

Anti-Communism in the American Labor Movements. Reflections on the Communist Expulsions in 1949–50

By

Lene Koch

Lecturer, University of Copenhagen

The point of departure for this article about anti-communism in the American Labor Movement is the internal conflict in the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), which in 1949–50 resulted in the expulsion of 11 pro-communist labor unions from this organization.

I have picked out this event because I consider it decisive in several ways for the consecutive development of the American labor movement in general and the CIO in particular. The CIO changed important aspects of its structure and political profile in the period from 1935–50. From being a relatively democratic membership-controlled organization established in conscious opposition to the anti-communist bureaucratic trade union structure of the AFL, the CIO, by 1950, had become an organization which did not differ substantially in any important respects from its original antagonist: strongly centralized, vehemently anti-communist, integrated with the federal political administration, in support of the democratic labor and industrial policy as well as the Cold War policies of the Truman administration.

CIO's expulsion of these pro-communist unions was not an event to radically change the character of the American labor movement at one blow, but should rather be considered as an indication that the development outlined above had been accomplished.

Only a very small part of the extensive historical literature about the American Communist Party (CP) and its impact on American society deals with the American Labor Movement. And this in spite of the fact that communist influence in this sector was not just make-believe but an established fact. The literature one does find, however, falls into two phases belonging to two different periods of history. One phase belongs to the late '50s, the Cold War, immediately after McCarthy's downfall and the time when the American CP, as a result of the anti-communist hysteria among other things, had been reduced to an impotent and unimportant small political sect. Two major works from this period, Kampelman, *The CP vs the CIO* from 1957, and David Saposs, *Communism in American Unions* from 1959, both explain the influence of the CP in American labor unions as the result of the clever application of the communists' extensive organizational and manipulative abilities in a socially instable period – the depression of the '30s. They implicitly assume that the American communists are foreign infiltrators and intervenors – an Unamerican element – a conception which is contradicted by the fact that the ethnic composition of American communists was, by and large, similar to that of the remainder of the American population. Even in the '30s, when the party gained its largest influence and growth of membership, this new membership was predominantly white middle class.

The expulsion of the communists is thus explained in the context of the alleged fundamental difference between the undemocratic practice of the communists and the democratic character of the American labor movement and healthy American ideology – it was the lack of ability of American communists to adapt themselves to this democratic line of thought which constituted the background to the expulsions.

An important premise to this idea is a typically Cold War dramatization of the role of the American CP as a representative of the Soviet Union. A notion which, in part, may be justified, as the party *was* politically dependent on the Soviet Union (more specifically on the Comintern) – a dependency which during the Cold War was bound to be considered traitorous.

Concerning the ethnic composition of American communists it was by and large similar to the one of the remainder of the American population. And in the '30s when the party gained its largest in-

fluence and growth of membership this new influx was primarily white middle class.¹

Vis-à-vis this political right-wing criticism of the CP, we find a group of New Left historians representing the second phase, among others James Green and Nelson Lichtenstein, who in a 1975 issue of the *Radical America* have analysed the relationship between the CP and the labor movement. Their political interest has been one common to many New Left historians, to prove the existence of a militant or socialist tradition in the American working class.

They express a political critique of the lack of ability of the CP to take the lead in the working class militancy that existed during the war and was flourishing in the post war years. They consider this a major negligence and an important reason why no socialist alternative was put forward in the politically turbulent period from 1945-48. This critique is essentially a critique of the Popular Front tactic of the CP which forced the communists to withhold their "private" political views from the public and formed an important obstacle to an open political mobilization.

Peter Losche, the German historian, influenced by marxist theory, must also be considered a contributor to this tradition. In his book, *Industriegewerkschaften im organisierten Kapitalismus* from 1974, he explains the success of the CP in the CIO, in spite of its explicit loyalty to the Soviet Union, as a result of a coalescence of the interests of the Soviet Union and the American working class till 1941. He concludes, however, that anti-communism in the CIO is irrational because the policies of the CP in this period coalesce with those of the right-wing of the CIO. Thus, he does not find objective (even though ideological) reasons for the right-wing opposition to the influence of the CP.

