winter Dance," *Western Worker*, 20 December 1934. Permission not yet granted.

to Lovell, the Invergordon defendants, and 35 others languishing in jail, there were 41 other comrades awaiting trial, and “hundreds” more across the country who owed fines to the court.⁸⁴⁴

The same financial problem arose in California in 1931 when several cases involving Comrades Frank Waldron (Eugene Dennis), Young, and a few others resulted in forfeiture of bail money, at least \$3000 by Sam Darcy’s account, and he warned the National Office that they

⁸⁴³ Special Branch Report (8 December 1931), Records of the Security Service, KV3/388, TNA.

⁸⁴⁴ “Smash Meerut ‘Frame-Up’: Persecution Strengthens as Crisis Deepens, More Savage Sentences: Ban on Meetings: Police Spying,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 18 December 1931.

were likely to “get an earful” from Anita Whitney when she arrived in New York. Because this money would likely never be repaid, Whitney and several wealthy “sympathizers” refused to offer further assistance, and most comrades had to remain in jail. This made it impossible for the ILD to raise the \$4000 needed to bail out Comrade Kenemotzu before immigration authorities deported him, and they asked that the National Office arrange for a Soviet visa once he arrived in Kobe or Yokohama.⁸⁴⁵ All this occurred while the ILD appealed the sentences of the eight Imperial Valley defendants and labor activist Tom Mooney and tried to have overturned deportation orders for Tetsuju Horiuchi and other foreign nationals.⁸⁴⁶

Similar circumstances prevented them from raising funds in 1934 when police arrested Caroline Decker, Pat Chambers, and sixteen others in California’s Central Valley.⁸⁴⁷ Even before the eighteen were arrested for criminal syndicalism that September, much of the ILD’s coffers had been depleted due to the number of cases stemming from the West Coast maritime strike that ended in early August. Later that month, the *Western Worker* published an appeal for more defense funds for cases being handled by Oakland’s Emergency Committee for Defense of Workers’ Civil Rights. Other than one serious charge of assault with a deadly weapon, ten other activists were being held in the Alameda County Jail for violating an anti-picketing ordinance, disturbing the peace, vagrancy, or the rather innocuous “failure to move

⁸⁴⁵ Sam Darcy to Comrades, 15 May 1931, RGASPI, *fond* 515, *opis* 1, *delo* 2319. \$4,000 dollars is roughly the equivalent of \$77,700 today.

⁸⁴⁶ Spector, “Story of the Imperial Valley.”

⁸⁴⁷ Decker interview, DAF #11.

on.”⁸⁴⁸ Granted, these men and women likely followed the ILD directive to plead not guilty and request a trial by jury in not-so-subtle attempts to clog up the court system. And not all those arrested were Communists, but that was precisely the point. Demanding trials not only created more work for local justice departments; they also gave radicals more publicity and demonstrated to the public that Communists were indeed the vanguard of the proletariat. They willingly slept in strike camps with migrant farmhands, intimidated strikebreaking loom operators and stingy Public Assistance Committee (PAC) members, protested pit closures with the unemployed, and, above all else, confronted law enforcement and vigilantes knowing they would be beaten, arrested, and possibly killed. Not content to offer rhetorical support for the common man, these men and women put themselves at risk for the sake of others, making them heroes to many and dangerous to those who wished to maintain the status quo.

Kenemotzu’s case highlights one conundrum faced by Communists, and that was determining who should be arrested. As Hosea Hudson so aptly put it, “we knowed (sic) somebody would get arrested.” According to Hudson, Communists in the South did not allow their leaders to get arrested “because if the leader in, you got nobody to see about getting the others out.” But they also tried to protect Black comrades because “it was too dangerous for a Negro to speak. They whup him. If he get (sic) in the jail, they might beat him to death.”⁸⁴⁹ Decker and Healey recalled that their age and gender influenced CAWIU decisions about their activism. Though both

⁸⁴⁸ “Funds Needed for Defense,” *Western Worker*, 27 August 1934.

⁸⁴⁹ Hudson and Painter, *Narrative of Hosea Hudson*, 127.

were arrested on numerous occasions, their male comrades sometimes succeeded in protecting them—Decker once during a pear pickers’ strike and Healey when she and Stanley Hancock were arrested during the Imperial Valley, California lettuce strike. In the latter action, limited funds for bail meant that Hancock remained in jail while the nineteen-year-old Healey was released so that she could return to Los Angeles for an abortion.⁸⁵⁰ These examples show that the Party sometimes considered the health, gender, national origin, and race of their operatives even though they often encouraged comrades to plead not guilty and demand trials. Yet, as Hudson surely knew, efforts to protect vulnerable members from violence and/or arrest were often unsuccessful, and many women, people of color, and foreign nationals ended up before the courts facing jailtime and/or deportation.⁸⁵¹

Pat Chambers’ case during that same lettuce strike stands in stark contrast to the treatment received by Healey. Arrested for inciting to riot and organizing a meeting without a permit, Chambers sat in jail while vigilantes burned a workers’ camp and assaulted (and arrested) any attorney who deigned to represent striking workers. Terrified for his life, Chambers accepted a plea deal wherein he promised to

⁸⁵⁰ Decker interview, DAF #3; and Healey, *California Red*, 42-50.

⁸⁵¹ Jennie Cooper, “Workers Must Save 6 Organizers from Atlanta Electric Lynching!” *The Southern Worker*, 25 October 1930. Besides cases involving the national leadership and well-publicized ones for Angelo Herndon, Harry Bridges, and the criminal syndicalism defendants in Oregon and California, there were hundreds more covered in the radical, if not the mainstream press. One example is the 1930 Atlanta case against six organizers: African Americans Herbert Newton and Henry Story, and whites Mary Dalton, Ann Burlak, M.H. Powers, and Joe Carr. For British cases involving women, see “Police Under Fire,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 11 April 1935; “Police Evidence Under Fire: Blaina Case Sensations,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 8 May 1935; “Militant Worker Arrested: Sequel to Activities with Strikers,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 13 November 1930; and “Last Stage of Weavers’ March Commences: Spirits Undaunted by Rain and Hail Storms, Demand for Relief,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 13 November 1930; “Rose Smith Again Arrested: Rose Smith in Prison,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 6 March 1930; and “Rose Smith Fined: Protest Demonstration Outside Court,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 March 1930;

leave town and never return. This did not sit well with the Party, and when he got back to Northern California, they insisted that he go back and serve out his six-month sentence.⁸⁵² Because he was a white man and US citizen, the Party may have believed that he had a higher chance of surviving in the Imperial Valley, or they might have equated his choice to take the plea deal as a sign of diminished manhood.

