LEFT OUT

Reds and America's Industrial Unions

JUDITH STEPAN-NORRIS

University of California, Irvine

MAURICE ZEITLIN

University of California, Los Angeles

CONTENTS

FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Tables

1

THE CONGRESS OF INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATIONS: LEFT, RIGHT, AND CENTER

Communism is now only a memory, but its specter still haunts America, obscuring and distorting our nation's recent past. The time has come to rid ourselves of its dead hand, and to try, in E. H. Carr's phrase, "to master and understand [the past] as the key to the understanding of the present." We aim, therefore, to dispel certain coercive illusions about the long "Red Decade," from the early 1930s through the late 1940s, when American capitalism was challenged by a "powerful and pervasive radical movement," built and led by Communists.[1] "It is unfortunate, though very natural" – if we may borrow Thomas Carlyle's fitting comment on the French Revolution – "that the history of this period has so generally been written in hysterics. Exaggeration abounds, execration, wailing; and, on the whole, darkness . . . so that the true shape of many things is lost for us."[2]

We have tried in this work, though a series of interrelated systematic empirical analyses, to illuminate the "darkness" that still envelops the reality of Communist-led industrial unionism in America. For, despite the supine and craven obedience of the Communist Party's (CP) officials and functionaries to the dictates of the Soviet regime through every tortuous twist in its line, Communist unionism during the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) era was "the main expression of native, working class radicalism in the United States."[3]

The CIO was the Communists' "greatest source of institutional power," as a book on the "Red Menace" in America avers: "[U]nions with Communist-aligned leaders represented about 1,370,000 unionists, a quarter of the CIO's total. Their power within the labor movement gave Communists entree into mainstream politics." In turn, it "was the shift of the CIO to an aggressively

---

[1] Starobin (1972, p. ix); also see Cochran (1977, pp. 98–99).
[2] Carlyle ([1837] 1906, Part III, Book I, Ch. 1, Vol. 2, p. 131).
[3] Laslett (1981, p. 115).

anti-Communist stance" in the late 1940s that was "one of the decisive events in the victory of anti-Communist liberalism."[4]

The CIO was born in the midst of an upheaval that "ripped the cloak of civilized decorum from society, leaving exposed naked class conflict." The CIO incarnated the spirit of the unparalleled workers' insurgency of the 1930s against the overlordship of capital, and embodied the most "sustained surge of worker organization in American history." The CIO united the country's working men and women, of all creeds, colors, and nationalities, under a single banner – a broad banner, not of "trade" or "craft" but of "class." In sum, the CIO "transformed American politics" by reconfiguring the nexus among the working class, civil society, and the state.[5]

From the beginning, the CIO sought to nourish "a new conception of [workers'] class duty . . . and class identity."[6] At all levels, CIO organizers and leaders – many of whom were veterans of years of earlier industrial battles, ranging from "run-of-the-mill" unionists to radicals of all stripes, anarcho-syndicalists, "Wobblies," socialists, and Communists – were committed to "industrial unionism" and "class solidarity."[7]

The CIO originated as a "Committee for Industrial Organization" within the American Federation of Labor (AFL), which was then the nation's major labor federation. The CIO was first convened by United Mine Workers (UMW) president John L. Lewis in late October 1935. This was just three weeks after the AFL's annual convention at which Lewis threw his famous punch decking an AFL official who had opposed his appeal – echoing the cause of his radical predecessors – to "organize the unorganized" in the industrial heartland. On November 9, 1935, the CIO established itself formally, and made the fulfillment of Lewis's appeal its primary objective. A year later, the AFL "suspended" the committee's ten international unions on charges of "fomenting insurrection" and "dual unionism." Soon after, other unions also broke with the AFL to join the committee. In November 1938, the CIO, under its new name, Congress of Industrial Organizations, officially became an independent labor organization. By then, the CIO already consisted of forty-one affiliated unions and "CIO organizing committees." The CIO's

---

[4] Haynes (1996, pp. 36, 131). Similarly: "The CPUSA's role in the CIO, helped the party transform itself from a vocal but marginal group into a significant force in American life" (Haynes and Klehr 1998, p. 54).

[5] Bernstein (1970, p. 217); Foner (1976, p. 227); Zieger (1995, p. 1).

[6] CIO (1936).