This theme, the causes of anti-communism in American labor, is dealt with in a fascinating way in one of the latest works in the field by the former union organizer Bert Cochran in *Communism and Labor* from 1977. Perhaps because he draws on a wealth of personal experience and conversations with then active labor union members, he succeeds in refuting many of the dogmas of the Cold War historical tradition (even though he himself is probably part of this tradition, ideologically). What makes him more useful than most non-marxist historians is his critical attitude to the leading strata of the trade union bureaucracy. He considers the bureaucratization and uniformity of the '40s an almost inevitable and automatic development in the process of "maturing" of any organization, and

Only a very small part of the extensive historical literature about the American Communist Party (CP) and its impact on American society deals with the American Labor Movement. And this in spite of the fact that communist influence in this sector was not just make-believe but an established fact. The literature one does find, however, falls into two phases belonging to two different periods of history. One phase belongs to the late '50s, the Cold War, immediately after McCarthy's downfall and the time when the American CP, as a result of the anti-communist hysteria among other things, had been reduced to an impotent and unimportant small political sect. Two major works from this period, Kampelman, *The CP vs the CIO* from 1957, and David Saposs, *Communism in American Unions* from 1959, both explain the influence of the CP in American labor unions as the result of the clever application of the communists' extensive organizational and manipulative abilities in a socially instable period – the depression of the '30s. They implicitly assume that the American communists are foreign infiltrators and intervenors – an Unamerican element – a conception which is contradicted by the fact that the ethnic composition of American communists was, by and large, similar to that of the remainder of the American population. Even in the '30s, when the party gained its largest influence and growth of membership, this new membership was predominantly white middle class.

The expulsion of the communists is thus explained in the context of the alleged fundamental difference between the undemocratic practice of the communists and the democratic character of the American labor movement and healthy American ideology – it was the lack of ability of American communists to adapt themselves to this democratic line of thought which constituted the background to the expulsions.

An important premise to this idea is a typically Cold War dramatization of the role of the American CP as a representative of the Soviet Union. A notion which, in part, may be justified, as the party *was* politically dependent on the Soviet Union (more specifically on the Comintern) – a dependency which during the Cold War was bound to be considered traitorous.

Concerning the ethnic composition of American communists it was by and large similar to the one of the remainder of the American population. And in the '30s when the party gained its largest in-

fluence and growth of membership this new influx was primarily white middle class.¹

Vis-à-vis this political right-wing criticism of the CP, we find a group of New Left historians representing the second phase, among others James Green and Nelson Lichtenstein, who in a 1975 issue of the *Radical America* have analysed the relationship between the CP and the labor movement. Their political interest has been one common to many New Left historians, to prove the existence of a militant or socialist tradition in the American working class.

They express a political critique of the lack of ability of the CP to take the lead in the working class militancy that existed during the war and was flourishing in the post war years. They consider this a major negligence and an important reason why no socialist alternative was put forward in the politically turbulent period from 1945-48. This critique is essentially a critique of the Popular Front tactic of the CP which forced the communists to withhold their "private" political views from the public and formed an important obstacle to an open political mobilization.

Peter Losche, the German historian, influenced by marxist theory, must also be considered a contributor to this tradition. In his book, *Industriegewerkschaften im organisierten Kapitalismus* from 1974, he explains the success of the CP in the CIO, in spite of its explicit loyalty to the Soviet Union, as a result of a coalescence of the interests of the Soviet Union and the American working class till 1941. He concludes, however, that anti-communism in the CIO is irrational because the policies of the CP in this period coalesce with those of the right-wing of the CIO. Thus, he does not find objective (even though ideological) reasons for the right-wing opposition to the influence of the CP.

This theme, the causes of anti-communism in American labor, is dealt with in a fascinating way in one of the latest works in the field by the former union organizer Bert Cochran in *Communism and Labor* from 1977. Perhaps because he draws on a wealth of personal experience and conversations with then active labor union members, he succeeds in refuting many of the dogmas of the Cold War historical tradition (even though he himself is probably part of this tradition, ideologically). What makes him more useful than most non-marxist historians is his critical attitude to the leading strata of the trade union bureaucracy. He considers the bureaucratization and uniformity of the '40s an almost inevitable and automatic development in the process of "maturing" of any organization, and

consequently he considers the expulsion of the communists a necessary means of ridding the organization of a radical opposition group. The problem remains, however (apart from the fact that the theory of the necessity of bureaucratization is disputable), that the communists themselves actively contributed to this development. An examination of their labor policy does not expose them as a radical opposition group. The communists did not per se form an obstacle to the above-mentioned organizational and structural change of the CIO.

As these considerations may suggest, the conflict that developed within the CIO on the Communist issue is not a simple one. It is no pure and simple conflict between a right and a left wing. Neither is it an obvious conflict between a democratically inclined rank and file (the American equivalent of the European left) and a bureaucratic CIO leadership aiming at centralizing the organization (which was the outcome in the '50s). It is not until the consequences of the outcome of the conflict become visible that such concepts – right – left, rank and file – top bureaucracy – gain their validity.