Magistrates and judges levied outrageous fines against Communists and gave them lengthier sentences, and prison wardens, guards, and matrons made life in prison as difficult as possible. For the crime of not being present when three witnesses signed the petition to get the Communist Party on the California state election ballot, a judge issued Louise Todd a sentence of one to fourteen years in prison, a sentence she claimed shocked even the members of the jury. Though Communism never came up during the trial, this harsh sentence suggests that the judge intended to make Louise an example for other radicals. She recalled that former District Attorney Gillen told her lawyer George Anderson as much after she served two and a half years in Tehachapi Women's Prison.⁸⁵³ Todd's sentence matched that of criminal syndicalism defendants Caroline Decker and Nora Conklin, whose periods of incarceration overlapped at Tehachapi. Such ambiguous judgments gave parole boards considerable power over political prisoners, whose misbehavior while incarcerated, especially any "radical" activity, could result in them serving the full sentence for their alleged crimes. Tehachapi's warden placed the three women in the same cell block with so-called "incurables"—murderers, second-time offenders,

⁸⁵² Olmsted, *Right Out of California*, 93-108.

⁸⁵³ Todd interview, DAF #8.

drug dealers, lesbians, and women who had beaten up prison matrons, thereby increasing the chances that some sort of misconduct would occur.⁸⁵⁴

Courts and Public Assistance Committees in the UK employed similar means to punish radical bodies and thwart their political activism. Let us return to those hundreds of activists fined and/or arrested in the last half of 1931 cited in a December *Daily* (UK) article on heightened police anti-communist activity. Leaving out the more serious charges of incitement to mutiny in the Invergordon case, we see that Len Jeffries got eight months and Reuben Skryme six for “riotous assembly,” Harold and Bessie Dickinson three months for “besetting and watching” a scab’s house in Burnley, and Bob Smith and George Wilson six months’ hard labour for demonstrating against dole cuts. In fact, “riotous assembly,” “inciting a crowd to riot,” and being part of a “riotous mob of evil disposed persons” seemed to be favorites of British law enforcement determined to stop demonstrations and strike activity. To be fair, sometimes protestors did resort to violence, but as the *Daily* pointed out, the police tended to instigate physical confrontations, as happened during pickets against the Coloured Seamen’s Registration Act in Cardiff, Wales.⁸⁵⁵ PACs denied Communists unemployment benefits if they were caught selling CPGB literature as well, as they did for a man hawking copies of the *Daily Worker* (UK) outside a Labour Exchange after registering as available for work. Readers were

⁸⁵⁴ Todd interview, DAF #9.

⁸⁵⁵ “Arab Seamen in the Dock: ‘I Told My Men Not to be Particular,’” *Daily Worker* (UK), 17 September 1930; and “Smash Meerut ‘Frame-Up’: Persecution Strengthens as Crisis Deepens, More Savage Sentences: Ban on Meetings: Police Spying,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 18 December 1931.

reminded that PAC agents needed to be told that Communists had a duty to sell Party literature and did not get paid for their services.⁸⁵⁶

While Communist literature kept readers apprised of the many radical activists in prisons on various, in their minds, trumped up charges, they also celebrated these same workers for being willing to risk their physical health and freedom in support of working-class struggles. After all, many did not believe they had committed a crime. As Dorothy Healey told a hiring committee when she applied for the California Deputy Labor Commissioner job in 1941: “I’m not ashamed of having served a jail sentence. I didn’t violate any law that I would recognize as a law.”⁸⁵⁷ In an article reminding readers that Bob Lovell was still in jail, the *Daily Worker* (UK) praised his “fine fighting record,” including “eight convictions...for working-class activity.” In their opinion, “no man in the movement has fought so strenuously and courageously against police brutality or so fearlessly led the workers in the fight against exploitation and oppression.”⁸⁵⁸ Ernest Woolley, convicted of assault on a policeman during a Workers’ Charter demonstration in Burnley, UK, had been arrested and imprisoned “several times this year...for his activity in leading the mass struggles of

⁸⁵⁶ “Pulled Up for Selling ‘Daily Worker’: Labour Exchange Manager Wrong,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 8 September 1933.

⁸⁵⁷ Dorothy Ray interview for Deputy Labor Commissioner, California State Personnel Board, transcript, February 1940, DRH MS, Box 1, folder 7, UCLA.

⁸⁵⁸ “Send Him a Card on His Birthday: Bob Lovell in Jail: His Fine Fighting Record,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 17 February 1930; “Bob Lovell: Demonstrate for His Release” and “Arrested for Dock Meeting: Policeman Gets ‘Hand-Out’ for Dock Workers,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 18 February 1930; and “Get Lovell Out! Do Your Bit by Sending Cash Now,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 3 March 1930. The Workers’ Charter, a document devised by the CPGB, demanded “more relief schemes such as cleaning of back streets, improvement of lavatory systems, improvement of workers’ homes, and healthier schools for children.”

the workers.”⁸⁵⁹ In announcing their endorsement of Karl Hama (Yoneda) for California Assembly, the *Western Worker* told readers of his previous convictions for labor organizing in Osaka, Japan, and said that he “continued with unbroken militancy” to fight for the working class despite having been “beaten and jailed many times by the Los Angeles Red Squad.”⁸⁶⁰ Such praise served as a signal of commitment to the struggle, a person’s rap sheet their worthiness to advance within the revolutionary ranks. This is precisely why questions about fines, arrests, and prison terms appeared on applications for membership renewal, election to Party offices, and selection for training schools and why operatives sometimes listed them in letters to Party officials.⁸⁶¹

In addition to publicizing their cases and printing the occasional letter from prison, the CPUSA and CPGB supported incarcerated radicals by raising funds for their defense and for luxuries to make their time as comfortable as possible. Appeals for donations and advertisements for fundraising events occasionally included details about the incarcerated like their inmate number, address, and rules about visitations, giving readers all the information they needed to correspond with or see prisoners.⁸⁶²

⁸⁵⁹ “Prison for Fighter: Comrade Woolley Gets Three Months at Burnley, Seven Others Arrested: For Leading Demonstration of Unemployed,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 30 August 1930; and “Six Month’s Hard for Charter Fighter: Heavy Sentences on Burnley Demonstrators,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 30 August 1930.

⁸⁶⁰ “Karl Hama, Japanese Working Class Fighter,” *Western Worker*, 30 August 1934.

⁸⁶¹ David Ainley self-narration, 1952; and Special Branch Report, no date, Records of the Security Service, KV2/3200, TNA.

⁸⁶² “Funds Needed for Defense,” *Western Worker*, 27 August 1934; “I.L.D. Urges You to Write to Labor Prisoners,” *Western Worker*, 10 December 1936; “To Fight for the Prisoners,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 18 December 1931; “Denied a Visit for Another Month: Prison Governor and an Unfortunate Mistake,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 6 September 1933; “Means Test Fight Visited in Prison: Fit and Well and Studying ‘Capital,’” *Daily Worker* (UK), 11 September 1933; and “For Rhondda Prisoners,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 8 March 1930.

