

H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences



Harvey Klehr, John E. Haynes, Fridrikh I. Firsov, eds. *The Secret World of American Communism*. New Haven, Conn. and London: Yale University Press, 1995. xxxii + 348 pp. \$25.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-06183-3.

Reviewed by Michael J. Carley (Carleton University)
Published on H-Russia (June, 1995)



The American editors and their Russian collaborator set out in this book to describe the history of the Communist International's relationship with the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA), based on a selection of documents drawn from the large holdings of the Comintern archives in Moscow. The editors contend that the CPUSA was subservient to the Comintern; received large subsidies from the Soviet government; and closely cooperated through its secret apparatus with Soviet government intelligence services. The editors also place their findings within the orthodox and revisionist historiography of the CPUSA. The former school (including Theodore Draper and editors Klehr and Haynes) believes "that the CPUSA was never an independent American political party but a creature given life and meaning by its umbilical ties to the Soviet Union" (p. 17). The revisionist school (including Maurice Isserman, Mark Naison, Ellen W. Schrecker), "holds that the American Communist movement was a normal, albeit radical, political participant in American democracy... with its roots in America's democratic, populist, and revolutionary past" (pp. 17-18). The editors' objective is to show that the revisionist school is wrong in all its main lines, and that American "communists' duplicity poisoned normal political relationships and contributed to the harshness of the anti)communist reaction of the late 1940s and 1950s" (p. 106).

The editors appear determined to deal a mortal blow to the revisionist school, so determined in fact that they do not address what it seems to this reviewer are important questions concerning the Comintern and its relations not only with other national communist parties, but with the Communist party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) and the Soviet government. In the 1920s British, French,

and American diplomats assumed that national communist parties were mere creatures of the Comintern, which was an instrument of the Soviet government controlled by the CPSU. Was it all so simple? What control did the CPSU Politburo exercise over the Comintern at various points during the interwar years? Narkomindel officials (from the commissariat for foreign affairs) often told western diplomats that the Soviet government could not always control the Comintern, and that Narkomindel certainly could not. Was this true? G. V. Chicherin, M. M. Litvinov, and L. B. Krasin were incensed by Comintern activities which interfered with their objectives of establishing business-like relations with the West and of obtaining long, cheap credit to rebuild and develop the Soviet economy. How important were the conflicts which developed within the CPSU and within the Soviet government about the Comintern's impact on Soviet foreign relations? What consequences did these "bureaucratic politics" have on the Comintern and its relations with foreign communist parties?

The editors' apparent determination to down the revisionists leads them to push their evidence rather further than would seem warranted by the documents they have published. This may surprise, since one might have expected the vast Comintern archives to have given up more incriminating evidence. Yale University Press, in its sensational press release of 10 April 1995, claims nevertheless that the editors have bagged the Bolshie bear. But have they?

Consider a few examples. In order to show the extent of Comintern subsidies to foreign communist parties, the editors reproduce a ledger sheet showing payments in 1919-20 to various individuals, denominated in

Russian rubles or in foreign currencies. Those amounts listed in rubles, say the editors, are given in "...value,' indicating jewels, gold, or other valuables rather than currency" (p. 22), though in the document there is no proof of this supposition. The editors do not indicate what the Russian word is, which they have translated as "value," if "valiuta," the English translation is foreign currency or medium of exchange. But whatever the Russian word, "value" does not mean or suggest valuable in the sense meant by the editors.

During the intervention period the Allied powers blockaded Soviet Russia and sought to destroy the value of the many types of circulating paper rubles. What foreign exchange value these rubles did have during the civil war period, was caused by Allied representatives buying them to subsidize anti-Bolshevik activities—incidentally, to the great annoyance of the French government, which wanted to destroy the ruble's value without delay. Rubles, especially Soviet rubles, had no foreign exchange value in January 1920, for example, when the ledger sheet shows that American journalist, John Reed, received 1,008,000 rubles. A seemingly large sum, one might think, but which would have bought very little in Soviet Russia and nothing at all abroad. When Reed tried unsuccessfully to leave Soviet Russia in February 1920, Finnish authorities stopped him with "\$1,500 in various currencies and 102 diamonds estimated to be worth \$14,000, a small fortune in 1920," say the editors—and a great deal more than a million worthless rubles. The editors calculate, nevertheless, that the Comintern gave American communists several million dollars in valuables, based on a future theoretical exchange rate projected back to 1920 where it had no meaning (p. 24). But even if the editors' calculations are correct, Reed tried to leave Soviet Russia with only \$15,500. What happened to the rest of the money and how was it sent to the United States since Reed died later in the year without returning to the United States?

The editors stress the importance of Comintern subsidies to the CPUSA, for example, \$75,000 in 1923 (p. 25). Not a huge sum even by the standards of the 1920s for a country as large and prosperous as the United States. But most Comintern subsidies and CPUSA expenditures mentioned in the editors' documents are three or four figure sums. The financial statement of the "Brother-Son" clandestine network for 1942 shows total expenditures of \$11,311, a beginning balance of \$30,145, and no income. More than half the expenditures are in three figures (pp. 211-12). In 1932 a CPUSA official complained "... it is annoying to expect funds and not get them, because altho

(sic) we are stretching out what we had, lack of assurance of any more prevents us progressing with the work in any way that will involve expense" (p. 51).

The editors also stress the importance of CPUSA secrecy and clandestine work. Once again the documents in the collection suggest that the secrecy was as amateurish as the sums expended to support it were modest. Not the three stooges by any means, but not the nefarious, pervasive operations either, which the editors seek to portray. In 1925 a CPUSA document complains of a "careless method of sending mail" (p. 33); in 1932, of mail being sent to the wrong comrade (p. 51); in 1939, of poor safeguarding of documents (p. 101). And contact with the Comintern was so clandestine that CPUSA officials complained (e.g., in 1932 & 1942) about not hearing from it (pp. 51, 209). In 1939 a top CPUSA official could not recall all the names of the members of Central Control Commission (p. 100). Another document dated 1939 reports that "Party work at Ford companies is badly organized" (p. 102).