The outcome of the expulsions was, as suggested above, that the CIO was centralized and bureaucratized and that local democratic as well as left-wing initiatives were impeded substantially. But such concepts are not useful when it comes to explaining the actual development of the conflict.

Therefore, in this treatment of anti-communism in the American labor movement, I have found it appropriate to consider the function of anti-communism in the CIO. As the communists neither formed a democratic nor a revolutionary tendency in the CIO *why* was their expulsion necessary? *Why* were they expelled at this particular time and *how* had the expulsions become possible? i.e. how could the internal power relationships have changed so considerably since the late '30s when even the CIO leadership was dependent on the assistance of the communists?² The purge within the labor movement's own ranks must be seen in the context of the major changes of the domestic as well as the international scene after the termination of the war. The expulsions, therefore, should be considered both as an internal strife between contesting factions within the labor movement and a struggle conditioned by outside political and economical factors of both national and international dimensions.

Some basic remarks on the nature of the conflicts in the CIO and the CP

In order to understand the course of events it is important to see the CIO and the CP as contradicting entities containing opposite internal tendencies with regard to both structure and political practise. Where the *CIO* is concerned, we find a decisive internal contradiction from the very conception of the organization: between the newly organized industrial workers' spontaneously democratic demands and autonomous self-organized forms of action, and the wish of certain CIO leaders to create an organization, centralized and controlled by themselves, in order to form a counterweight to the AFL.

It is a misconception to believe that the CIO was the pure and untainted expression of the unskilled, unorganized industrial workers' will to struggle. Several younger historians (e.g. Mike Davis³ and Piven and Cloward⁴) have observed that the labor leaders, whom traditional history presents as the heroes of the labor movement (John Lewis of the United Mine Workers may be the most obvious example), were not initiators of the early struggles of the '30s. At a time when labor militancy was surging in the mass producing industries, these leaders were intensely involved in conflicts within the old AFL bureaucracy, conflicts which were not the cause but an effect of the then already existing mass movement in the working class. Mike Davis puts it this way,

The original CIO was an alliance of dissident trade union bureaucrats with important financial resources and friends in high places, created for the purpose of capturing an already existent mass movement of industrial shop committees and rebel locals – a movement with dangerous embryonic proclivities toward an anti-Gompersian model of class struggle unionism.⁵

The development of the CIO in this period is the result, at least on one level, of the contradiction between a locally organized mass protest movement and a group of top bureaucrats trying to gain control of the new organization – not necessarily to further their own interests, but to give this organization a political perspective which was in line with the labor tradition they themselves represented. This control of the CIO was obtained with the assistance of the American communists, without whom top leaders such as Lewis and Hillman⁶ could not have consolidated their power in the workers' mass movement. I shall return to this important aspect of the internal conflict later.

The *American Communist Party* was, like all western national communist parties, an organization with a double purpose. It was not just an ordinary left-wing organization representing the interests of the American working class (as for instance the PWW or the SPA). The very specific position of the CPUSA was rooted in its ties to the Third International, whose primary purpose was to further the interests of the Soviet Union on a world-wide basis.

As long as these two purposes did not conflict with each other, the CPUSA did not distinguish itself substantially from other left-wing organizations in its political and labor activities. But in certain important phases of the period in question the two purposes *did* conflict, and in these instances Soviet interests were given priority to the building of a socialist movement in the USA, with the result that the interests of the American working class were disregarded. The history of the CPUSA in the '40s will fully illustrate this.⁷

In 1919, the American communists had left the small Socialist Party (SPA) and, until the Great Depression, had led a relatively quiet life without any considerable popular support. In the '20s the party had followed a vacillating labor policy with the long-term purpose of strengthening the labor organization of the American working class in industrial unions.⁸

The altered conditions of class struggle brought about by the economic crisis of the '30s resulted in substantial progress for the party, in regard to both electoral support and increased membership. In spite of all tactically determined vacillations in its policy, the party secured for itself a tremendous success in the '30s because of its determined and aggressive defense of the material interests of the working class against capitalists, tenement owners and official authorities.⁹

When fascism began to gather strength in Europe, the American CP, like all other communist parties, embarked on the Popular Front policy. In the USA this took the form of support for Roosevelt's New Deal and the Democratic Party. American communists now worked in a host of politically broad front organizations and for the first time in its history won general recognition with the American public. The party emphasized its patriotism ("Communism is twentieth century Americanism") and stressed its ideological rapport with national American heroes like Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, and Paine.¹⁰ The membership of the party rose from 40,000 in 1936 to 75,000 in 1938. The majority of these were