[7] Kampelman (1957, xiv). On the "Wobblies," a nickname (origins unknown) for the members of the Industrial Workers of the World, see Foner (1965); Dubovsky (1988); Kimeldorf (1998, 1999).

constitution declared that it aimed "to bring about the effective organization of the working men and women of America regardless of race, creed, color or nationality, and to unite them for common action into labor unions for their mutual aid and protection."[8]

"The CIO," its organizers declared, "is a people's movement, for security, for jobs, for civil rights and freedom. It speaks for all the working men and women of America, Negro and white . . . [and] fights to bring the benefits of industrial organization to all working people . . . in the only way it can be done – by organizing all the workers, excluding none, discriminating against none." In fact, the CIO organized so many workers so quickly that less than a decade later, in 1947, its constituent international unions already represented roughly 80 percent of the country's industrial workers.[9]

At the CIO's first postwar convention in 1946, 39 "international unions" sent delegates, 38 of which are included in our analysis.[10] Of the 38, according to anti-Communist sources, 18 were "left-wing" or "Communist-dominated."[11] Communists also had significant pockets of workers' support in another ten – although these internationals were said by one observer to be

---

[8] Bernstein (1970, pp. 217, 422–23); Zieger (1995, pp. 2, 22–24); Foner (1976, p. 228); Matles and Higgins (1974, p. 41).

[9] CIO (1942, pp. 4, 10); Bell (1960, p. 91).

[10] CIO unions were referred to as "internationals" or "international unions" because they also had locals in Canada, as well as in Hawaii and Alaska (which at the time were still U.S. colonial territories). We use the descriptive terms *international* and *international union* interchangeably throughout this book. This study includes all but one of the CIO internationals listed in Peterson's *Handbook of Labor Unions* (1944), namely, the Aluminum Workers of America, which merged with the Steel Workers. The United Railroad Workers, also represented at the 1946 convention, lasted only a year (Kampelman 1957, pp. 45, 46, 59n2). The Optical and Instrument Workers Organizing Committee was also represented at that convention, but we could find no relevant data on it, and it is not listed in Peterson's *Handbook*. Leo Troy (1965, pp. A20–A23) lists eleven short-lived CIO unions, founded sometime during the CIO era, only four of which lasted more than three years, and none of these eleven are on Kampelman's list of forty. All thirty-six internationals listed in "a special report" on *The Communists in Labor Relations Today* by the Research Institute of America (RIA) are included in this study (RIA 1946, pp. 17–18).

[11] Kampelman (1957, pp. 45–47, 121–40, 167–224); also see Avery (1946); Research Institute of America (1946, pp. 17–18). Of the eighteen internationals in Kampelman's "Communist camp," seventeen are on the RIA's list of "left-wing unions." The remaining one is classified by the RIA as "probably left-wing." For other more or less contemporaneous estimates of Communist strength in the CIO, see Mills (1948, p. 195); Moore (1945, p. 37); Seidman (1950). According to Kampelman (1957, p. 249), "Communist-led unions in 1949 claimed a membership of more than two million." He gives no source for this estimate; it is almost certainly inflated.

merely "troubled by, but not under the threat of . . . [Communist] control." In short, as Irving Howe and Lewis Coser observe, "The Communists were the best-organized political group within the CIO."[12]

No twentieth-century political struggle among organized workers in America was more chronic and divisive and ultimately self-destructive than the one between the "right" and the "left," especially as it unfolded within the CIO. Nor is any question in the writings about "the CIO era" as contentious, and the conventional answers given as tendentious and less substantiated by systematic evidence, as the legacy of the Communists and their radical allies in the CIO.

The empirical analyses in this book focus on the *consequences* of the political struggles and political relations within the CIO. So we do not attempt to examine the origins or assess the validity, let alone the morality, of the stances taken by the left, right, and center on the political issues – ideological, programmatic, or strategic – that divided and eventually tore the CIO asunder, and all but put an end to radical, class-conscious unionism in America.

Yet these issues and the effects of the struggles over them cannot be dissevered historically. On the eve of the CIO's pseudotrials and purges of its "Communist-dominated" affiliates, the "primary charges" made by "liberal and left wing opponents" against the Communists in the CIO were summed up as follows by a young anti-Communist radical and sociologist named C. Wright Mills:

> First, the turns of these U.S. Stalinists from leftward to rightward, and back again, have been determined not by their judgment of the changing needs of the working people, or by pressures from these people, but by the changing needs of the ruling group in Russia. Second, the ways for maintaining power which are habitual with the U.S. Stalinists include personal defamation and intrigue, carried, if need be, to the point of wrecking a man or a labor union. . . . Third, Communist rule within the U.S. unions they control is dictatorial; although they talk the language of democracy they do not believe or practice democratic principles. . . . Fourth, the existence of Communist factions, and their lack of independence, is a strong deterrent to . . . any genuine leftward tendencies of labor in America.[13]

Implicit in these "left-wing charges," then, is a critical historical question: How did the Communists win and hold power in the CIO's international

---

[12] Mills (1948, p. 195); Howe and Coser (1957, p. 375).
[13] Mills (1948, pp. 199–200).

unions, and what did they do with it, once they had it? More specifically, What were their political practices and concrete achievements? Was Communist "rule" in fact "dictatorial"? Did Communist unionists subordinate the "needs" of the workers they represented to the "needs" of the Soviet regime? What impact did they have on the shop-floor conditions and broader life experiences and commitments of the workers they represented, as compared with their rivals on the center and right? We try in the following chapters to provide replicable, testable, and refutable answers to these questions, by means of historically specific quantitative analyses of data on the CIO's origins, internal struggles, and political relations. We also examine the aftermath of the purge and follow the organizing activities of the expelled unions into the 1950s. And finally, we assess the relevance of the purge for subsequent developments in the American labor movement.