The documents present a problem in that they often do not permit definite conclusions, so that the editors are compelled to use such qualifiers as the evidence "suggests" (pp. 109, 231, 247, 294, 295), "most likely" (pp. 59, 103), "probably" (pp. 60, 64, 104, 109, 231), "possibly" (p. 104), "may be" (pp. 126, 132, 294). At one point the editors speak of the "evidentiary weight" of their documents (p. 105), but the editors' use of language suggests the weight of the evidence is rather light.

Even so, some of the editors' most definite conclusions concerning the "integral links" and treasonable activities of the CPUSA with the CPSU and Soviet intelligence agencies (p. 205) are not well supported by their evidence. For example, seventeen CPUSA members were also members of the CPSU, these seventeen become "many" members, by the editors' reckoning (p. 202). The editors publish two documents "pilfered", say the editors, from the State Department by a communist "thief" (pp. 110, 218). Pilfered Soviet documents are a penny a piece in British and French archives. Note also that when American security agencies obtain documents or ciphers, by clandestine means, from the Soviet government during the second world war, the editors offer no negative comments (p. 237). Undoubtedly it is a case of "deux poids, deux mesures".

The editors characterize CPUSA head Earl Browder as an "NKVD Talent Spotter", on the basis of a single document in which Browder reported to the Comintern in 1940 that French Third Republic politician Pierre Cot

wanted to work for a Franco)Soviet alliance. A Soviet defector has alleged that Cot was a Soviet “agent”; his family has asked for a formal inquiry to prove Cot’s innocence. The editors, however, appear to assume that Cot was a Soviet agent, though other French cabinet ministers, for example, Georges Mandel and Paul Reynaud, were strong advocates of a Franco-Soviet alliance, and sometimes went to see the Soviet ambassador in Paris in the late 1930s with information or to complain about the policies of their government. Charles de Gaulle rebuffed Cot in 1940, when he offered his services to the Free French; he was “an embarrassment” because, the editors imply he was tainted by over-enthusiasm for the USSR. To support this point, the editors cite Jean Lacouture’s biography of de Gaulle (pp. 233-7). But Lacouture notes that de Gaulle rejected Cot because of his ties with the rotten Third Republic, not the USSR, and that a year later de Gaulle wrote to Cot to praise his conduct as a “bon Français” (Lacouture, *De Gaulle: Le Rebelle, 1890-1944*, [Paris, 1984], p. 409).

The editors also say that Browder “was sufficiently intimate with the NKVD to ask that his wife’s birth certificate (she was born in Russia) be sent to him through Soviet intelligence channels...” (p. 233). From this bit of evidence and the fact that his wife and his wife’s sister worked or had worked for Soviet agencies, the editors conclude (guilt by association one supposes) that Browder “had direct ties with the NKVD” (p. 249), though later they note that the NKVD provided a channel of communications for the Comintern during world war II because of war)time disruptions (p. 293).

Finally, there is the case of Soviet intelligence operations to obtain American nuclear secrets during the second world war, in which the CPUSA clandestine network was directly involved, assert the editors. The editors focus their attention on one Morris Cohen, code-name Louis, who worked in the CPUSA clandestine network. They produce an undated document, apparently written in early 1943 since it was a summary of 1942 activities, which referred to Louis’ clandestine work. The document strongly implies that Louis was not in the United States in 1942 and that in any event communications with him were “extremely difficult” and that the network did not know what he was doing (pp. 209-10). However, in 1991 a Soviet intelligence officer claimed that in 1942 Louis, Morris Cohen, recruited for Soviet intelligence a physicist who was working on the development of the atomic bomb. Were there thus two agents named Louis or Morris Cohen; if there was one agent, could he have been in two places at the same time; or did he recruit

the American physicist for Soviet intelligence and then go abroad? Further, did the Soviet intelligence officer make a mistake about the date, or did Soviet intelligence officers contact Louis, as an individual, outside the CPUSA network since he had difficult communications with it? The editors observe that Soviet intelligence organizations wanted their agents to sever communist party ties (p. 293).

Unfortunately, the editors do not address these questions, though they claim “that the CPUSA’s own covert arm was an integral part of Soviet atomic espionage” (p. 226). The editors’ evidence fails to support such a sweeping statement. This “evidentiary” problem does not prevent the editors’ from asserting that CPUSA involvement in Soviet atomic espionage “undermine[d] the American political process” (p. 218). They say further that the Soviet explosion of an atomic bomb in 1949 destroyed the monopoly which the United States government hoped to retain for 10 to 20 years and destroyed the American “sense of physical security”. The United States would henceforth have to face the danger of “serious civilian deaths or destruction” (p. 225)) just like Europe & the USSR, the editors might have added. Once again it appears a case of “deux poids, deux mesures”. However, the editors do not stop there, they go on: “Had the American nuclear monopoly lasted longer, Stalin might have refused to allow North Korean Communists to launch the Korean War, or the Chinese Communists might have hesitated to intervene in the war... (p. 226).” The editors do not produce a scrap of evidence to support such assertions.

The gap between the editors’ evidence and the editors’ conclusions is wide. Nor are the above examples mere exceptions, numerous but not systematic, in the editors’ work. On the contrary, in virtually every section of this book the attentive reader will find such gaps. These technical flaws are serious, the result perhaps of the editors’ desire to down the revisionists, once and for all. If the editors’ main objective was to bag the bear, the reader may want to wonder about the reliability of their research methodology.

“Mind the gap,” warns the piped recording in the London Underground to exiting passengers. Readers! Mind the gap also! The evidence adduced in this book suggests, contrary to the editors’ view, that the CPUSA was a relatively small organization, largely made up of amateurs, working with small financial and other resources and having at times inadequate or sporadic communications with the Comintern and indeed between its various

elements. While the CPUSA may well have had close working ties with Soviet intelligence agencies, the evidence produced by the editors fail to show it. This is not to say, by the way, that the CPUSA did not have an important influence on the American labour and black civil rights movements. On the contrary, this influence seems the more impressive in view of the CPUSA's relatively small membership and limited resources.

RESPONSE BY Harvey Klehr <hklehr@ssmain.ss.emory.edu>
John E. Haynes <jhay@loc.gov>

In reviewing our book, *The Secret World of American Communism*, M. J. Carley makes so many misstatements of fact and omits so many details that contradict his assertions that it would take a small book to respond to every silly assertion but here are a few rejoinders to some of his more egregious errors and distortions.