Only a very small part of the extensive history of the American Communist Party (CP) and the society it deals with in the American Labor Movement in spite of the fact that communist influence has been made to believe but an established fact. The history, however, falls into two phases belonging to different periods of history. One phase belongs to the late '50s, immediately after McCarthy's downfall and the decline of the CP, as a result of the anti-communist hysteria which had been reduced to an impotent and unproductive sect. Two major works from this period, *CIO* from 1957, and David Saposs, *Communism in America* from 1959, both explain the influence of the CP on unions as the result of the clever application of extensive organizational and manipulative techniques during an unstable period – the depression of the '30s – that the American communists are foreigners – an Un-American element – a contradiction by the fact that the ethnic composition of the communists was, by and large, similar to that of the American population. Even in the '30s, when the CP had its largest influence and growth of membership, it was predominantly white middle class.

The expulsion of the communists is the result of the alleged fundamental difference between the practice of the communists and the democratic principles of the American labor movement and health care system. It was the lack of ability of American communists to follow this democratic line of thought which led to the expulsions.

An important premise to this idea is the dramatization of the role of the American Communist Party and the Soviet Union. A notion which, in part, was politically dependent on the Soviet Union (officially on the Comintern) – a dependency which was bound to be considered traitorous.

Concerning the ethnic composition of the CP, it was by and large similar to the one of the American population. And in the '30s when the CP

membership this new influx was primarily

right-wing criticism of the CP, we find a
as representing the second phase, among
Iason Lichtenstein, who in a 1975 issue of
analysed the relationship between the
ent. Their political interest has been one
t historians, to prove the existence of a
n in the American working class.

critique of the lack of ability of the CP to
g class militancy that existed during the
the post war years. They consider this a
ortant reason why no socialist alternative
itically turbulent period from 1945-48.
a critique of the Popular Front tactic of
ommunists to withhold their "private"
olic and formed an important obstacle to
on.

nan historian, influenced by marxist
lered a contributor to this tradition. In
after im organisierten Kapitalismus from
ss of the CP in the CIO, in spite of its
et Union, as a result of a coalescence of
Union and the American working class
ever, that anti-communism in the CIO
olicies of the CP in this period coalesce
g of the CIO. Thus, he does not find
eological) reasons for the right-wing
of the CP.

of anti-communism in American labor,
g way in one of the latest works in the
rganizer Bert Cochran in *Communism* and
ecause he draws on a wealth of personal
is with then active labor union members,
any of the dogmas of the Cold War
ough he himself is probably part of this
hat makes him more useful than most
s critical attitude to the leading strata of
cy. He considers the bureaucratization
s an almost inevitable and automatic
of "maturing" of any organization, and

consequently he considers the expulsion a necessary means of ridding the organization of the Communist group. The problem remains, however (and this is the theory of the necessity of bureaucratization) whether the Communists themselves actively contribute to the process. An examination of their labor policy during the war shows a radical opposition group. The Communist Party was an obstacle to the above-mentioned organizational change of the CIO.

As these considerations may suggest, there is a conflict within the CIO on the Communist issue. It is not a pure and simple conflict between a right-wing and a left-wing; it is an obvious conflict between a democratic leadership (the American equivalent of the European CIO leadership aiming at centralization) and a rank-and-file leadership (which was the outcome in the '50s). It is not clear what the outcome of the conflict will be. It may become a right-left, rank-and-file-top bureaucracy.

The outcome of the expulsions was, as a result, a centralized and bureaucratized CIO. The rank-and-file initiatives were impeded. The concepts are not useful when it comes to the development of the conflict.

Therefore, in this treatment of anti-Communist labor movement, I have found it appropriate to discuss the function of anti-Communism in the CIO. Was the CIO formed a democratic nor a revolutionary organization? Why was their expulsion necessary? Why at that particular time and how had the expulsions taken place? How could the internal power relations have changed considerably since the late '30s when even the CIO was dependent on the assistance of the Communist Party? The labor movement's own ranks must be considered in the light of the major changes of the domestic as well as the international situation after the termination of the war. The expulsions should be considered both as an internal strife and as a struggle within the labor movement and a struggle against the political and economical factors of both dimensions.