The CIO's "Political Camps"

Classifying any union in the United States politically during these years, as none had any formal political affiliations or party alignments, is both inherently problematic and controversial, especially when it comes to designating a union, in the standard Cold War terminology, as "Communist-dominated." "Red-baiting," or charging someone with being a "Red" or "Communist," was a stock political tactic in the United States used by capitalists resisting unionization long before the Bolsheviks took power in Russia.[14] Militant unionists of all political hues suffered at the hands of company security forces and freelance goons during the long hard years preceding the birth of the CIO. But the most brutal terror by employers was reserved for the Communists and their "Red unions." What's more, officials of the AFL and its affiliates also freely denounced their opponents in labor as Communists, and it was long common

---

[14] As John Brophy, a Mine Workers veteran who had become director of the "committee for industrial organization," said in 1938: "Redbaiting, lies, slanders, raising the cry of 'Communist' against militant and progressive union leaders, is nothing more than a smoke-screen for the real objective . . . [which] is to kill the CIO, destroy collective bargaining, destroy the unity of the organized and unorganized that the CIO is building through the nation." Walter Reuther, then still a young auto worker organizer, also said: "Now the bosses are raising a scare – the Red Scare. They pay stools to go around whispering that so-and-so, usually a militant union leader, is a Red. What the bosses actually mean, however, is not that he is really a Red. They mean they do not like him because he is a loyal, dependable union man, a fighter who helps his brothers and sisters and is not afraid of the boss. So let us all be careful that we do not play the bosses' game by falling for the Red Scare" (Matles and Higgins 1974, pp. 117–18).

for AFL officials and affiliates to prohibit Communists from holding union office or even from being members.

From 1922 through 1929, Reds, socialists, anarchists, syndicalists, and other radicals, including "many of the most active and influential militants in the American trade union movement," were allied under the umbrella of the Trade Union Educational League (TUEL). The league was "a system of informal committees throughout the entire union movement," as its organizing pamphlet *Amalgamation* declared, " . . . working for the closer affiliation and solidification of our existing craft unions until they have developed into industrial unions." The league rejected "dual unionism" and welcomed members of every political party or political tendency; it called upon the AFL to recognize, in the words of the TUEL's founder, William Z. Foster, that "the organization of the unorganized is the supreme problem of our times. Upon its solution depends the welfare if not the actual life of the whole labor movement."[15]

Any TUEL adherent who openly advocated the TUEL's program in an AFL affiliate was subjected to "drastic punitive measures. . . . Many unions insisted on loyalty pledges. TUEL members were removed from union offices and others were expelled."[16] And if the affiliate failed to purge and expel them, the affiliate itself was thrown out of the AFL altogether.

These repressive measures against "Reds" and other radicals by the AFL intensified during the next decade. So, for example, on the eve of the CIO's formation within the AFL, the "president's page" of an AFL affiliate featured this notice in July 1935:

> WARNING FROM AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR – WAR ON REDS – The *united front* plan of the Communists for taking over labor leadership in the United States was effectively scotched this week by AFL President [William] Green, when . . . he warned that any local unions affiliated with the [AFL] . . . that admit Communists *will not be recognized* and they may expect to have their *charters withdrawn*.

Such warnings against "Communist maneuvers" and advocacy of a "war on Reds" in AFL publications were frequent during the "turbulent years" of workers' uprisings that brought the CIO to birth.[17]

---

[15] Written by the anarchosyndicalist Jay Fox, *Amalgamation* was distributed to a quarter million unionists during the summer and fall of 1922 (Foner 1991, pp. 127, 133, 152, 158; also see Foner 1994).

[16] Saposs (1959, p. 84).

[17] Kampelman (1957, p. 9); Saposs (1959, p. 84, bold caps and italics in original).

Even in the CIO's halcyon years, when unionists on the left, right, and center were still allies, many CIO internationals prohibited Communists from holding union office or even from being members.[18] So if Communist union-ists rarely "avowed" their membership in the party, it was not a mere Leninist reflex, but a matter of both principle ("don't let Red-baiting break you up") and political – even physical – survival. By denying their membership while hew-ing to the "party line," however, they made their motives suspect and opened themselves up to charges of "masquerading" their true political identities.[19]

Yet everywhere in the CIO (and even in the unions labeled "Communist-controlled") many so-called Communists were not party members and never had been: Some were men (and a few women) who, in pursuing and hold-ing on to union office, willingly accepted Communist support. Conspicuous examples were George Addes, secretary-treasurer of the United Automobile Workers (UAW), until his defeat in 1947 by Emil Mazey, a Reuther ally, and Joe Curran, president of the National Maritime Union (NMU), who split with his Communist allies early in the Cold War. Some were independent radicals or even otherwise "nonpolitical" labor activists who considered Communists legitimate aspirants to working-class leadership and regularly allied with them in intraunion politics. Notable among them were Albert Fitzgerald, president of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers (UE), and Shelton Tappes, recording secretary of the megalocal at the Ford Rouge plant, UAW Local 600.