In addition to cards and letters, sympathizers mailed them newspapers, pamphlets, and books, sometimes having to disguise the more radical material from prison censors.⁸⁶³ The Party also provided them with the funds to pay for necessities like toothbrushes, combs, and tobacco, the latter a valuable commodity whether the prisoner smoked or not. During their time in Tehachapi Women's prison, District #13 and ILD officials arranged visits for Louise Todd, Nora Conklin, and Caroline Decker, encouraged sympathizers to send cards, letters, and literature of all kinds, and deposited \$5 in their prison commissary accounts each month. They even provided Decker and Todd with typewriters and paper so that they could more easily correspond with loved ones.⁸⁶⁴ Included in *Daily Worker* (UK) profiles of the Meerut prisoners were details of the fundraising done by the National Meerut Prisoners' Defence Committee, who regularly sent them money for their "immediate personal expenses" and larger amounts to pay for their defense.⁸⁶⁵ The *Daily* also advertised group fundraising efforts around the country and applauded individuals like J.R. Campbell who planned and managed many events, including a week-long series of talks, dances, and concerts commemorating the anniversary of their arrest.⁸⁶⁶

⁸⁶³ Louise Todd interview, DAF #9 and #10; "Send Him a Card on His Birthday: Bob Lovell in Jail: His Fine Fighting Record," *Daily Worker* (UK), 17 February 1930; and "Bob Lovell Refused Son's Letter: Prison Governor Applies Censorship on Letters," *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 September 1933.

⁸⁶⁴ Louise Todd interview, DAF #9 and #10.

⁸⁶⁵ "Benn Refuses to Answer: Meerut Frame-up Delayed a Few Days, Workers' Donations," *Daily Worker* (UK), 28 January 1930; Meerut Prisoners Still Without Counsel: £300 Sent to India by National Defence Council, More Wanted, Life of Thengdi," *Daily Worker* (UK), 7 February 1930; "Lives of Meerut Prisoners—4: Militant Worker from England, Saw Indian Conditions in Government Employ," *Daily Worker* (UK), 11 February 1930; and "Lives of the Meerut Prisoners—4 (sic): Leader of the Starving: Workers' and Peasants' Organiser," *Daily Worker* (UK), 18 February 1930.

⁸⁶⁶ "Jarrow's Meerut Campaign: J.R. Campbell Rams Home the Truth," *Daily Worker* (UK), 14 February 1930; "Sabotaging Meerut Defence: Dirty Tricks of Labour Council, "Lefts' Retreat," "Scotland's Meerut Meetings," and "Meerut Defence Meetings: Hanwell and Clapham to Protest

Prisoner health, sometimes even their lives, depended on this assistance from the Party. Louise Todd suffered from anemia—photographs of her show a slender frame that could have been an indication of malnourishment—and Attorney George Anderson’s wife Frances Foster worried how this might be exacerbated in prison. So, she contacted an old college friend who happened to be the doctor at Tehachapi, told her of Louise’s impending incarceration and medical condition, and asked that special care be taken to alleviate any suffering. According to Louise, whenever liver was on the menu, the doctor set aside extra that she made into a “liver shot” with lemon just for Louise.⁸⁶⁷ When police arrested foreign nationals who faced deportation to fascist countries, the Party and ILD worked tirelessly to raise money so that they could voluntarily depart for the Soviet Union. After his arrest in the 17 July 1934 raid on District 13’s headquarters at Ruthenberg House in San Francisco, the Communist Jew Otto Richter received \$200 that enabled him to voluntarily depart for the Soviet Union rather than face deportation to Nazi Germany.⁸⁶⁸ These are just two examples of the ways that the ILD, MOPR, and Communist Parties worked to protect the lives of their incarcerated comrades.

Conclusion

Efforts on behalf of incarcerated members should not be misconstrued as the CPGB and CPUSA romanticizing their suffering. Nor should we imagine that Party

Against Jailing,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 21 January 1930; Meerut Campaign in Lancashire,” “Meerut Week,” and “Hundreds a Day for Trial: Meerut Expenses for Prosecution,” *Daily Worker* (UK), 6 March 1930.

⁸⁶⁷ Louise Todd interview, DAF #8.

⁸⁶⁸ “Save Richter from Deportation to Nazi Death Camp: S.F. Workers Raise Fund for Voluntary Departure to USSR,” *Western Worker*, 30 August 1934.

newspapers glorified victimhood by covering their trials and sponsoring campaigns to raise money for their defense. Instead, these measures should be seen for what they were, sincere efforts by a Party and its organs to let the world know that these were not imaginary bomb-throwing radicals but hardworking people like themselves who willingly and resolutely went against the forces of capitalism in pursuit of a more equitable future.

Conclusion

[Clara Zetkin] was a fine orator and spoke with a strong resonant voice. Though she suffered from a heart ailment, she never spared herself. I have seen her talk until she dropped unconscious. At such times her son, who was always with her, would revive her, and then she would continue.⁸⁶⁹

By the time International Publishers released Ella Reeve “Mother” Bloor’s autobiography in 1940, every Communist in the United States and Great Britain knew of Clara Zetkin and her leadership in the German Socialist and later German Communist Parties. They had read reports of her interviews with Vladimir Lenin, transcriptions of her speeches before Comintern World Congresses, articles with her thoughts on the Woman Question, and tributes to her unwavering leadership in the international Communist movement. They knew that as the oldest elected official in the Reichstag, a “weak and frail” Zetkin had opened the 1932 session with a speech railing against “Nazi brutality” and urging Germans to unite in the fight against fascism. Bloor’s characterization added to Zetkin’s reputation as a bonny fighter in ways that resonate with concepts of the model Comrade and the idealized embodiment of Communism. This, Bloor contends, was a woman who sacrificed her own physical health to spread the socialist message, who wrote and spoke eloquently and purposefully on behalf of women and the proletariat even as her body failed her, who once told Bloor that she only wished to have the strength to do more.⁸⁷⁰

Far from the only example, Zetkin was one among many lauded in the Communist press for their commitment and their sacrifice in the name of a socialist

⁸⁶⁹ Bloor, *We Are Many*, 176.

⁸⁷⁰ Ibid.

future. Bloor, as much as Zetkin, served as a role model for the younger generation of activists. Her decades-long experience as a labor organizer and proponent of socialism impressed even Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, herself a veteran of radical activism with the Industrial Workers of the World and Communist Party of the United States. In her introduction to Bloor's book, Flynn dared anyone who doubted Bloor's youthful exuberance and commitment to "try to keep up with her for twenty-four hours any day and find out for themselves" that she "will never be too old to dream, to laugh, [and] to fight...[for] socialism in the America of her forefathers."⁸⁷¹ As members of a transnational community opposed to capitalist society in every way and who expressed that opposition both intellectually and physically, these three women personified Michael Warner's notion of a counterpublic. Revolutionary socialists to the core, Zetkin, Bloor, and Flynn served as models of embodied Communism and their life stories effective demonstrations of what that entailed.