Carley states that we have mistranslated a Comintern accounting sheet showing subsidies to the American Communist Party through John Reed and other of several million rubles of "value" in gold and jewels. According to him the sheet shows only a payment of worthless paper rubles. The first thing to note is that we have seen the original document in Russian and know what we are talking about. Carley has not seen it and, literally, does not know what he is talking about. To be fair, we may be capable of making mistakes in translating from the Russian, but our co-author, Fridrikh Igorevich Firsov, is not. We suspect Professor Firsov's knowledge of Russian is a match for that Professor Carley's. Firsov's knowledge of the language used in Comintern documents, honed by his decades of research as a Russian historian of the Comintern and scholarly supervisor of the Comintern's archives, gives us confidence that our translation is accurate. Further, as we noted in the book, Rudolf Pikhov, chairman of the Committee on Archival Affairs of the Russian Federation and the overall supervisor of all Russian archives, put the value the subsidy delivered to Reed at \$1.5 million. The senior Russian historian Dmitri Volkogonov, who cites this document, estimated the value of the subsidy given to Reed at more than \$1 million U.S. in his own book on Lenin. Translators at the Yale University Press and translators at the Russian archive all agreed that the term on the accounting sheet indicates valuables: gold and jewels, and reflect hard currency values. They have all seen the document in the original Russian while Carley has not seen the original. Professor Carley says they are all wrong. It is Carley who is wrong.

Professor Carley does not seem to know the value of

money. He dismisses a 1923 Soviet payment of \$75,000 to the CPUSA as insignificant. In 1923 \$1,000 was a annual salary that would have been welcomed by many American workers. Thus this single payment would have taken care of the full-time annual salaries of roughly seventy-five CPUSA organizers and officials, hardly insignificant. Carley claims that we suggest that Soviet trade revenue financed Comintern activities and even gives page numbers for where we did this. We never wrote anything even resembling this and on checking the pages on which he claimed we made this suggestion we can find nothing supporting his bizarre assertion. Carley also seems unaware of already published documents about the size of Soviet subsidies to the CPUSA. We refer him to our "Moscow Gold," Confirmed at Last?" (Labor History 33,2 and 33,4, Spring and Fall 1992) which reproduced documents showing secret Soviet subsidies to the CPUSA continuing into the 1980s with payments in that decade averaging \$2 million a year until 1989.

Carley says we make too much of a document showing that Earl Browder's "wife's sister" worked for what Carley calls "the Soviet government." Browder did have a sister-in-law but we don't discuss her. We presume that Carley has confused the sister-in-law with Margaret Browder, the person discussed in two documents, who is clearly and repeatedly identified as Earl Browder's own sister (Earl actually recruited her to the Communist movement). And what she worked for, what Carley euphemistically calls "the Russian government," was the foreign intelligence branch of the NKVD. We reproduce documents demonstrating that Browder asked that she be removed from that position – not because he thought here was anything objectionable about such activity – but lest it embarrass him if it became known. Its an embarrassment for Carley as well, thus his hiding the agency Margaret Browder worked for behind a bland euphemism.

Carley equates the evidence we published of the theft of State Department documents by a CPUSA source with American intelligence decoding Soviet cable traffic. Carley seems unable to understand that the point is not what Soviet or American intelligence was doing; what those documents show is the assistance provided by AMERICAN Communists to Soviet intelligence. If there was some equivalent of the CPUSA – moles of the Democratic or Republican parties inside the Soviet government – aiding American intelligence we are not aware of it.

Carley says the only evidence of Pierre Cot having a covert relationship with the Soviets was an allegation by

a Soviet defector. As we stated in the book, in addition to the statement by a defecting Soviet intelligence officer, Cot was identified by American and British decoding of wartime Soviet cable traffic as having been recruited by the Soviets. In the book we reproduce Browder's message informing the Soviets that Cot, then a newly arrived exile in the U.S., had met with Browder and "wants the leaders of the Soviet Union to know of his willingness to perform whatever mission we might choose." Carley, in the face of the other evidence, wants readers to believe that the Soviets rejected Cot's offer. The evidence is otherwise.

Carley misunderstands the Louis/Morris Cohen matter but most egregious is his failing to note that the report from the CPUSA's Brother-Son network records the network's cooperation with Vasily Zubilin, the NKVD agent who supervised Soviet penetration of the Manhattan project. Carley is equally silent about the cable we reproduce in which Eugene Dennis, then number two in the CPUSA hierarchy, asked on his behalf and that of Browder, for Soviet instructions about the use of CPUSA contacts in the OSS and OWI. Nor does he mention the documents demonstrating the contact between Soviet military intelligence and a CPUSA network in Washington, DC, NKVD documents checking for Comintern files on Americans who are later identified by defectors or by FBI surveillance as Soviet spies, documents reporting CPUSA manipulation of a U.S. government agencies in 1938, or the stolen OSS document we reproduce. Carley's effort to minimize or ignore cooperation between the CPUSA and Soviet intelligence agencies will not work. We reproduce the documents in our book. Readers who doubt our claims can read them for themselves.

Carley's claim in his original post that Stalin did not control the Comintern or his equally bizarre theory that the Comintern was somehow independent of CPSU and Soviet government control, a loose cannon undermining Soviet foreign policy, are breathtaking assertions that can be accepted as plausible only by the truly naive or willfully blind.

There are in the Comintern archive literally thousands of pages of exchanges between the CPUSA and the Comintern: letters, cables, memoranda, and reports. For most of the Comintern's existence the CPUSA stationed a permanent representative in Moscow whose sole duty was to act as CPUSA liaison to the Comintern. And, there were Comintern representatives in the U.S. who regularly communicated directives and reports. As we noted in the book, the Comintern archive has many thousands

of pages of transcripts of the verbal reports by American Communist leaders and their detailed cross-examination by officials of the Comintern's "Anglo-American Secretariat." There are innumerable instructions going to the USA and numerous requests for instructions coming to Moscow. In the face of all of this Carley's assertion that the CPUSA had "inadequate or sporadic communications" with the Comintern is ridiculous.