Even some union leaders who are commonly assumed to have been Communists apparently were not members of the party. The Australian-born "Red 'arry" Bridges of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU) was "the most celebrated or notorious pro-Communist trade unionist in America," as David Caute puts it, in part because of the govern-ment's twenty-one-year long battle to deport him. Bridges was repeatedly hauled before committee investigators and congressional committees, who

---

[18] Saposs (1959, p. 121); Taft (1953, p. 23). For instance, the constitution of the Utility Workers, which was still a CIO Utility Workers Organizing Committee as late as 1944, provided that "[a]ny member accepting membership in the Communist, Fascist, or Nazi party shall be expelled from the Utility Workers' Union of America and is permanently barred from holding office" (Kampelman 1957, pp. 46–47; Peterson 1944, pp. 400–401).

[19] The risks and dangers were magnified, of course, for those who were not only Red but black, especially in the South, where CIO leaders themselves usually "were still far more conservative compared with the rest of the country, particularly on issues related to racial equality. . . . [So] black Communists had to hide their political affiliations, [but] they . . . remained outspoken rebels on racial issues." Nor, except rarely, could black Communists in the South become regular union officers "in the way their comrades had in Northern and Western CIO unions" (Kelley 1990, p. 147).

sought to prove his membership in the party at the time of his arrival and use such proof to denaturalize and deport him. He readily declared to them and anyone else who cared that he was a Marxist and that he sought advice from Communists, worked closely with them, and counted on their support; and the positions he took in his speeches and editorials in the union's newspaper, *The Dispatcher*, dovetailed closely with the party line.[20] But he consistently denied that he was then or ever had been a member of the party himself. And the government, despite two decades of spying and trying, never was able to prove the contrary.[21]

Or take James J. Matles, director of organization of UE, the CIO's "Red fortress." *Fortune* featured him in November 1946 as one of America's ten most outstanding labor leaders: He gives "no impression of big union bossism," said *Fortune*, "– though he is the driving power and a large part of the brains of the CIO's biggest Communist-line union."[22] With UE under intensifying raiding by rival CIO and AFL unions, Matles and UE's other officers found themselves "compelled to take the distasteful but necessary defensive

[20] The government's effort to deport him began at the time of the 1934 San Francisco general strike under his leadership and ended only in July 1955 when a court's ruling against the government finally put an end to this unremitting deportation drive (Caute 1979, pp. 237–38). After the Taft–Hartley Act went into effect, 94 percent of ILWU's rank-and-file longshore and warehouse members voted in a 1948 election that Bridges and other elected ILWU officers should not comply with the requirement to sign on oath a non-Communist affidavit (McWilliams 1999).

[21] Joseph Starobin, a former senior party official and longtime foreign editor of the *Daily Worker*, characterizes Bridges's relationship to the party as follows: "[A]lthough he was close to anarcho-syndicalism and never a Communist, [Bridges] enjoyed intimate ties with the party, *usually on his own terms*" (1972, p. 258n51, emphasis added). Robert Cherny's research in the newly accessible Comintern files in Moscow on the CP of the United States through the late 1930s confirms that Bridges did, in fact, consult often with party officials during the 1930s, but that, as earlier historical studies had already concluded, Bridges "never relinquished control of union policy to the party" (Schwartz 1980, p. 76; also see Kutler 1982, pp. 150–51). Cherny says that nothing in the files he examined contradicts the conclusions of these studies about Bridges as a union leader: After consulting with the party's representatives, Bridges often did not do what the party wanted him to do, and when he went his own way – for instance, in taking the Pacific Coast ILA locals out of the AFL into the CIO – they promptly decided he was right and made his views or actions, or both, into party policy (Cherny 1998, pp. 7, 11–13, 16). Other researchers in Soviet archives dealing with Communist activities in the United States promise that a "subsequent volume in this series will reproduce documents definitely establishing Bridges's membership in the CPUSA" (Haynes, Klehr, and Firsov 1995, p. 104n24), but no such document is referenced or reproduced in the next volume in that series (Klehr, Haynes, and Anderson 1998).