The Communist International and its affiliates included stories of such dedication in pamphlets, newspapers, and other ephemera that encouraged members to follow these leaders' example. They urged readers not only to learn about Marxism through self-study but also to promote it on the soapbox and in the picket line. This literature consistently reminded members that the Communist Party was a party of action and that true Communists combined intellectual growth with activism. They advised members to demonstrate their commitment to socialism in their personal and professional lives, to make their bodies political instruments at sporting

⁸⁷¹ Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Introduction," in Bloor, *We Are Many*, 12.

events, at anti-fascist protests, and during strike activities. Though the CPUSA and CPGB may have hesitated to admit it, they also expected employees to work longer hours for less pay, to endure harassment and surveillance by vigilantes and law enforcement, and to experience the occasional separation from loved ones. Finally, the press celebrated lesser-known figures who exemplified the ideal, publishing detailed accounts of perseverance in the face of defeat, yes, but also those rare moments when Communists and Communism emerged victorious.

Many, though not all, took that call to action very seriously. They attended classes at labor schools, voraciously read Party literature, and then climbed atop that soapbox and loudly proclaimed their support for Communism, sometimes within sight of violent opponents. They eschewed conventional gender norms, physically marking themselves as social outsiders. For the women especially, outsider status was defined by absence—the face without makeup, the hand missing a wedding ring, the childless heterosexual relationship. The athletically inclined joined radical sports leagues not simply as a way of getting exercise or socializing with comrades, but to use their bodies to promote Communist causes or protest social injustices like bans on Sunday games or the unlawful convictions of Black men in the Jim Crow United States.

Like others in marginalized communities, simply being a member of the CPUSA or CPGB exposed radical bodies to verbal and physical harassment, yet it was often paid operatives who suffered the most. Granted, the requirements of the job sometimes made it impossible to avoid brushes with law enforcement and

vigilantes, and most functionaries met that opposition with an iron will forged by Communist discipline. Without that discipline, made manifest through self-study and Bolshevik criticism, there would have been little incentive to perform Communism on the footpaths of Northern England and the sidewalks of Harlem. Without that discipline, few would have accepted employment that all but guaranteed insufficient wages and government surveillance. Without that discipline, they may not have been capable of withstanding family separation and the stress of knowing that their next action might be the one that sent them to hospital or prison. Not every person who made the decision to join the Communist Party of Great Britain or the United States expected to be detained by police, beaten up by fascists, or killed for their beliefs. But, as this dissertation has shown, they did understand rather quickly that their lives, indeed their bodies, would be irrevocably changed by the experience.

Bibliography

Manuscript Collections

- Archive of the Communist Party of the USA. Microfilm. Green Library, Stanford University Libraries.
- Books, Pamphlets, and Periodicals Collection. Marx Memorial Library. London, UK.
- Clive Branson Manuscript Collection. Marx Memorial Library. London, UK.
- Communist Party of the United States of America Papers. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. New York University Libraries.
- Communist Party of Great Britain Papers. Labour History Archive and Study Centre. People's History Museum. Manchester, UK.
- Communist Periodicals. Working Class Movement Library. Salford, UK.
- Samuel Adams Darcy Papers. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. New York University Libraries.
- Simon W. and Sophie Gerson Papers. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. New York University Libraries.
- Sophie M. Gerson Letters to Simon W. Gerson. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. New York University Libraries.
- James E. Jackson and Esther Cooper Jackson Papers. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. New York University Libraries.
- Herb Lerner World War II Letters to Ruth Lerner. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. New York University Libraries.
- London Metropolitan Police Files. National Archives. Kew, UK.
- Ivor Montagu Papers. Labour History Archive and Study Centre. People's History Museum. Manchester, UK.
- Thomas J. Mooney Manuscript Collection. Bancroft Library. University of California. Berkeley, CA.
- Security Service Files. National Archives. Kew, UK.

Spanish Civil War and International Brigade Collection. Working Class Movement Library. Salford, UK.

Spanish Collection. Marx Memorial Library. London, UK.

Alfred Wagenknecht and Hortense Allison and Helen and Carl Winter Family Papers. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives. New York University Libraries.

Newspapers and Periodicals

Boots: National Clarion Cycling Club

Chicago Defender

Columbia Spectator

Los Angeles Times

New Sport and Play

New York Times

San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco Call-Bulletin

The Daily Worker (UK)

The Daily Worker (US)

The Labour Monthly

The Negro Worker

The Southern Worker

The Spokesman

The Stanford Daily

The Workers Weekly

Volunteer for Liberty

The Worker Sportsman

The Young Worker

Times of India

Times of London

Washington Post

Western Worker

Woman Worker

Women Today

Workers Life

Online Databases

British Cartoon Archive. University of Kent. <https://www.kent.ac.uk/library-it/special-collections/british-cartoon-archive>.

British Newspapers Online. <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>.

Ernie Lazar FOIA Collection: Communist Party of the USA. Internet Archive. https://archive.org/details/ernie1241_cpusa.

Legislation.gov.uk. National Archives. Kew, U.K. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/>.

Marxist Internet Archive. <https://www.marxists.org/english.htm>.

Our Documents. National Archives. Washington, D.C. <https://www.archives.gov/>.

Memoires and Oral Histories

Ainley, Ben and Audrey. Interview by Ruth and Eddie Frow. TAPE/028 and TAPE/218, 1968. Working Class Movement Library, Salford, United Kingdom.

- Amter, Israel and Sadie. Israel and Sadie Amter Autobiographical Typescript. TAM.079. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
- Baruch, Hilda. TAPE/127, 1984. Working Class Movement Library, Salford, United Kingdom.
- Bloor, Ella Reeve. *We Are Many*. New York: International Publishers, 1940.
- Brewster, Frieda Truhar. "A Personal View of the Early Left in Pittsburgh, 1907-1923." *The Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 69, no. 4 (October 1986): 343-365.
- Cornford, John. *John Cornford: A Memoir*. Edited by Pat Sloan. Dunfermline, Fife: Borderline Press, 1938.
- Dennis, Peggy. *The Autobiography of an American Communist: a personal view of a political life*. Westport: Lawrence Hill & Co., 1977.
- Dickinson, Harold and Bessie. TAPE/033. Working Class Movement Library, Salford, United Kingdom.
- Edelman McAdory, Mildred. Communist Party of the United States of America Oral History Collection. OH.065. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University. Accessed 23 November 2022. <https://digitaltamiment.hosting.nyu.edu/s/cpoh/item/3964>.
- Finley, Margaret. TAPE/122. Working Class Movement Library, Salford, United Kingdom.
- Gadian, Margaret. TAPE/331. Working Class Movement Library, Salford, United Kingdom.
- Gerson, Simon. Communist Party of the United States of America Oral History Collection. OH.065. Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University. Accessed 23 November 2022. <https://digitaltamiment.hosting.nyu.edu/s/cpoh/item/3974>.
- Gladstein, Caroline Decker. Interview by Dorothy Sue Cobble, 1976, California Historical Society, "The Twentieth Century Trade Union Woman: Vehicle for Social Change," Wayne State University. Accessed 23 November 2022. https://archive.org/details/chi_000011.