of the conflicts in the CIO and the CP

course of events it is important to see
trading entities containing opposite
gard to both structure and political
concerned, we find a decisive internal
conception of the organization: be-
d industrial workers' spontaneously
autonomous self-organized forms of
in CIO leaders to create an organiza-
lled by themselves, in order to form a

believe that the CIO was the pure and
ne unskilled, unorganized industrial
several younger historians (e.g. Mike
ward⁴) have observed that the labor
history presents as the heroes of the
is of the United Mine Workers may be
were not initiators of the early struggles
labor militancy was surging in the mass
leaders were intensely involved in
bureaucracy, conflicts which were not
e then already existing mass movement
Davis puts it this way,

ce of dissident trade union bureaucrats with
friends in high places, created for the purpose
mass movement of industrial shop committees
th dangerous embryonic proclivities toward an
ruggle unionism.⁵

CIO in this period is the result, at least
fiction between a locally organized mass
oup of top bureaucrats trying to gain
ttion - not necessarily to further their
his organization a political perspective
labor tradition they themselves repre-
CIO was obtained with the assistance of
without whom top leaders such as
ot have consolidated their power in the
shall return to this important aspect of

The American Communist Party was, like communist parties, an organization with a not just an ordinary left-wing organization interests of the American working class (as the SPA). The very specific position of the its ties to the Third International, whose further the interests of the Soviet Union of

As long as these two purposes did not conflict the CPUSA did not distinguish itself from other left-wing organizations in its political and certain important phases of the period in which it did conflict, and in these instances Soviet priority to the building of a socialist movement was the result that the interests of the American working class were disregarded. The history of the CPUSA illustrate this.⁷

In 1919, the American communists had formed the Communist Party (SPA) and, until the Great Depression, led a quiet life without any considerable popular support. The party had followed a vacillating labor policy with the purpose of strengthening the labor organization of the working class in industrial unions.⁸

The altered conditions of class struggle during the economic crisis of the '30s resulted in a sharp decline of the party, in regard to both electoral support and membership. In spite of all tactically determined setbacks the party secured for itself a tremendous success in its determined and aggressive defense of the working class against capitalists, tenement landlords, and other authorities.⁹

When fascism began to gather strength in Europe, the CP, like all other communist parties, errored in its Front policy. In the USA this took the form of supporting F.D.R.'s New Deal and the Democratic Party, which now worked in a host of politically broad fronts. For the first time in its history won general support from the American public. The party emphasized that its program is twentieth century American Socialism in ideological rapport with national American heroes like Jackson, Lincoln, and Paine.¹⁰ The membership rose from 40,000 in 1936 to 75,000 in 1938. The

lectuals, but a large group was
n youth and black organizations.¹¹
creasing influence in several labor
were able to control the leadership
s Union, Fur and Leather Workers
s Union. In the important union of
ommunists controlled a very strong

r, that the support which the com-
ns during these years was not always
must often be seen as the result of the
etermined defense of the economic
embership.¹³ Having mentioned some
ictions in the two organizations, I
of events, which falls into 3 phases:
iod, and the post-war years.

and communists which had led the
e middle of the '30s had had remark-
ew Deal policy seemed to be deserted
and onward, its survival apparently
port, and the communists decided to
socialists and throw in their lot with
Hillman. In the specific situation of
rganization in support of the fragile
molished its party organized factory
ory newsletters, and refrained from
s communists.¹⁴ In this way they
s's attempts to consolidate his control
it in the image of other top-down
FW.

s gladly accepted the aid of the com-
skills in propaganda and organiza-
new organization. The influence the
the labor movement gave the party,
excellent opportunities of becoming
alliance and increased its legitimacy
he zeal with which the communists
od standing in American society and,

as the Browderians wanted, coin an Popular Front is a sad example of how socialist movement in the labor movement union democracy were given last priority after Browder's fall, criticized severely but recognized as an important cause of the post-McCarthy hysteria and reveals a naïve importance of building a mass base in the

I believe that the party's lack of ability to keep the party as ultimately resting on its rank and file for the long-term survival of the party. A major factor was the CP by its cooperation with the CIO leadership in the conflict in question at a very early stage in consolidating the local union democracy in the political balance of the CIO.