At one point Carley berates us for being cautious in our claims. We plead guilty to using words like "probably," "suggest," "most likely," etc. We do not lightly or quickly accuse people of being espionage agents; when the evidence requires qualification, we qualify it – nor do we, by the way, accuse anyone of "treason" as Carley charges. There is no single smoking gun document in this book. It is the weight of all the documents and their relationship with other known evidence that led us to our conclusions. Carley reminds us of the Holocaust deniers who confidently assert that because there is no signed order from Hitler ordering the extermination of the Jews the Holocaust itself didn't happen or, like Carley's fantasy of the Comintern as an autonomous agency independent of Stalin, that the SS did it behind Hitler's back.

Carley claims that in this book we have set out "to describe the history of the Communist International's relationship with the Communist Party of the United States." That badly misstates what the book is about. *The Secret World of American Communism* is about documents dealing with the CPUSA's underground. That's why it has the title it has. The CPUSA-Comintern relationship will be developed in documents in the next volume, and we make this clear in our book. Carley did not read our book with any care and missed this just as he missed much else. We note that he even has misidentified the three authors as editors.

One of the reasons we and the Yale University Press choose to reproduce the entire texts of most of the documents we used is so that readers could make their own judgments. Professor Carley has tried mightily to give a benign spin to several of those we used. The human mind is a wondrous thing, and some readers may be able to join him in this, but we think most readers will not be able to perform such mental gymnastics for more than a few documents. We confidently urge people to read the documents.

Professor Carley does not seem to realize what is happening with the opening of this archive. He can continue to insist that the earth is flat and that if it were round

we would all be falling off. But scholars no longer pay attention to the flat-earth people. We will be publishing two more volumes of documents. Even with that, we will have only picked a few of the interesting and instructive items of the mountain of material open for research in Moscow. Others researchers are busy finding more and in the years ahead these will be published. These documents are devastating; they detail a mountain of criminality. Our book deals with one small part of the Communist movement and demonstrates that the leadership of the American Communist party willingly cooperated with Soviet intelligence agencies. It describes, in their own words, the creation by the CPUSA leadership of a "secret apparatus" that penetrated U.S. government agencies, worked hand-in-glove with the KGB and GRU, helped finger Soviet dissidents, and cooperated in Trotsky's assassination. Mr. Carley admires this outfit when he's not making excuses for its behavior or insisting on the moral equivalence of the U.S. and the USSR. That's his privilege, but we urge readers of this list not to believe that his review bears any resemblance to the contents of our book.

RESPONSE BY Mike Haynes, University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom <le1958@ccug.wlv.ac.uk>

May I be permitted a comment on the problem of Moscow Gold?

I have not yet had a chance to look at the contested discussion on American Communism but we have had a similar debate in Britain over Moscow Gold and the British Communist Party so I suspect that I am familiar with the outlines of the debate. In this context the following thoughts occur to me:

1. Puzzlement? why is there so much obsession in the US with using the collapse of the USSR to settle scores? So far as I can see most of the pro Soviet left certainly got it wrong but so too did the right. Some certainly predicted the collapse of the Soviet Union but then they did so continuously so that when it did collapse their analysis was only proved correct in the way that the famous stopped clock is right every once in a while. By far the biggest section of the right, however, was of the view that the dictatorial character of the Soviet system was so powerful that it could not collapse. So they were wrong too.

2. Who is occupying the moral high ground? If we argue that the old system was the embodiment of all evil and that there was no moral equivalence between the US and the SU then how do we cope with the fact that we are

still dealing with people who ran the old system - that so many of the old centres of power including the control of the archives lie in the hands of the old apparatchiks. No less than politicians can historians avoid this issue. I do not necessarily dispute the correctness of the information of funding revealed by the Russian historians concerned but its a bit rich to claim extra credit because of where it comes from see since these figures effectively presided over the old Ministry of Disinformation for Historians.

3. The Russian Revolution was in part a response to the collapse of the idea of international socialism in its Second International form and it reflected a renewed determination to create a genuine internationalism. This can be seen in the writings of the early leaders and it was reflected at a much deeper level in the wider debates and even on the banners of the demonstrations where international socialism had much more than a rhetorical character. It was often the case that many ordinary Russians had a hazy understanding of international affairs in this early period but we should be careful about eliminating often genuine feelings of solidarity from history.

4. Because of this internationalism in their own terms the Bolsheviks would have been deserving of criticism had their been no Moscow gold. And they were quite open about this. By chance I have just come across some notes from the Second Comintern Congress of 1920

'Proletarian internationalism ... demands 1. the subordination of the intertests of the proletarian struggle in one country to the interests of the struggle on a world scale; 2. that the nation which achieves victory over the bourgeoisie first shall display the capacity and readiness to make the greatest national sacrifices in order to overthrow international capitalism'.

5. The key issue therefore is the politics of the connection. Here the degeneration of the revolution from the ideas of 1917 is crucial and particularly the development of the idea of socialism in one country because that meant that the whole relationship was stood on its head and the western Cps were used to further not international revolution but the foreign policy interests of the Soviet state. One aspect of this was the encouragement - especially during the Popular Front period - of Western Communist parties to portray themselves as being as much the inheritors of specific national traditions of radicalism (rather than traditions that developed within individual societies but on the basis of social and economic forms that were international in character).in the belief that a compromise with nationalism would give them greater legitimacy. If you wish to cast the debate in

terms of influence 'from abroad' 'foreign pressure' this is essentially to adopt a nationalist perspective - some undoubtedly do this consciously but it behoves us all to make our assumptions clear.

6. Elements of that first tradition address a human need that we all feel to connect with one another. It was good that people from all over the world contributed time, effort and money to bring down the South African regime. The pity was that for so long governments did so little. For my part I am happy to have given money and signed a petition to try to save someone on death row in the US this weekend for however unpalatable it may be to people in the United States to have criticism from abroad I reject the idea that we live in national boxes and I believe that capital punishment in the United States is a disgrace to a civilized society. I have then to accept the consequences of this position and recognize the right of people in the United States to give money and support to criticizing and affecting the policies of the British government as in Ireland. Uncomfortable though this sometimes is I have to accept it because the real question is not the abstract one of whether aid should be given but the specific political question of whether a thing is right or wrong. That question is not solved by running up the Stars and Stripes, the Union Jack or the Soviet Flag over political issues.