- Haywood, Harry, *A Black Communist in the Freedom Struggle: The Life of Harry Haywood*. Gwendolyn Midlo Hall, editor. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.
- Healey, Dorothy Ray and Maurice Isserman. *California Red: A Life in the American Communist Party*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Hudson, Hosea and Nell Irvin Painter. *The Narrative of Hosea Hudson: His Life as a Negro Communist in the South*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.
- Hyde, Douglas. *I Believed: The Autobiography of a former British Communist*. London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1951.
- Kaross, Sonia Baltrun. Interview by Lucille Kendall for the California Historical Society's Women in California Collection, 1977. Accessed 23 November 2022. https://archive.org/details/chi_00003.
- Lambert, Louise Todd. Interview by Lucy Kendall for the California Historical Society's Women in the Trade Union Movement Project, 1976. Accessed 26 November 26, 2022. https://archive.org/details/chi_00006/chi_00006_t01_a_access.mp3.
- Levine, Maurice. TAPE/078. Working Class Movement Library, Salford, United Kingdom.
- O'Reilly, Salaria Kee. Interview by John Gerassi for the John Gerassi Oral History Collection. Abraham Lincoln Brigade Association. ALBA.AUDIO.018. Tamiment/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives, New York University.
- Orr, Violet. Interview by Lucy Kendall for California Historical Society's Women in California Collection, 1977. Accessed 23 November 2022. https://archive.org/details/chi_00009.
- Roche, Gertie. TAPE/022. Working Class Movement Library, Salford, United Kingdom.
- Rothman, Benny. *The Battle for Kinder Scout: Including the 1932 Mass Trespass*. Cheshire: Willow Publishing, 2012.
- Yoneda, Elaine Black. Interview by Lucy Kendall for the California Historical Society's Women in the Trade Union Movement Project, 1976, transcript, Labor Archives & Research Center, San Francisco State University, San Francisco.

Published Primary Sources

Adi, Hakim and Merika Sherwood, eds. *The 1945 Manchester Pan-African Congress Revisited*. London: New Beacon Books, 1995.

Ballou, Robert O. *A History of the Council on Books in Wartime*. New York: Country Life Press, 1946.

Carroll, Peter N., Michael Nash, and Melvin Small, eds. *The Good Fight Continues: World War II Letters from the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Firsov, Fridrikh I., Harvery Klehr, and John Earl Haynes. *Secret Cables of the Comintern, 1933-1943*. Translated by Lynn Visson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Foster, William Z. *History of the Communist Party of the United States*. Accessed 11 September 2020. <http://williamzfoster.blogspot.com/2013/01/chapter-thirty-communist-political.html>.

Hearings Before the Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-third Congress, First Session, December 5, 1953. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1954.

Jamieson, John. *Editions for the Armed Services, Inc.: A History: Together with the Complete List of 1324 Books Published for American Armed Forces Overseas*. New York: Editions for the Armed Services, Inc., 1948.

Kollontai, Alexandra. *Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Writings*. Edited by Alix Holt. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1977.

Secondary Sources

Adi, Hakim. *Pan-Africanism and Communism: The Communist International, Africa, and the Diaspora, 1919-1939*. Trenton: Africa World Press, 2013.

Alano, Jamarie. "Armed with a Yellow Mimosa: Women's Defence and Assistance Groups in Italy, 1943-1945." *Journal of Contemporary History* (2003): 615-631.

- Alexander, Michelle. *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. New York: The New Press, 2012.
- Anderson, Bonnie. *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830-1860*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Anderson, Warwick. "Only Man is Vile." In *Colonial Pathologies: American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*, 74-129. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Andrews, Molly. *Lifetimes of Commitment: Aging, Politics, Psychology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
- Anthony, David Henry III. *Max Yergan: Race Man, Internationalist, Cold Warrior*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.
- Apps, Jerry. *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Wisconsin: Nature's Army at Work*. Madison: Wisconsin Historical Society, 2019.
- Ashwin, Sarah, ed. *Gender, State, and Society in Soviet and post-Soviet Russia*. London: Routledge, 2000.
- Attwood, Lynne. *Creating the New Soviet Woman: Women's Magazines as Engineers of Female Identity, 1922-1953*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- _____. *Gender and Housing in Soviet Russia: Private Life in a Public Space*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010.
- Baldrige, Kenneth W. *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Utah, 1933-1942: Remembering Nine Years of Achievement*. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2019.
- Ballantyne, Tony. *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.
- _____. *Webs of Empire: Locating New Zealand's Colonial Past*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012.
- Barrett, James R. "Americanization from the Bottom Up: Immigration and the Remaking of the Working Class in the United States, 1880-1930." In *History from the Bottom Up & Inside Out: Ethnicity, Race, and Identity in Working-Class History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

- Bauerkämper, Arnd and Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe, eds. *Fascism Without Borders: Transnational Connections and Cooperation Between Movements and Regimes in Europe from 1918-1945*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017.
- Baxell, Richard. *British Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War: The British Battalion in the International Brigades, 1936-1939*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Beers, Laura. *Red Ellen: The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Bender, Thomas, ed. *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Bernstein, Frances Lee. *The Dictatorship of Sex: Lifestyle Advice for the Soviet Masses*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2007.
- Blackmon, Douglas A. *Slavery By Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II*. London: Anchor Books, 2008.
- Blee, Kathleen. *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.
- Bonnell, Victoria E. "Peasant Women in Political Posters of the 1930s," and "The Leader's Two Bodies: Iconography of the Vozhd." In *Iconography of Power: Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin*, 100-185 and 297-318. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Brooks, Barbara. *Abortion in England, 1900-1967*. Second Edition. London: Routledge, 2013.
- Brown, Kathleen. *Foul Bodies: Cleanliness in Early America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.
- Brown, Peter. "The Desert Fathers: Anthony to John Climacus." In *Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity*, 213-240. New York: Columbia University Press, 1988.
- Brown, Vincent. *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Bruley, Sue. *Leninism, Stalinism, and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1920-1939*. New York: Routledge, 2013.