[22] "Ten Who Deliver," p. 147.

measure of qualifying for appearance on the ballot in elections conducted under Taft–Hartley auspices."[23]

[23] UE alone suffered "more than 500" raids by CIO rivals – as well as by the IAM and the Teamsters – between August 1947 when the Taft–Hartley Act (Labor–Management Relations Act) became effective and UE's October 1949 convention. UE's main CIO predators were the UAW under Walter Reuther and, crucially, after USWA officers signed the Taft–Hartley affidavits in July 1949, Murray's own USWA (Zieger 1995, p. 284; Emspak 1972, pp. 317–18; Levenstein 1981, pp. 269–78, 289–93; Matles and Higgins 1974, pp. 192–94, 249). The Taft–Hartley Act's section 9(h), requiring a "non-Communist affidavit" of responsible union officials, triggered the sudden escalation of raiding on the membership of the Communist-led unions. Every union official had to sign on oath an annual affidavit that "he is not a member of the Communist Party nor affiliated with such party, and that he does not believe in, and is not a member of or supports any organization that believes in or teaches, the overthrow of the United States Government by force or by any illegal or unconstitutional means." A union whose officers refused to comply with the non-Communist affidavit could not be certified as a bargaining agent with the NLRB, could not participate in NLRB elections, and could not insert a union-shop clause in any renewed or subsequent contract nor apply for redress to the NLRB against an employer engaged in unfair labor practices. This severely restricted a union's ability to hold on to the workers it already represented and made it harder still, if nearly impossible, to gain bargaining rights in unorganized workplaces (Caute 1979, pp. 354–58). The 1935 Wagner Act (National Labor Relations Act) had set up the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) with broad powers to oversee union certification and to penalize employers that did not recognize the rights of employees to organize and join unions or failed to "bargain in good faith" with their union representatives. The Taft–Hartley Act all but gutted the Wagner Act's protection of workers' right to "self-organization" and broadened employers' rights. It outlawed "secondary boycotts" and other so-called unfair labor practices by unions; authorized the President to enjoin strikes for a "cooling off period"; allowed employers on their own to call for a bargaining election and to include a company union on the ballot, as a way of trying to "decertify" an existing union, that is, deprive it of representation before the NLRB; and made union-management agreements into legally enforceable contracts in federal courts, allowing either party to sue the other for breach of contract. The act also limited union political contributions. Nearly all the main provisions of the act had been on the legislative agenda of the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) and other conservative groups since the CIO's founding in 1938, and was virtually written by NAM's staff (Slichter 1951; Tomlins 1985; Lichtenstein 1991; Ginger and Christiano 1987, p. 243). "In effect," as David Montgomery observes, "the only union activity which remained legal under Taft–Hartley was that involved in direct bargaining between a certified 'bargaining agent' and the employers of the workers it represented. Both actions of class solidarity and rank-and-file activity outside of the contractual framework were placed beyond the pale of the law" (1979, p. 166). UAW's Walter Reuther called the act "a vicious piece of fascist legislation" and then used the affidavit as a weapon against his left, proceeding almost immediately after it went into effect to sign the non-Communist affidavit and demand that

On November 25, 1953, Matles appeared before Senator Joseph McCarthy's committee, in "executive session."[24] McCarthy opened with his customary

all UAW officers sign one. At the CIO's convention in October 1947, Murray, president of both the CIO and USWA, denounced the affidavit requirement as "a diabolical piece of work, extremely discriminatory in nature and revolting to a citizen who believes in decency and in justice and in freedom." But he and the CIO executive board chose to leave the decision on compliance with the affidavit to its constituent unions – which, of course, exposed the Communist-led unions, without CIO unity and support, to attack (Lichtenstein 1995, p. 266; Starobin 1972, p. 169). (At the AFL's convention that same month, its officials also decided – over the strenuous opposition of John L. Lewis, who condemned the act as "the first ugly, savage thrust of Fascism in America" – to leave compliance up to its affiliates, many of whose officers already had signed it. "On this particular issue," Lewis thundered, "I don't think the Federation has a head. I think its neck has just grown up and haired over." Lewis then promptly, and once again, took the UMW out of the AFL (Ginger and Christiano 1987, p. 246; Cochran 1977, p. 316).) Responding to the CIO executive board's decision to allow the unions to decide for themselves whether to comply, Matles said: "I cannot predict what we are going to do next year. . . . If we are ever found in . . . [the Taft–Hartley lineup] we will be found in the rear . . . squawking like hell; we will tell our people we are there because we were compelled to be, because there were too many ahead of us." Murray, whose USWA was still among the CIO holdouts refusing to sign the affidavit, spoke after Matles, saying: "I'm like Jimmy Matles, I do not know [what we'll do]." By July 1949, He knew: He and other USWA officers signed the affidavit. And at the CIO convention a few months later, he supported the resolution that denounced the union led by his erstwhile friend "Jimmy Matles" as "the Communist Party masquerading as a trade union" and expelled it from the CIO. (Lichtenstein 1995, p. 309, says that Walter Reuther was "the principal author" of this resolution.) This was the same Murray who, three years earlier, at the CIO's 1946 Convention, had lauded the UE's officers for their postwar "organizing activities" and noted that, despite initial losses resulting from the war's end, UE's "membership has steadily grown, and continues to grow." Months earlier, in an address to the UE convention, Murray also had told UE's delegates themselves: "In the course of the past eleven years, you have made many magnificent contributions toward the well-being of the people you represent." He also had thanked the UE for "splendid support" of the CIO, and pointedly declared: "So let no enemy of the CIO glibly get by with the argument that they are ever going to be able to destroy a movement like this. It's not in them. It can't be done" (Matles and Higgins 1974, pp. 170, 164, 158).