7. Moscow gold however is misleading in another sense - it cannot explain the development of communist parties. The Russian revolution had such an appeal immediately after 1917 because it seemed to offer a way out of a dead end that many radical traditions across the advanced world had got into. As a labour historian who has worked on both the British and Russian experience I would argue that this is evident in the practice of the labour movement as well as its ideology. In particular the stress on the centrality of the industrial working class, the need to build a socialist politics around workplace issues and strikes, the need to fight for rank and file movements to capture the trade unions from increasing bureaucratisation - these were concepts that were embryonically present before 1917 and the direction of things to come.

8. The fact that everywhere the early communist parties drew on complex traditions that were developing organically is important because it helps us to understand the mechanism by which control was established in the interests of Soviet policy in the 1920s. This was a process of leaning first in favour of one faction and then in favour of another. Russian influence was crucial but it was cru-

cial because it linked in to the way in which the communist parties in the west had roots albeit uneven ones. Nowhere was the argument sufficient that 'Moscow says we have to do this

RESPONSE BY M.J. Carley <mcарley@ccs.carleton.ca>.

May I reply please to the rebuttal of my review by Messrs. Klehr and Haynes. I think it would be appropriate to offer point by point comments, but I would like to start by responding to the unsuitable and offensive analogy between my views and the denial of the Holocaust. I can understand that the editors do not like my review of their book, but there is no justification for such comment; and frankly I am surprised that the moderator let it pass.

Not being a denier of the Holocaust nor a member of any flat earth society, let me say that I am a scholar of western-Soviet relations and in particular those relations between the two world wars. I am not a specialist in the CPUSA, but I am in western-Soviet relations and in particular Anglo-Franco-Soviet relations between 1917 and 1939. I have published a book and a large number of articles (four of which forthcoming or submitted for publication) on various aspects of these relations. I am working with R. K. Debo on a book concerning western-Soviet relations in the 1920s based on French, British, German, American, and, yes, soon, Soviet archives, though of course we have already made good use of the series of published Soviet papers.

Contrary to the assertions of the editors, I do have some passing knowledge of Comintern activities and of western attitudes toward them during the inter-war years. With this in mind, I dare still to differ with the editors about the ledger sheet which they reproduced in their book. They say that I have not seen the document first hand; this of course is true. I did however see the reproduction of it in their book, and I assumed (I assume still) that it was/is a faithful reproduction of the actual ledger sheet, from which any critical mind could draw conclusions. I am sure that Messrs. Firsov, Pikhov, and Volkogonov are honourable and honest men, but no critical reader should be prepared to take their word on Comintern subsidies to the CPUSA. Incidentally, Dimitri Volkogonov is a special assistant to Russian president Boris Yeltsin; I would not be the first commentator to note that his views, however interesting, should not be accepted uncritically, since Yeltsin wishes to discredit Soviet history in order to defeat his present political enemies.

In my initial comments I asked what is the Russian word which the editors translated as “value”, and I ask again: What is the Russian word for “value”? When readers know what it is, they will not have to take anyone’s word, they can decide for ourselves. I note that in their very long reply on this point, the authors did not answer my query on the Russian word, or concerning John Reed’s 1,008,000 rubles. The editors state that Reed tried to leave Soviet Russia in February 1920 with \$15,500 in foreign currency and diamonds. Very well, but as the editors note Reed was jailed in Finland and then went back to Soviet Russia, where he died without returning to the United States. I asked what happened to the rest of the large sum of money given to Reed, assuming the editors’ calculations to be correct, and how it was sent to American communists? Indeed, if Reed was to act as courier of this money, why was he carrying only \$15,500 and not a million or two million dollars of valuables? The question is a reasonable one, and remains to be answered. The editors appear to be using what I would call the “expert’s argument”: trust us, trust Messrs. Volkogonov et al., and accept without question our assertions.

As for the \$75,000 Comintern subsidy paid to the CPUSA, I did not dispute that it was paid, nor in fact would I dispute that the Comintern paid subsidies to various foreign communist parties. I said that I did not think the sum was large, and the editors have only confirmed my supposition. They say that the \$75,000 would have paid the annual salary of 75 CPUSA organizers and officials, presumably 25 of them in clandestine activities, since the editors say that \$25,000 “... was to support illegal operations of various sorts” (p. 25). So let us say that the money paid for 50 organizers for a year. That would be one approximately for each state, and one for every two to three million Americans (depending on the census) - for one year. I rest my case.

The editors, of course, refer to their articles in *LABOR HISTORY*, and they talk about Soviet subsidies continuing until the 1980s. Their book and my comments pertain mostly to the interwar years, and it is from their documents that I drew the conclusion that the subsidies were not substantial. Even Volkogonov in his book on Lenin notes that Comintern subsidies fell off in the 1930s (pp. 403, 406). Incidentally, I could find no reference in Volkogonov’s *LENIN* about Comintern monies paid over to John Reed.

With regard to E. Browder’s sister’s connection with Soviet government agencies, whether it was his sister or sister-in-law (*mea culpa*), my point still stands. If the ed-

itors want to demonstrate Browder’s close connections with the NKVD, they need only to produce documents or other evidence demonstrating these connections with respect to policy formulation and implementation. Browder’s request for his wife’s birth certificate through an NKVD channel does not achieve this object, any more than Browder’s request that his sister stop working for the NKVD. The latter request does, however, demonstrate his good & prudent political sense. The editors indict me & attempt to discredit me for confusing Browder’s sister with his sister-in-law; fair enough, though my error is similar to theirs in dating the Polish repulse of the Soviet invasion to 1921 (p. 6), when it actually took place in 1920, after a Polish offensive in April 1920 undertaken with tacit French government support (see my articles on the subject in *Historical Journal* [1976] & *International History Review* [1980]). If the editors care to nit-pick; so can the reviewer.

I consider that the editors have demonstrated a lack of fair play in quoting from the first draft of my review which the H-Russia moderator clearly stated he had mistakenly circulated and was not intended for posting. Even the second draft on H-Russia contained a few mistakes. The version which was cross-posted to H-Labour and H-Diplo is the review for which I will stand to account. There are several examples of references to the early draft: one is the editors’ on the use of Soviet trade revenue for Comintern purposes. The French and British governments thought this was in fact the case, by the way, and it is a good lead to follow up. The editors deny making any such suggestion. But here is what they say & to which I referred in my first draft: The editors explain that the U. S. State Department was concerned that “Soviet authorities” had furnished funds to Americans Julius and Armand Hammer for the purchase of a bank through which funds could be transferred surreptitiously objectives. “The concern was justified,” state the editors: “In 1927 British police raided the London offices of Arcos - the All-Russian Co-Operative Society - an agency ostensibly engaged in promoting Soviet-British trade” (p. 27). “Ostensibly” suggests that Arcos had other surreptitious activities. Maybe it did, but the British Foreign Office did not think the police had turned up enough incriminating evidence to justify the rupture of diplomatic relations. Tory “die-hards” did not need much of an excuse; Arcos would do, and they got rupture.