- Bullock, Ian. *Romancing the Revolution: The Myth of Soviet Democracy and the British Left*. Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011.
- Butler, Judith. *Undoing Gender*. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Bynum, Caroline. "Why All the Fuss about the Body? A Medievalist's Perspective." *Critical Inquiry* 22 (1995): 1-33.
- Catterall, Peter. "The Battle of Cable Street." *Contemporary British History* 8, no. 1 (Summer 1994): 105-132.
- Cherny, Robert W. "The Communist Party in California, 1935-1940: From the Political Margins to the Mainstream and Back." *American Communist History* 4, no. 1 (2010): 3-33.
- _____. "Prelude to the Popular Front: The Communist Party in California." *American Communist History* 1, no. 1 (2002): 5-42.
- _____. *Victor Arnautoff and the Politics of Art*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017.
- Chowdhuri, Satyabrata Rai. *Leftism in India, 1917-1947*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- Clements, Barbara Evans. *Bolshevik Feminist: The Life of Aleksandra Kollontai*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979.
- Clements, Barbara Evans, Barbara Alpern Engel, and Christine Worobec, eds. *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Cohen, Lizabeth. *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1930*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Cohen, Phil. *Children of the Revolution: Communist Childhood in Cold War Britain*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997.
- Conkin, Paul K. *The New Deal*, Third Edition. Wheeling: Harlan Davidson, 1992.
- Critchlow, Donald T. and Charles H. Parker, eds. *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998.

- Darlington, Ralph. *The Political Trajectory of J.T. Murphy*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1998.
- David-Fox, Michael. *Showcasing the Great Experiment: Cultural Diplomacy and Western Visitors to the Soviet Union, 1921-1941*. London: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Davies, Carol Boyce. *Left of Karl Marx: The Political Life of Black Communist Claudia Jones*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Davies, R.W., Oleg V. Khlevnyuk, and Stephen G. Wheatcroft. *The Years of Progress: The Soviet Economy, 1934-1936*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
- Davis, Rebecca L. "‘Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry’: The Companionate Marriage Controversy." *The Journal of American History* (March 2008): 1137-1163.
- Denning, Michael. *The Cultural Front: The Laboring of American Culture in the Twentieth Century*. London: Verso, 1996.
- Dixler, Elsa Jane. "The Woman Question: Women and the American Communist Party, 1929-1941." Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974. ProQuest (AAT 751529).
- Donnelly, Peter. "The Paradox of Parks: Politics of Recreational Land Use Before and After the Mass Trespasses." *Leisure Studies* 5, no. 2 (1986): 211-231.
- Drachewych, Oleksa. *The Communist International, Anti-Imperialism, and Racial Equality in British Dominions*. New York: Routledge, 2019.
- Draper, Theodore. *American Communism and Soviet Russia: The Formative Period*. New York: The Viking Press, 1960.
- _____. *Roots of American Communism*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Dyl, Joanna. "Transience, Labor, and Nature: Itinerant Workers in the American West." *International Labor and Working-Class History* no. 85 (Spring 2014): 97-117.
- Edmondson, Linda Harriet, ed. *Gender in Russian History and Culture*. New York: Palgrave, 2001.

- Engel, Barbara Alpern. *Women in Russia, 1700-2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Engelstein, Laura. *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-De-Siècle Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Erai, Michelle F. "In the Shadow of Manaia: Colonial Narratives of Violence Against Māori Women, 1820-1870." PhD diss. University of California, Santa Cruz, 2007.
- España-Maram, Linda. *Creating Masculinities in Los Angeles's Little Manila: Working Class Filipinos and Popular Culture, 1920s-1950s*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006.
- Espinosa, Emanuel Nicholas Bourges. "Managing Industrial Discontent in Britain, 1927-1930: The Industrial Cooperation Talks and the Segregation of the National Unemployed Workers' Movement," *Labor History* 62, nos. 5-6 (2021): 742-761.
- Fabian, Ann. *The Skull Collectors: Race, Science, and America's Unburied Dead*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010.
- Fahy, Thomas. "Worn, Damaged Bodies in Literature and Photography of the Great Depression." *The Journal of American Culture* 26, no. 1 (March 2003): 2-16.
- Faue, Elizabeth. *Community of Suffering & Struggle: Women, Men, and the Labor Movement in Minneapolis, 1915-1945*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1991.
- Field, John. *Working Men's Bodies: Work Camps in Britain, 1880-1940*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013.
- Fisher, Kate. *Birth Control, Sex, and Marriage in Britain, 1918-1960*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- Fitzpatrick, Sheila. "Sex and Revolution." In *The Cultural Front: Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995.
- Gilbert, James. *Men in the Middle: Searching for Masculinity in the 1950s*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005.

- Gilman, Sander. *The Jew's Body*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Glazer, Nathan. *The Social Basis of American Communism*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1961.
- Goldman, Wendy Z. *Women At the Gates: Gender and Industry in Stalin's Russia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Gore, Dayo F. *Radicalism at the Crossroads: African American Women Activists in the Cold War*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.
- Goscilo, Helena and Andrea Lanoux, eds. *Gender and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Russian Culture*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois Press, 2006.
- Gosse, Van. "Red Feminism: A Conversation with Dorothy Healey." *Science & Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter 2002-2003): 511-518.
- Green, Rodney D. and Michael S. Isaacson. "Communists and the Fight for Jobs and Revolution." *Review of Black Political Economy* 39, no. 1 (March 2012): 155-173.
- Griffith, R. Marie. *Born Again Bodies: Flesh and Spirit in American Christianity*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Hallas, Duncan. *The Comintern*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008.
- Harker, Ben. *The Chronology of Revolution, 1920-1940: Communism, Culture, and Civil Society in Twentieth Century Britain*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2021.
- Hawley, Ellis W. "Herbert Hoover, Associationalism, and the Great Depression Relief Crisis of 1930-1933." In *With Us Always: A History of Private Charity and Public Welfare*, edited by Donald T. Critchlow and Charles H. Parker, 125-146. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1998.
- Healey, Dan. *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia: The Regulation of Sexual and Gender Dissent*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Hill, Rebecca. *Men, Mobs, and Law: Anti-Lynching and Labor Defense in U.S. Radical History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Hoffman, Matthew B. and Henry F. Srebrnik, eds. *A Vanished Ideology: Essays on the Jewish Communist Movement in the English-Speaking World in the Twentieth Century*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2016.

- Homberger, Eric. "Proletarian Literature and the John Reed Clubs 1929-1935." *Journal of American Studies* 13, no. 2 (August 1979): 221-244.
- Jarvis, Christina S. *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity during World War II*. DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2004.
- Jensen, Erik N. *Body by Weimar: Athletes, Gender, and German Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Johanningsmeier, Edward P. "The Trade Union Unity League: American Communists and the Transition to Industrial Unionism: 1928-1934," *Labor History* 42, no. 2 (2001): 159-177.
- Kaganovsky, Lilya. *How the Soviet Man Was Unmade: Cultural Fantasy and Male Subjectivity Under Stalin*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2014.
- Kaier, Christina and Eric Naiman, eds. *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006.
- Kasson, John F. "Who is the Perfect Man? Eugene Sandow and a New Standard for America." In *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2002.
- Kelley, Robin D.G. *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1990.
- Kenefick, William. *Red Scotland! The Rise and Fall of the Radical Left, c. 1872-1932*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007.
- Kimmel, Michael. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. New York: The Free Press, 1996.
- Klehr, Harvey. *Communist Cadre: The Social Background of the American Communist Elite*. Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978.
- _____. *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1984.
- Klehr, Harvey, John Earl Haynes, and Kyrill M. Anderson. *The Secret World of American Communism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