World War 2

The war period further reinforced the trends mentioned above section and at the same time the different tendencies in the CIO were in fact operated openly with the Roosevelt administration's official war policy. In an attempt to sustain national strength¹⁵ the CIO abstained from strikes in war industries, the No-Strike Pledge, and in fact further growth by the introduction of co-operation for all workers in the war industries (co-operation).¹⁶

These arrangements affected the internal structure of the CIO in various important respects. The membership was radically changed. As a result of the new Membership clause, a very large group of workers quickly organized from the top, and they were affiliated with the CIO as a result of the case in the '30s.¹⁷ Furthermore, many laborers were drafted and the militant traditions of the CIO were a consequence thereof.¹⁸ And last but not least, the CIO unions placed themselves at the head of CIO in 1941, after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union. The party had opposed the No-Strike Pledge treaty (from 1939 to the summer of '41),¹⁹ and its policy drastically. Once more we witness

centre-right wing of the CIO. The CP
ces in the war industries and, as an
a which the party controlled its mem-
ions came up with the lowest number
he period between 1941 and 1945.²⁰

reintroduction of piecework and
war industries and actively partici-
. In this way the communists lost a
y they might have enjoyed in such
tic and militant union of the auto-
struggle against piecework was con-
f the '30s. The war period as a whole
undermining the substantial respect
nmunists had enjoyed among large
t respect which had earlier impeded
nist forces in the labor movement.²¹

e of an efficient and unbroken war
munists contributed to the strengthen-
s well as to the social integration of
at. In this period they did not even
res to the capitalist organization of
the most reactionary tendencies in
equence of the international alliance
Union, and Great Britain, and especi-
in 1943, the American communists
national strategy to support these
. Thus the Party abandoned their
USA to work for "national unity" in
²² Earl Browder put it this way, in a

life', which is dominated by its capitalist
ive ways, determines that our national unity
tnd modes followed by the Soviet peoples. . . .
y can be achieved only through compromise
. of 'capital and labor'. . . . The Communist
pletely subordinated its own ideas as to the
ystem for our country.²³

ion, I as a Communist am prepared to clasp
izing that class divisions or political groupings

As a result of this broad policy of cooperation dissolved itself to form a loose political thereby demonstrated that it was well connected with the class struggle and the American working class in order to attain the vantage point of the present day) alliance between the Soviet Union and

The Post-war period

Having thus foregone the leadership of the gates were open to the strong anti-communists who exploited the severe post-war labor market for their own purposes. The extent of the labor base dwindled away can be properly understood in the background of their growing isolation of the war period. In what was perhaps the UAW, the anti-communist Walter Reuther after the great 1946 strike at General Motors enormous discontentment which the introduction of piecework and speed-up had created. 1945-46 (which, among other things, was the consequence of an effective wartime wage control) completely the anti-communist forces of the CIO. The strikes were hardly influenced at all and distinguished themselves from the strikes of the '30s, both in regard to the nature of the demands that were put forward.²⁷ In instances where militant local "Industrial Councils" couple of wild cat strikes in various cities were strikes effectively by recalling the auto workers as well as their local democratically elected representatives cause of communist infiltration.²⁸

Often these councils were controlled by the workers and an important part in the political work of the Executive Board to restrict the autonomy of the union. An indication of how the increasing control came down into the CIO and was exploited by the forces here. What is more important, however, is that the national restrictions decided to limit the autonomy of the local actually had severe consequences for local

eratic political control of all local
t of locals to freely decide with which
wanted to cooperate and thus had
explicit intention of limiting the com-

ged rapidly after the war. Following
s was controlled by a conservative
anti-labor Taft-Hartley bill was passed.
tained strength of employers and anti-
moved the results won by the working
he '30s. One, for our purpose, very
the ruling that all labor leaders must
at they were not members of the CP
policies in their capacity of labor
ed out sympathy strikes, secondary
a types of picketing, as well as renew-
ruling against union contributions to
resolutions had a great impact on the
internal CIO conflicts about the com-
stantial cleavage within the organiza-
ct most effectively.

bor movement against this act, which
communists but on the labor move-
ve and failed because of internal dis-
fact that the AFL named the act a
d it bordered on fascism, jurisdictional
ganizations from reaching agreements
posed.

ited front would have been decisive,
both organizations' fear of losing their
Thus, the whole labor movement be-
as the act intended. One important
y to create such an opposition was
federal administration.³⁰ This de-
ad consciously accepted and contri-
Act and onward, now revealed its
being able to resist it. Another reason
mists and anti-communists.

Consequences of the Act

As mentioned above, the Taft-Hartley Act established the interests of the labor movement in putting a halt to all further organizing in the Southern states, the largest unorganized area by the extensive organizing campaigns of the Hartley Act provided the strongly anti-labor possibility of legally weakening the labor movement through so called "right to work" laws of organization in the USA dropped for years.³¹

Several thousand labor officials signed affidavits that they were not communists and strengthened the labor movement so effectively that it was not communists or those merely suspected of being communists who were the focus of everyday events. The pro-communist unionists' militant profile (and therefore suspected of being communists) found themselves in an extremely difficult position as employers had obtained legal sanction to renege on contracts. A general deterioration of wages and living standards was approaching in all sectors where unionization was present.