The editors do not like my comparison of the “pilfering” of State Department documents with the acquisition, shall I say, of Soviet documents. It is not the same thing, claim the editors, because “AMERICAN com-

munists” provided the documents to Soviet intelligence agencies. Well, sorry, but the British and French governments got their documents, inter alia, from Soviet communists, anti-Bolsheviks both in and out of Soviet Russia/USSR, and indeed from enterprising document counterfeiters. These gentlemen did a good business with the American, British, French, and German governments, which later proved rather an embarrassment to them all. Readers should decide if the analogy fails.

On the case of Pierre Cot, the verdict is still out. It is quite true that I did not mention British and American decrypts of Soviet cable traffic suggesting Cot’s culpability, but it is unclear how the cables implicate Cot and the authors do not say it - they simply assume that Cot was a “Soviet agent”. Maybe he was, but the case is not proved.

The editors say that I “misunderstand” the Louis/Morris Cohen matter (i.e., atomic espionage); I do not think so. I ask a number of pertinent questions concerning this issue which the editors do not answer, and the affair requires some further elucidation before the drawing of any dramatic conclusions.

I am glad incidentally that the editors raise the matter of CPUSA involvement with British and American intelligence agencies. Initially, I was puzzled by the editors’ indignation because the CPUSA was cooperating with these agencies against Nazi Germany and fascist Italy. Readers may remember that the USA and the USSR were allies during the second world war. What appears to bother the editors is that American communists lied about being communists or continued their loyalties to the communist party while assisting British and American intelligence services (e.g., pp. 267, 279-80). I do not remember that the USSR, or European communist resistance movements (which dominated the resistance in Europe against fascism), agreed to give up being communist for the sake of the alliance anymore than the USA agreed to give up being capitalist. Alliance partners agreed to “caler la voile”, trim their ideological sails, but no more than that.

Incidentally, the editors appear to make a good deal out of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact. It was a badge of shame for the Soviet government, without a doubt, but before the editors wax too indignant on that issue, I would suggest that they examine a little the conduct of the French and British governments over the previous five years during which they repeatedly rejected Soviet initiatives for an anti-Nazi alliance (see, inter alia, my recent or forthcoming articles in *Cahiers du Mode Russe et Sovietique* [1992], *Europe-Asia Studies* [1993], *Canadian*

Journal of History [1994 & forthcoming 1995], *Historical Reflections* [1996]). The editors might also like to read a little A.J.P. Taylor.

The editors again refer back to the early draft of the review, more fair play, to say that it is positively ridiculous to suppose that the Comintern could act without CPSU/Soviet government approval. And it is here that the editors reach the paroxysm of their incredulous indignation that I should even suggest that the Soviet government/CPSU could not always control the Comintern or foreign communist parties. A curious position for the editors, since even Volkogonov - within whose robes the editors like to warm themselves - indicates that the Soviet government did not exercise full control until after 1924 (LENIN, p. 405); Foreign Officials did not think there was full control even in 1936 as they watched the Popular Front take power in France. There is considerable evidence in French, British, and German archives of the Soviet government’s inability to control fully Comintern activities. Whether it was a communist ruse, I cannot say, but the hypothesis is worth further investigation, not the editors’ dogmatic, dismissive indignation.

Continuing their fair play, the editors refer to my use of the word “treason” [my characterization of the editors’ view of CPUSA activities] in the early draft [not in the finished review], but then they themselves take about “a mountain of criminality” which they will expose in future. The editors also ridicule my position by misquoting me in referring to “inadequate or sporadic communications” between the CPUSA and the Comintern. The full and proper quotation is “... having at times inadequate or sporadic communications with the Comintern and indeed between its [i.e., CPUSA] various elements.” This is a conclusion, by the way, which I drew from reading the editors’ documents.

The editors further say they have produced “no single smoking gun” in their book. Who could disagree? They might then wish to instruct Yale U. P. to exercise a little more restraint in any subsequent press releases. And the editors dislike being referred to as “editors” even though they have critically edited a collection of 92 Comintern documents, more proof they suggest of my careless review of their work. I do not wish to offer personal offence, and so henceforth I will refer to the editors as authors - as they wish. And finally the authors accuse me of insisting on the “moral equivalence” of the United States and the USSR. I never spoke of moral equivalence and I do not think morality should normally be mixed up in the exercise of foreign policy. Morality and foreign policy

like religion and politics is poisonous and usually false and self-interested. What I would say, however, is that historians should try to understand what the Soviet government considered to be its legitimate security interests.

The authors quite rightly condemn Stalin's assassination of Trotskii, and they would rightly condemn the purges and all the other murderous acts of Stalinism. But this book is about other matters, and here the authors would do well to consider whether they want to continue to sledgehammer documents into a rigid, dogmatic cold war framework. In case the authors have not noticed, the cold war is over. The USSR lies defeated and dismembered; Russia is thrown back to frontiers roughly equivalent to those of the 17th century. The United States and the capitalist west are triumphant! Why do the authors not get on with writing good, sophisticated history, instead of continuing their necrophilic grapple with the corpse of a dead adversary.

RESPONSE BY Harvey Klehr <hklehr@ssmain.ss.emory.edu>
John E. Haynes <jhay@loc.gov>

Professor Carley's latest post confirms that he did not read our book very carefully. Let us start with a trivial issue; whether we are authors or, as he insists on calling us, editors. In the heading of his initial review, where the title of the book and other publishing information is placed, Professor Carley writes "Edited by..." Whether or not he thinks we deserve to be called authors, he was under an obligation to readers to accurately describe the publishing data in the book he was reviewing. On to more substantive matters. In document #1 regarding the subsidies to the American Communist movement, we translated a word describing the form in which the subsidy was transmitted as "value" and explained that in that context it meant something of value or valuables such as jewels. As we noted, Russian historians and Russian translators who examined the document agreed with the accuracy of this characterization. Carley speculates that the word we translated was "valiuta" or "stoimost'" and goes on to weave an intricate web about worthless paper rubles. Wrong guesses. The Russian word is "tsennosti;" and its meanings include things of value, valuables, and jewels.