- _____. *The Soviet World of American Communism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- Knaff, Donna B. *Beyond Rosie the Riveter: Women of World War II in American Popular Graphic Art*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012.
- Koureas, Gabriel. *Memory, Masculinity and National Identity in British Visual Culture, 1914-1930: A Study of 'Unconquerable Manhood.'* Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007.
- Koven, Seth. *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Kraditor, Aileen S. *Jimmy Higgins: The Mental World of the American Rank-and-File Communist, 1930-1958*. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.
- Laderman, Gary. "The Body Politic and the Politics of Two Bodies: Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln in Death," *Prospects: An Annual of American Cultural Studies* 22 (Cambridge University Press, 1997): 109-132.
- Lawrence, Paul. "The Vagrancy Act (1824) and the Persistence of Pre-Emptive Policing in England Since 1750." *British Journal of Criminology* 57, no. 3 (May 2017): 513-531.
- Laybourn, Keith and Dylan Murphy. *Under the Red Flag: A History of Communism in Britain, c. 1849-1991*. Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing Limited, 1999.
- Leab, Daniel J. "'United We Eat': The Creation and Organization of the Unemployed Councils in 1930." *Labor History* 8, no. 3 (1967): 300-315.
- Levine, Philippa. "States of Undress: Nakedness and the Colonial Imagination." *Victorian Studies* 50 (2008): 189-219.
- Lichtenstein, Alexander C. *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South*. London: Verso, 1996.
- Lieberman, Robbie. *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anticommunism, and the U.S. Peace Movement, 1945-1963*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000.
- Lincove, David A. "Activists for Internationalism: ALA Responds to World War II and British Requests for Aid, 1939-1941." *Libraries and Culture* 26, vol. 3 (Summer 1991): 487-510.

- Linehan, Thomas P. "'On the Side of Christ': Fascist Clerics in 1930s Britain." *Politics, Religion, and Ideology* 8, no. 2 (2007): 287-301.
- _____. *East London for Mosley: The British Union of Fascists in East London and South-west Essex*. London: Frank Cass, 1996.
- Livers, Keith. *Constructing the Stalinist Body: Fictional Representations of Corporeality in the Stalinist 1930s*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.
- Logan, Gabe. "C'mon, You Reds: The U.S. Communist Party's Workers' Soccer Association, 1927-1935." *Journal of Sport History* 44, no. 3 (Fall 2017): 384-398.
- _____. "Playing for the People: Labor Sport Union Athletic Clubs in the Lake Superior/Iron Range, 1927-1936." *Upper Country: A Journal of the Lake Superior Range* 4, no. 3 (2016): 44-82.
- MacIntyre, Stuart. *The Reds: The Communist Party of Australia from Origins to Illegality*. St. Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998.
- Maher, Neil M. *Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the American Environmental Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Mangan, J.A., ed. *Shaping the Superman: Fascist Body at Political Icon—Aryan Fascism*. London: Frank Cass, 1999.
- _____, ed. *Superman Supreme: Fascist Body at Political Icon—Global Fascism*. London: Frank Cass, 2000.
- Manjapra, Kris. *Age of Entanglement: German and Indian Intellectuals across Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Manzer, Habib. "British Measures Against Indian Communists, 1934-1937." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 64 (2004): 776-783.
- Marquardt, Virginia Hagelstein. "'New Masses' and John Reed Club Artists, 1926-1936: Evolution of Ideology, Subject Matter, and Style." *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 12 (Spring, 1989): 56-75.
- Marriott, John. "Recession, Mass Culture, and the Entrepreneurial Spirit, 1920-1939." In *Beyond the Tower: A History of East London*, 269-321. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011.

- Matera, Marc. *Black London: The Imperial Metropolis and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015.
- May, Matthew S. *Soapbox Rebellion: The Hobo Orator Union and the Free Speech Fights of the Industrial Workers of the World, 1909-1916*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2013.
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. New York: Routledge, 1995.
- McDevitt, Patrick F. *May the Best Man Win: Sport, Masculinity, and Nationalism in Great Britain and the Empire, 1880-1935*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.
- McDuffie, Erik S. *Sojourning for Freedom: Black Women, American Communism, and the Making of Black Left Feminism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011.
- McIlroy, John, and Alan Campbell. "The Leadership of British Communism, 1923-1928: Pages from a Prosopographical Project." *Labor History* (June 2021): 1-47.
- _____. "The Leadership of American Communism, 1924-1929: Sketches for a Prosopographical Portrait." *American Communism* 19, nos. 1-2 (2020): 1-50.
- McIver, Arthur. "'A Crusade for Capitalism': The Economic League, 1919-1939." *Journal of Contemporary History* 23, no. 4 (1988): 631-655.
- Melosh, Barbara. *Engendering Culture: Manhood and Womanhood in New Deal Public Art and Theater*. Washington: Smithsonian Institute Press, 1991.
- Meyer, Jessica. *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.
- Michels, Tony. *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005.
- Mishler, Paul C. *Raising Reds: The Young Pioneers, Radical Summer Camps, and Communist Political Culture in the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

- Moran, Michelle T. *Colonizing Leprosy: Imperialism and the Politics of Public Health in the United States*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Moran, Rachel Louise. *Governing Bodies: American Politics and the Shaping of the Modern Physique*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018.
- Morgan, Kevin. *Harry Pollitt*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993.
- _____. *International Communism and the Cult of the Individual: Leaders, Tribunes, and Martyrs under Lenin and Stalin*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.
- Morgan, Kevin, Gidon Cohen, and Andrew Flinn. *Communists and British Society, 1920-1991*. London: Rivers Oram Press, 2007.
- Naison, Mark. *Communists in Harlem during the Depression*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983.
- Nelson, David. *How the New Deal Built Florida Tourism: The Civilian Conservation Corps and State Parks*. Tallahassee: University Press of Florida, 2019.
- Nuttall, Sarah. *Entanglement: Literary and Cultural Reflections on Post-Apartheid*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009.
- O'Connor, Emmet. *Reds and the Green: Ireland, Russia, and the Communist Internationals, 1919-1943*. Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2004.
- Oldstone-Moore, Christopher. *Of Beards and Men: The Revealing History of Facial Hair*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- _____. "The Beard Movement in Victorian Britain." *Victorian Studies* 48, no. 1 (Fall 2005): 7-34.
- Olmsted, Kathryn S. "British and US Anticommunism Between the Wars." *Journal of Contemporary History* 53, no. 1 (2018): 89-108.
- _____. *Right Out of California: The 1930s and the Big Business Roots of Modern Conservatism*. New York: The New Press, 2015.
- Pasquill, Robert. *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Alabama, 1933-1942: A Great and Lasting Good*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2008.