The legislative attempts of the right-wing movement had given the anti-communist movement opportunities. The internal witchhunt of communists as well as the political regimentation necessary to maintain loyalty to Truman's Cold War policy. It was a political attitude to foreign policy, in the Marshall Plan and the presidential election in 1948, that led to a showdown for the communists in the CIA.

Around 1948, the political situation was very tense. Large liberal and labor groups bore the brunt of Truman's domestic policy, his weak stance on the economy, and his continuously interventionist foreign policy.

To carry out the Marshall Plan would require a large economic margin of domestic social reform and a large amount of money into military purposes. Henry Walling's conciliatory disposition towards the Soviet Union, and to a large spectrum of groups from communists to capitalists, and a potential threat to the effectiveness of Truman's War policy, as he represented some of the

thered momentum towards the end
ber 1947, Wallace announced his
e Citizens' Association) and in the
r popular support than anyone had
ition appeared to be very difficult.

minimal after the Dixiecrats had
European Recovery Programme in
gress seemed doubtful.

a result of growing tension between
e increasing reflections cast on the
f a well publicized anti-communist
Wallace.³² This mudslinging crusade
Wallace campaign and alienating the
ressives from the third party.³³

t led to a passionate sharpening of
dership had systematically moved
man's policies and remained con-

was the only possibility of having
³⁴ Towards the end of 1947, CIO
ndorsed the Marshall Plan, and
as that did not loyally adhere to this
disciplinary measures. The communist
d understandable opposition to the
conflicts within the CIO to unfold
these political issues. This rampant
must not only be regarded as an
chance to get rid of the communists
unity and strength of the organiza-
be CIO. By endorsing Wallace, the
e unity which they had endeavored
inging to CIO president Murray's
and enduring innumerable anti-
r year. By doing so they lost the last

the CIO because their strength in
g. As mentioned above, the Re-
used their congressional majority to
by passing the Taft-Hartley Act,
threatening perspectives. If the CIO
on of a democratic president (and
as only possible if the CIO stood

united), it would greatly improve the relation with the democratic administration. A important ingredient in CIO's political strategy was the former communist labor officials and their alleged attempt to split the CIO. The Transport Workers Union, stated: "If we leave the CIO, the price is too great. . . . I' With this statement he was probably speaking for a majority of American labor.

The remarkably low turnout for Workers' Unity League's ingly remarkable landslide in Truman's election was an unequivocal expression of American identification with the Democratic Party. The results of the election prove that the communist party which would not have been able to win in a different political context. Most decisive factor was communist hysteria and the ensuing pressure. Very few dared associate themselves with the communist participation.

The Expulsions

The scruples and doubts which marred the CIO about passing constitutional amendments for membership had faded away by 1948. At the Cleveland convention the majority of the CIO. Two unions were expelled at the convention. Two unions were expelled the following year as a result of the CIO.³⁶ The expulsions and ensuing decisions were a disaster for the CIO entirely. The CIO now introducing that all locals support the official CIO line on domestic issues. The executive board of the CIO has dictatorial powers to watch the activities of the locals in these cases where they did not comply with the CIO. The CIO had come to represent a centralization which had been unthinkable only a few years earlier.

With regard to membership figures, the CIO has lost from the expulsions during the first year. A large portion of these ret

aged local elections in the respective established new unions to rival the hard time surviving the unfavorable Act. Only a very strong union could s of the NERB and the mounting progressive unions made an existence increasingly difficult. To illustrate the anti-communist campaign in the labor that in 1954 60 percent of all American anti-communist stand by constitution- n membership.³⁷

perspectives concerning the important e Democratic Party (renewed at the a would probably not have been able rt). By expelling the communists the discrediting opposition group and at self from any further discussion of the Truman administration. CIO had ed status as ally and social partner of . by organized opposition within its

idea that CIO's development towards rm organization in close collaboration was intimately connected with the und the CIO communists. One might communists and anti-communists in a of the CIO, as suggested above. With- mmunist victory over the communists unists was identical with this develop- ver, necessary prerequisites.

between the various factions in the O, it is impossible to find any explicit ms of a contradiction between demo- file groups wanting to centralize the munist unions were often strongly ed by a Stalinist orthodoxy which -communist unions. The communists of more democratic conditions in the

unions. On the contrary, in several cases; buted actively to a centralization which, turned out to be a boomerang against ther to centralize power in the hands of the e *vated* by the "communist danger" in the u of the organizational constrictions took pla expulsions or in the immediate context of

Even though it is not possible to contt represented a democratic tendency in the (was to some extent a guarantee against ce regimentation, precisely because the don to check and counterbalance each other fractions were permanently dependent on and file to gain ultimate power.