[24] Matles actually had to work hard to get called by McCarthy, whose committee had come to Lynn, Massachusetts, to hold "hearings" on "Communist infiltration" of the GE "defense" plant there. McCarthy's "investigation" coincided, not incidentally, with a hard-fought NLRB election, petitioned by UE. UE was campaigning to replace the International Union of Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers Union (IUE) as the local bargaining agent, and seemed likely to win. (IUE, the anti-Communist International chartered in 1949 by the CIO in UE's jurisdiction, had won the local in 1950.) McCarthy was calling GE workers active in the campaign for UE, and GE was then firing them if they proved to be "unfriendly

gambit, "Are you a Communist?" Matles shot back:

> My [Taft–Hartley] affidavit answers that. It shows I signed five non-Communist affidavits in the last five years and these affidavits carry a five-year jail sentence and ten thousand dollar fine if falsely signed. . . . You have had a lot to say about spying and espionage. When you accuse us of that you are lying, Senator McCarthy. You are a liar. You are doing a dirty thing, going to Lynn and Schenectady [where UE locals were on strike and under attack] for the General Electric Company, terrorizing and browbeating decent working people. I tell you to stop it.

By now, as Matles tells it, McCarthy had gotten up and come within a couple of feet of Matles and was "glowering over him." Matles stood up and looked at McCarthy "eyeball to eyeball." McCarthy told Matles to sit down. Matles said he'd sit down when McCarthy did.

> McCarthy (back in his seat):
> > I want to set you straight on the purpose of this executive session. We've got a lot on you. We wanted to give you a chance to clear yourself.
> Matles:
> > You've got nothing on me, not a damn thing. You've been trying to frame me on my non-communist affidavits for three years, the pair of you, and you haven't done it. Let me ask you a question: Are you a spy? The question is as good coming from me to you as coming from you to me.[25]

witnesses." But McCarthy had not called a single UE international officer. So Matles and his fellow officers decided to demand that McCarthy confront one of them, rather than let the rank and file bear the brunt of McCarthy's committee. They sent McCarthy a telegram demanding that he subpoena Matles. "Nothing happened. No reply." So UE's attorney got on the phone with McCarthy's chief counsel, Roy Cohn, and told him that if the committee didn't issue the subpoena, he would tell the press that McCarthy had refused. "That did the trick" (Matles and Higgins 1974, p. 214).

[25] Matles and Higgins (1974, pp. 215–16). Another "well-known Communist" at the head of a major CIO international was *TWU* president Michael J. Quill, known to one and all as "Red Mike." Yet he repeatedly denied, even under oath, that he had ever been a member of the CP. Quill split with the party in 1948, after fifteen years of being closely identified with it, both because of the party's decision to form the new Progressive Party and run Henry Wallace for President (see note 37 below and Chapter 10) and its opposition to raising the "5 cent fare" in New York City to allow a wage increase for his union's members. After the split, he said in an October 1948 interview: "I was kind of careful where my signature went

Some CIO unionists, of course, proudly identified themselves publicly as members of the CP. One of the most prominent was William Sentner, head of UE's district 8 centered in St. Louis. In a feature article on him in *Fortune*, he's quoted as saying: "When I joined [the party], I told everybody in town." Hiding his party membership, he said, would promote the "lie" of a Communist conspiracy in the CIO. Sentner's public credo was: If it strengthens the working class, then it "paves the way for an ultimate transition to an industrial democracy that is complete – some form of socialism." Sentner's union policies often went against the party line. "The C.P. never ran Bill Sentner," he told *Fortune*. "No one fools around with what I believe . . . and I don't fool around with what they believe." When the party's head in St. Louis chastised him for his "deviations," Sentner retorted, "You run your organization and I'll run mine."[26]

So, in general, designating a union as being in the "Communist political camp" unavoidably involves some distortion of political reality. The Research Institute of America (RIA) was explicit that, in designating a union as "left wing," it had not made "any attempt to distinguish here between those unions whose action is caused by the fact that the officers are Communist and those unions whose policy is set by the fact of their having either a majority Communist membership or a small but active group of Communist members." Rather, the RIA labeled a union as "left-wing" if it had espoused causes or taken positions similar to the CP positions as revealed by the *Daily Worker*. "Whether this is coincidence or is the result of Communists within the union can best be determined by one who deals with them over a period of time."[27]

In our quantitative analyses, we simply adopt Max Kampelman's classification of the CIO's international unions into rival "political camps." In 1946, according to his lineup, the "Communist camp" consisted of eighteen

---

in certain matters." Earl Browder, the CP's top official until his expulsion in 1945, supported Quill's claim that he had never been a party member (Freeman 1989, p. 254n96).