- Pennybacker, Susan D. *From Scottsboro to Munich: Race and Political Culture in 1930s Britain*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Perry, Matt. *Bread and Work: Social Policy and the Experience of Unemployment, 1918-1939*. London: Pluto Press, 2000.
- Phelan, Craig. *Grand Master Workman: Terence Powderly and the Knights of Labor*. Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000.
- Pivens, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward. *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.
- Pons, Silvio. *The Global Revolution: A History of International Communism*. Translated by Allan Cameron. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.
- Quinlan, Kevin. *The Secret War Between the Wars: MI5 in the 1920s and 1930s*. Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2014.
- Rafeek, Neil. *Communist Women in Scotland: Red Clydeside from the Russian Revolution to the end of the Soviet Union*. London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2008.
- Reagan, Leslie J. *When Abortion Was a Crime: Women, Medicine, and Law in the United States, 1867-1973*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Richardson, R. Dan. *Comintern Army: The International Brigades and the Spanish Civil War*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2014.
- Rippelmeyer, Kay. *The Civilian Conservation Corps in Southern Illinois, 1933-1942*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015.
- Roiphe, Rebecca. "Lawyering at the Extremes: The Representation of Tom Mooney, 1916-1939." *Fordham Law Review* 77, no. 4 (2009): 1731-1762.
- Ruiz, Vicki L. *Cannery Women, Cannery Lives: Mexican Women, Unionization, and the California Food Processing Industry, 1930-1950*. Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico, 1987.
- _____. "Una Mujer sin Fronteras: Louisa Moreno and Latina Labor Activism." *Pacific Historical Review* 73, no. 1 (2004): 1-20.
- Ryle, J. Martin. "International Red Aid and Comintern Strategy, 1922-1926." *International Review of Social History* 15, no. 1 (1970): 43-68.

- Selvin, David F. *A Terrible Anger: The 1934 Waterfront and General Strikes in San Francisco*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996.
- Shaikh, Juned. "Translating Marx: *Mavail*, Dalit and the Making of Mumbai's Working Class, 1928-1935." *Economic & Political Weekly* XLVI, no. 31 (30 June 2011): 65-73.
- Sherwood, Marika. "The Comintern, the CPGB, Colonies, and Black Britons, 1920-1938." *Science & Society* 60, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 137-163.
- Shulman, Max. "Beaten, Battered, and Brawny: American Variety Entertainers and the Working-Class Body." In *Working in the Wings: New Perspectives on Theatre History and Labor*, eds. Elizabeth A. Osborne and Christine Woodworth, 179-204. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2015.
- Slaughter, Jane. *Women and the Italian Resistance, 1943-1945*. Denver: Arden Press, 1997.
- Slavishak, Edward. *Bodies of Work: Civic Display and Labor in Industrial Pittsburgh*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Smith, Andrew W.M. and Chris Jeppesen, eds. *Britain, France, and the Decolonization of Africa: Future Imperfect?* London: UCL Press, 2017.
- Smith, Evan. *British Communism and the Politics of Race*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Smith, S.A. *Russia in Revolution: An Empire in Crisis, 1890-1928*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Solinger, Rickie. *Pregnancy and Power: A Short History of Reproductive America*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2005.
- Steele, Tom and Richard Taylor. "Marxism and Adult Education in Britain." *Policy Futures in Education* 2, nos. 3 & 4 (2004): 578-592.
- Stein, Sarah Abrevaya. *Extraterritorial Dreams: European Citizenship, Sephardi Jews, and the Ottoman Twentieth Century*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Stepan-Norris, Judith and Maurice Zeitlin. *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

- Stevens, Margaret. *Red International and Black Caribbean: Communists in New York City, Mexico, and the West Indies, 1919-1939*. London: Pluto Press, 2017.
- Stoker, Paul. "‘The Imperial Spirit’: British Fascisms and Empire, 1919-1940." *Religious Compass* 9, no. 2 (2015).
- Storch, Randi. *Red Chicago: American Communism at Its Roots, 1928-1935*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
- Storrs, Landon R.Y. *The Second Red Scare and the Unmaking of the New Deal Left*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2013.
- Streeby, Shelley. *Radical Sensations: World Movements, Violence, and Visual Culture*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Street, Richard Steven. "Lange’s Antecedents: The Emergence of Social Documentary Photography of California’s Farmworkers." *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (August 2006): 385-428.
- Studer, Brigitte. *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*. Translated by Dafydd Rees Roberts. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Szreter, Simon and Kate Fisher. *Sex Before the Sexual Revolution: Intimate Life in England, 1918-1963*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Thorpe, Andrew. *The British Communist Party and Moscow, 1920-43*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000.
- _____. "Comintern ‘Control’ of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1943." *The English Historical Review* 113, no. 452 (June 1998): 637-662.
- _____. "The Membership of the Communist Party of Great Britain, 1920-1945." *The Historical Journal* 43, no. 3 (September 2000): 777-800.
- Thurlow, Richard C. "The Straw that Broke the Camel’s Back: Public Order, Civil Liberties, and the Battle of Cable Street." *Jewish Culture and History* 1, no. 2 (1998): 74-94.
- Tilles, Daniel. *British Fascist Antisemitism and Jewish Responses, 1932-1940*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Tosstorff, Reiner and Ben Fowkes. *The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), 1920-1937*. Leiden: Brill, 2016.

- Travis, Trysh, "Books as Weapons and 'The Smart Man's Peace': The Work of the Council on Books in Wartime." *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 60, no. 3 (Spring 1999): 353-399.
- Triece, Mary E. *On the Picket Line: Strategies of Working-Class Women During the Depression*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007.
- Verdery, Katherine. *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Ware, Susan. *Holding Their Own: American Women in the 1930s*. Edited by Barbara Haber. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982.
- Warner, Michael. *Publics and Counterpublics*. New York: Zone Books, 2002.
- Weibe, Robert. "Framing U.S. History: Democracy, Nationalism, and Socialism." In *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, edited by Thomas Bender, 236-249. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002.
- Weigand, Kate. *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women's Liberation*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001.
- Weiner, Tim. *Enemies: A History of the FBI*. New York: Random House, 2012.
- Weinrib, Laura. *The Taming of Free Speech: America's Civil Liberties Compromise*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016.
- Weiss, Robert. "The Emergence and Transformation of Private Detective Industrial Policing in the United States, 1850-1940." *Crime and Social Justice* no. 9 (Spring-Summer 1978): 35-48.
- West, Nigel. *MASK: MI5's Penetration of the Communist Party of Great Britain*. London: Routledge, 2005.
- White, Ahmed. "The Crime of Radical Industrial Unionism." *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 31, no. 4 (2019): 225-237.
- Wood, Elizabeth A. *The Baba and the Comrade: Gender and Politics in Revolutionary Russia*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.
- Worley, Matthew. "Reflections on Recent British Communist Party History." *Historical Materialism: Research in Critical Marxist Theory* 4, no. 1 (1999): 241-261.

_____. *Oswald Mosley and the New Party*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.