Carley asks what happened to that large sum and why John Reed only had about \$15,000 in currency and jewels when he was arrested in Finland. We do not know. There were a number of other Americans in Russian and other Comintern emissaries available to carry funds back to America. It would have been the height of folly for Reed or any other single individual to have attempted to

smuggle the entire sum into the U.S; Reed's arrest amply demonstrated the wisdom of dividing up the fund into smaller amounts for transmittal. We also call attention to the fact that the same documents list three other persons who received 1.72 million rubles worth of valuables for the American movement. Moreover, these sums are contained on a long list of other Comintern payments to foreign Communists. Some of these payments were made in marks, pounds, or other foreign currencies and some in more tsennosti. What would be the purpose of paying Reed and the others in paper rubles that had no exchange value and would have been useless for the intended purpose of jump-starting the international Communist movement?

And, one final example of Professor Carley's carelessness on this issue. We noted that Dmitri Volkogonov in his LENIN stated that Reed received more than one million in U.S. dollars for the American Communist movement. Mr. Carley in his reply said "I could find no reference in Volkogonov's LENIN about Comintern monies paid over to John Reed." Mr. Carley should look harder. On page 364 of LENIN: A NEW BIOGRAPHY (New York: The Free Press, 1994) is the following exact quote regarding Comintern subsidies: "A typical monthly statement begins with Hungary and continues with Czechoslovakia, Germany, Italy, America (including US\$1.008m for John Reed), England, the Balkans, Sweden and Switzerland." The statement is footnoted and the footnote on page 503 references the same document that is reproduced in our book as document #1.

Just how much did the Comintern give to the American Communist movement? Thirty-five years ago Theodore Draper estimated that in its first fifteen years of existence, the CPUSA received anywhere from half a million to five million dollars. It now appears that the latter figure is closer to the truth. Professor Carley keeps repeating that \$75,000 in one year was a trivial amount. We reproduced only a few of the documents we found that discussed the transfer of money from the USSR to the U.S. In addition to the regular yearly subsidies there were frequent additions for all sorts of special projects, ranging from starting up the DAILY WORKER to separate subsidies for trade union work. Even leaving aside these special payments, the yearly subsidy enabled a small and struggling political organization – which the CPUSA was in the 1920s – to deploy far more resources than any of its rivals on the American left and to support a party structure and full-time staff whose numbers were the envy of rival groups whose actual American membership was many times that of the CPUSA. Adjusted for inflation that

\$75,000 figure would be the equivalent to \$670,000 today. Small change?

Professor Carley raises a series of questions about Morris Cohen's role in Soviet atomic espionage and the links between the CPUSA's secret apparatus and that espionage. Morris Cohen, who just died in Moscow, was an American Communist who was recruited as a Soviet spy while in Spain fighting with the International Brigades. We present evidence suggesting that other American members of the Brigades may have been recruited as well. He was trained as a radio operator and given the code name Louis. The KGB has proudly claimed credit for Cohen's role in atomic espionage. The KGB has also credited Vasily Zubilin as being the KGB officer in the U.S. who supervised penetration of the Manhattan project. One document reproduced in our book is a report of the Brother-Son network headed by Rudy Baker, the man in charge of the CPUSA secret apparatus. Baker notes that Louis is a radio operator in the network in 1942 and that his network is working in close cooperation with Vasily Zubilin. Thus, our conclusion that Louis/Cohen and Louis of the Brother-Son document were the same is based on both having the same codename, both being radio operators, and both being associated with atomic espionage.

Carley says the Brother-Son document implies that Louis was abroad in 1942 and could not be the Louis who Chikov, the retired KGB officer, said recruited a key Soviet source. The Brother-Son document used pseudonyms for locations and Louis may or may not have been abroad. Further, the report is from early 1943, and the references to the difficulty of contacting Louis refer to difficulties in changing his assignment at that time, early 1943, and do not refer to all of 1942. Chikov's account places Louis/Cohen's recruitment of an American physicist in mid-1942 and that is not inconsistent with what is in the Brother-Son document. But, as we noted in the book, Chikov's account is one that was released with the cooperation of the Russian successor agency to the KGB and the information he gives must be evaluated with that in mind. Because the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service still has institutional reasons to maintain the secrecy of Soviet-era spies, Chikov gives a pseudonym for the scientist Louis/Cohen recruited. Out of a desire to obscure exactly who was recruited, we regard it as possible that the date Chikov gives is not exact. Chikov is publishing a longer version of his story of the Cohens' life as Soviet spies and this may provide additional information on this matter.

None of this, however, does Carley's enterprise of separating American Communists from Soviet espionage much good. Even if we are wrong that the Brother-Son document's Louis is Louis/Cohen, Morris Cohen remains an American Communist recruited along with his wife, also a CPUSA member, for a life-long career as Soviet spies. Nor does that even affect the incontestable fact that the document we reproduced shows that the Brother-Son network, a CPUSA instrument, was supporting the activities of Vasily Zubilin, the NKVD supervisor of the penetration of the Manhattan project.

But the connection between the CPUSA and atomic espionage goes deeper. Just this week the CIA and NSA released 49 documents that are part of the VENONA decrypts. These were coded cables sent to Moscow in the 1940s by Soviet offices in the U.S. They are the first batch of 2,200 decrypted NKVD cables that will be released in the next year. In addition to proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that the Rosenbergs were Soviet spies, the released documents make it clear that Bernard Schuster, a CPUSA official in New York who worked in Baker's apparatus, was providing logistical assistance to the NKVD's atomic espionage. The NSA-CIA announcement about what to expect in the documents to be released in the next year notes: "Information derived from the VENONA translations shows the KGB's [NKVD's] extensive contacts with the American Communist Party. Many of the espionage activities by members of the American Communist Party are reflected in the VENONA translations."