[26] "A Yaleman and a Communist," p. 148; Filippelli and McColloch (1995, p. 7); Feurer (1992, pp. 111, 103). In early 1947, the Alsop brothers, in an article pointedly titled, "Will the CIO Shake the Communists Loose?," also focused on Sentner. "Sentner was recently re-elected to the presidency of an important district of the United Electrical Workers after a fierce and bitter contest in which Sentner's communism was the main issue. One of the leaders of the opposition [explained]: . . . 'The Communist issue wasn't enough all by itself. Sentner brings home the bacon for the men, and you can't take that away from him.' Sentner," concluded the Alsops, " . . . retains his position entirely on his merits as a union officer" (Alsop and Alsop 1947, p. 106).

[27] RIA (1946, p. 16). The chairman of the RIA's Board of Editors in 1946 was William J. Casey, who was destined to serve as President Ronald Reagan's CIA Director. In an article under his name, Casey repeats virtually verbatim the major conclusions of the RIA's Report (Casey 1946, pp. 15, 31).

internationals, and the "uncertain and shifting" and the "anti-Communist" camp both had ten internationals.[28] Kampelman's criteria for putting a union in one or another of these so-called camps (like the criteria of the RIA and his other anti-Communist predecessors) were the political issues raised, causes advocated, and positions taken – mainly on foreign policy – by its officers over many years. Kampelman, who had been a "congressional aide . . . who helped orchestrate the [CIO] purge," relies heavily for his "evidence" on the CIO's "indictments" in the 1950 pseudotrials of the international unions' officials accused of being "Communist-controlled."[29]

[28] Here is a list of the CIO Internationals included in this study, by "political camp" (Kampelman 1957, pp. 45–46): In the "Communist" camp: International Federation of Architects, Engineers, Chemists and Technicians (AECT) (earlier in 1946, the Office and Professional Workers absorbed the AECT, but both were still represented separately at the CIO's 1946 convention); American Communications Association (ACA); UE; United Farm Equipment and Metal Workers of America (FE); United Federal Workers of America (earlier in 1946, the State, County and Municipal Employees (SCM) and the Federal Workers merged to form the United Public Workers (UPW), but both were represented separately at the CIO's 1946 convention); International Union of Fishermen and Allied Workers of America; Food, Tobacco, Agricultural and Allied Workers (FTA, formerly United Cannery, Agricultural, Packing and Allied Workers of America); International Fur and Leather Workers Union (IFLWU), United Furniture Workers of America; Inland Boatmen's International Union (IB); International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU); Marine Cooks and Stewards Association of the Pacific Coast (MCS); International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (MM); National Maritime Union (NMU), United Office and Professional Workers of America (UOPW); United Shoe Workers of America; State, County and Municipal Workers (SCM); and Transport Workers Union of America (TWU). In the "uncertain and shifting" camp: United Automobile, Aircraft, Agricultural Implement Workers of America (UAW); Barbers and Beauty Culturists' Union of America (BBC); Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACW); United Gas, Coke, and Chemical Workers of America (GCC); National Marine Engineers Beneficial Association; Oil Workers International Union (OWIU); United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA); United Retail, Wholesale, and Department Store Employees of America (RWDSU); United Stone and Allied Products Workers of America; and International Woodworkers of America (IWA). In the "anti-Communist" camp: Federation of Glass, Ceramic, and Silica Sand Workers of America; Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America (IUMSBW); American Newspaper Guild (ANG) (Kampelman says that the "New York and Los Angeles chapters [are] controlled by [the] Communist Party" (1957, p. 46)); United Paper Workers of America; International Union of Playthings, Jewelry, and Novelty Workers of America; United Rubber, Cork, Linoleum, and Plastic Workers of America (URW); USWA; United Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA); United Transport Service Employees of America (UTSE); and Utility Workers Union.