NOTES

- 1 Nathan Glazer, *The Social Basis of American* (1974).
- 2 From the very start the CIO had provided the possibilities of gaining influence in the new John Lewis, the first president of the CIO, in 1936, that he would accept the aid of all gr establishment of the CIO. He placed commun exploiting their renowned skills in the areas of c See Bert Cochran, *Labor and Communism* (Prince
- 3 Mike Davis, "The Barren Marriage of the Der Labor," *New Left Review*, No. 124, Nov./Dec. 1
- 4 Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *they succeed and how they fail* (New York, 1977).
- 5 Mike Davis. See 3.
- 6 John Lewis and Hillman were presidents of ty Mineworkers Union and Amalgamated Clothit these unions were semi-industrially organized a the early founding phases of the CIO.
- 7 For an international historical perspective on the excellent book by Fernando Claudin, *Krise vægelse*, 2 vols. (Viborg: Modtryk, 1979).
- 8 Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Comm* Philip Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in t* York, 1973).
- 9 Peter Losche, *Industriegewerkschaften im organisie der Roosevelt Era* (Frankfurt, 1974), 158.
- 10 Irwing Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American C* 339.
- 11 *Op.cit.* 347.
- 12 Max Kampelman, *The Communist Party vs. the Cl* also David J. Saposs, *Communism in American* chapter 13.

... , Peter Losche, 159-162, see note 9.
... the fact that the communists, as soon as
... influence in any union, were immediately
... communist forces in and outside the labor
... -baiting as their foremost political weapon.
... these accusations was to meet their critics
... they agreed that infiltration was a bad thing
... convictions and abstaining from arguing
... activities in the unions.

... almost ceased to expand. The economic
... employment and strike activity was but
... . Economically, CIO was suffering from a
... 39, the AFL had caught up with CIO on
... nization had also benefited from the ad-
... d competed effectively with the CIO in
... groups.

... the No-Strike Pledge and the Maintenance
... James Green, "Fighting on two fronts,"
... Nelson Lichtenstein, "Defending the No-
... 5 (1975).

... the reserve army of labor was important
... le incentive to organize or perform active
... the relatively high wages in the war in-
... zgriculture. The differential in many cases
... e these groups, often women and blacks,
... ns whatsoever. See Nelson Lichtenstein,
... ry, 2 (1977).

... inentance of Membership Clause to a large
... against the unavoidable criticism from the
... o provided a necessary stabilization of the
... i. This policy thus illustrates the dilemmas
... ed internal contradictions of the CIO.
... er with Lewis and the Miners became the
... cial CIO No-Strike policy.

... a *McCarthy and the American Labor Movement*
... 6).

... Browder, who, after the war, was removed
... 's blessings.
... 2.

... *Communism in Crisis* (University of California

... *Postwar America* (New York, 1949) chapter 1,
... *Labor from Defense to Reconversion* (Chicago,

... and Bert Cochran, 255, see note 2. Art Preis,
... 2), chapter 23 has a very critical review of
... e strikes.

... 2.
... of this legislation see Joel Seidman, chapter
... ne, chapter 13, see note 26.

... the National Labor Relations Board as an
... collective bargaining units and to regulate

labor practices. It gave federal recognition to
for and asserted throughout the century.]
formally amended the Wagner Act, radically
by stating that only non-communist unions w
rights, besides limiting the rights in various w
union had chosen not to sign the affidavit, i
under the provisions of the act, and would
bargaining etc. alone at the mercy of anti-la
unions. This option was no longer open to CIO
it had chosen to rely more on its relations to e
own rank and file base.

- 31 Colston Warne, 712. See note 26.
- 32 Anti-communism was an important ingred
campaign and closely tied to his endeavors
pansionist foreign policy. Richard Freeland c
communism is consciously employed and c
specifically with the purpose of securing ap
Plan and convicting Wallace. Richard Freelar
Origins of McCarthyism (New York, 1974).
- 33 Bert Cochran, 298-304. See note 2. Joseph R. S
- 34 It should be remembered that the Taft-Hartley
veto, thus making it possible for the CIO to r
was basically pro-labor.
- 35 Bert Cochran, 301-303. See note 2. Joseph R
25. Quill was an active and loyal party mem
- 36 See Max Kampelman note 12 for further deta
- 37 The factual information in this section is fro
munist dominated Unions in the United State
(1968).