Mr. Carley's assertions about Earl Browder are puzzling. To demonstrate Browder's ties to the NKVD, he insists, we "need only to produce documents or other evidence demonstrating these connections with respect to policy formulation and implementation." We are at a loss to understand what Carley is getting at. That the NKVD determined CPUSA policy? That wasn't its function. The Comintern took care of that task. But our point were really quite simple. Through the NKVD Browder informed the Soviets that Cot, then a newly arrived exile in the U.S., had met with Browder and "wants the leaders of the Soviet Union to know of his willingness to perform whatever mission we might choose." As we note, decrypted Soviet radio cables, VENONA again, showed that the NKVD took Cot up on his offer. But that was not Browder's only connection to the NKVD. He was fully cognizant of the activities of the Brother-Son network and its links to Zubilin.

If Professor Carley had carefully read our book he would have found documents where the CPUSA and

Browder quite clearly took orders from the NKVD. We reproduce documents demonstrating that Browder and Gene Dennis accepted orders from the Comintern and the NKVD to close down an operation against Nazi Germany in which American Communists cooperated with the OSS during World War II. In his latest post Carley hopelessly confused this episode. Mr. Carley reports that he was “puzzled by our indignation that the CPUSA cooperated with American and British intelligence against Nazi Germany.” We’re puzzled as well because we said nothing of the sort. Our point was and is that American Communists STOPPED cooperating with American and British intelligence on Soviet orders. What we wrote was exactly the reverse of what Mr. Carley thinks we wrote.

Some of Professor Carley’s other remarks seem to us irrelevant. What has the conduct of the British and French governments in the 1930s to do with our book on the American Communist party underground operations? Carley brings up what some anti-Bolsheviks may or may not have done in the USSR. Again, we are writing about what American Communists were doing in America. On the other hand, he says we should not have talked about the assassination of Trotsky because he says our book “is about other matters.” We did not gratuitously bring up Trotsky’s assassination. We brought it up in connection with the CPUSA’s secret apparatus’s role in infiltrating the American Trotskyist organization and its direct role in the successful insertion of the assassin into Trotsky’s Mexican residence.

We realize this is tedious, but a few final examples of Mr. Carley not being aware of what he has said. He now claims that we have unfairly taken him to task for using the word “treason” in the first of the two versions of his review that were posted— a word that “was not in the finished review.” But in the finished review here is Professor Carley talking about “the editors’ [sic] most definite conclusions concerning the ‘integral links’ and treasonable activities of the CPUSA.” And, he now says that because we talk of a “mountain of criminality,” he is somehow justified in using the word treason. But not all criminal activities are treasonable. Treason has a precise and limited meaning and we do not use it. Professor Carley is more free with his words. Also, Mr. Carley states that a passing reference we made to the Polish-Bolshevik war was wrong by our dating its end to 1921 rather than 1920. The battle of the Vistula was in 1920, to be sure, but the war did not end until the Treaty of Riga of March 18, 1921.

RESPONSE BY M.J. Carley <mcарley@ccs.carleton.ca>

Messrs. Klehr & Haynes! Shall we go around one more time?

Thank you for the reference to Volkogonov [by the way readers, if you search for it, the authors transposed the page number; look on p. 346]. Volkogonov says US\$1.008m; the authors say 1.008m rubles in valuables. And the authors do not know how the money got to the United States. It is a incongruous admission among the accusatory, ad hominem allegations and statements made by the authors.

Readers! Would you not agree? The authors’ words “We do not know” mark the beginning of the path to scholarly wisdom and humility. But authors! If you do not know how the money was sent to the United States, how can you be sure that it was sent in full or at all, as you state unequivocally (p. 24)? Even the Comintern could not keep track of all its money.

Since the authors excuse themselves for delving into trivial issues; I shall do the same. The authors reply triumphantly to my comment about the dates of the Soviet-Polish war that the treaty of Riga was signed in March 1921 and that therefore their reference is after all correct. But here is what the authors actually write: “When Poland repulsed a Soviet invasion in 1921...” A trivial matter which illustrates the authors’ skill in legerdemain, but not in historical accuracy.

On the matter of CPUSA involvement in Soviet atomic espionage: Readers, you may remember that I asked, inter alia, how agent Louis could be in the United States in 1942 helping Soviet intelligence services to penetrate the Manhattan project, and at the same time be abroad. The authors say that the brother-son document points to difficulties in contacting Louis in early 1943 and that the report is about changing Louis’ assignment “at that time, early 1943, and do[es] not refer to all of 1942”. Is this also legerdemain? Here is a key sentence from the brother-son document: “GENERALLY [my emphasis] communications with Louis are extremely difficult” (p. 210). Indeed, as the authors note, the brother-son document “... is a year-end report on the 1942 activities and financing of an espionage network” (p. 206). It begins: “Brother: Year 1942 has been characterized by difficulties arising from the war, difficulties we were not equipped to cope with and on the whole have not solved up to this time...” (p. 208). The authors concede the date given by a Soviet intelligence officer may not be exact, but if the date is not exact, other elements of the authors’ theory may not be exact either. As for the Venona decrypts, we shall have to wait to see if they explain the conundrums

of this affair.

I am not a specialist in such matters, but I believe that Maurice Isserman is. A colleague passed me the other day a copy of his review of Klehr et al. (*The Nation*, 12.6.95); coincidentally, Isserman raises, inter alia, the same point about the whereabouts of Louis in 1942 (p. 855). He speculates that the brother-son network may have been “nothing more than a Comintern postal service” (p. 856). Messrs. Klehr & Haynes, will you write to *The Nation*?

There is another interesting point in the brother-son document. The authors’ make much of the Comintern

advisory (May 1942) to cease CPUSA cooperation with American and British intelligence services, but it does not seem to have been entirely obeyed as the brother-son document reports that “ever since Dec. 7. 1941” comrades had worked for or cooperated with the Office of War Information “with our direct approval and under our steady guidance (sic)” (cf., pp. 210-11 & 271). In any event, there was certainly no halting of communist resistance cooperation with the Allied powers in Europe - whatever its difficulties and limitations.

Readers! In my review, I said “Mind the gap”, between the authors’ evidence and the authors’ conclusions. I say it still!

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-russia>

Citation: Michael J. Carley. Review of Klehr, Harvey; Haynes, John E.; Firsov, Fridrikh I., eds., *The Secret World of American Communism*. H-Russia, H-Net Reviews. June, 1995.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=91>

Copyright © 1995 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.