[29] Kimeldorf (1988, p. 12) reports Kampelman's role as a congressional aide. A salient illustration of the reigning method of identifying "Communist-controlled unions" was given

So the classification of the CIO's internationals into these rival camps originated as a product of what CIO historian Robert Zieger calls the CIO's "own dispiriting version of the red scare that dominated American politics in the early 1950s." The CIO's "trials" were based on elaborate pseudolegal "cases." The "evidence" against them consisted of the record of dissenting foreign policy positions taken by their officers, who often "parroted the pro-Soviet line." Anyone with a dissenting reputation soon came under suspicion. "Many [anti-Communist radicals who] supported at least the original efforts to discredit the pro-Soviet elements, found themselves . . . frozen out of union politics, and often hounded out of the labor movement because of their alleged 'subversiveness.'"[30]

Among the stalwarts of the "Communist camp" were UE, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU), and the International Union of Mine, Mill and Smelter Workers (MM). MM, heir to the legacy of the radical Western Federation of Miners, was alone among Communist-led international unions in declaring its socialist objectives.[31] Its constitution's preamble declared:

> We hold that there is a class struggle in Society, . . . that the producer . . . is exploited of the wealth which he produces, . . . that the class

by Father Charles Owen Rice, who listed some on the back page of his 1948 pamphlet, *How to Decontrol Your Union of Communists*. The ILWU's Bridges wrote him, on July 17, 1948, inquiring as to why his international was on Rice's list. Rice replied, on July 22, 1948: "My chief reason for listing the ILWU as a Communist-controlled union is that you control it" (Levenstein 1981, pp. 241, 251n46). Despite the analytical tendentiousness of Kampelman's classification, we consider it consistent with our own study of the historical materials and an adequate empirical reflection of the common understandings of activists of all kinds during the CIO era – with one crucial exception. Kampelman puts the United Packinghouse Workers of America (UPWA) in the "uncertain and shifting" camp, although by his own criteria, it surely belonged in the Communist camp. Three years after the anti-Communist expulsions and purges, James Carey, CIO secretary-general; John V. Riffe, CIO executive vice president; and other important CIO leaders were still convinced that UPWA was "Communist dominated" (Zieger 1995, pp. 346–47, 470), and in 1959, David Saposs (1959, pp. 202–3) was still writing about the "flagrant case of continuing Communist influence in a strong CIO union . . . the United Packinghouse Workers of America." Historian Edward P. Johanningsmeier simply refers to the UPWA as one of the CIO's internationals that was "controlled" by "Communists or close Communist sympathizers" (1994, p. 314). The outstanding prolabor record of the CIO's Communist camp revealed in this study would have stood out even more, compared with the records of the shifting and anti-Communist camps, if Kampelman had put the UPWA in the Communist rather than the shifting camp.

[30] Zieger (1986, pp. 131–32).

[31] A cursory review of some of the publications of these unions, however, suggests that socialist ideas were omnipresent, if usually implicit, in their interpretations of issues.

struggle will continue until the producer is recognized as the sole master of his product . . . [and] that the working class, and it alone, can and must achieve its own emancipation.[32]

In the CIO's "uncertain and shifting" camp were internationals in whose ruling coalition Communists were said to be influential, but not in "control." Among this camp's major unions were the UAW, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (ACW), and the UPWA. The UAW, the CIO's biggest union, had radicals of many stripes among its rival factions. The UAW's 1947 constitution committed the union to "prepar[ing] the ground for the wider and richer economic democracy which our combined efforts will win for our children," but also affirmed that "[t]he worker does not seek to usurp management's functions . . . through his Union [but] merely asks for his rights."[33]

The unions classified in the anti-Communist camp were led by officials of whom few considered Communists a legitimate presence in the CIO. The United Steel Workers of America (USWA), the Textile Workers Union (TWUA), and the United Rubber Workers (URW) were among the most important unions in the anti-Communist camp. Officials of USWA, this camp's most powerful union, were influenced by Catholic labor doctrines emphasizing social harmony and the achievement of "Christian justice" through class collaboration. They stood, as *Steel Labor* declared, for "the right of private property, for a free choice of action under a system of private competitive capitalism."[34]

We have adopted Kampelman's term "political camp" as a convenient label for the CIO's internal political alignments, and, as we show below, the internationals classified in the rival camps did, in fact, differ sharply in how they conducted themselves. But these "camps" were not in any way internally organized or even minimally cohesive, and this also applies, we want to emphasize, to the so-called Communist camp.

[32] Mine, Mill (1947, p. 2).
[33] UAW (1947, pp. 1, 4).
[34] Levenstein (1981, pp. 111–13); *Steel Labor*, July 1945, p. 4, as cited in Emspak (1972, p. 52). Murray, president of both the CIO (after John L. Lewis stepped down) and USWA, was "a devout and profoundly antisecular Catholic" who believed, as he told a "labor priest" (an activist in the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, or ACTU) in 1946, that "[w]hat the CIO is trying to do is basically in the social encyclicals of the Church" (Rosswurm 1990, p. 130). But, just to confuse matters, although he headed the USWA, the major union in the anti-Communist camp, Murray was universally regarded – until his turnaround, in response to the Communists' support of Henry Wallace's third-party ticket – as the *primus inter pares* between "left" and "right" and a representative of the "center."