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Stanley Levison's Financial Role in the Civil Rights and Communist Movements in the 1940s to 1960s: A Rank-and-File Perspective

Toby Terrar

Department of History, City University of Los Angeles, Los Angeles, USA

ABSTRCT
This is a biographical essay about Stanley Levison, who is the subject of Ben Kamin's *Dangerous Friendship: Stanley Levison, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Kennedy Brothers* (2014). Levison was a communist and friend of Martin Luther King. The review focuses on the limitations and strengths of the book, of Levison and of the Civil Rights Movement. At a time when the Communist Party was facing difficult challenges, Levison was not totally a failure in helping to uphold the aspirations of the underprivileged.

KEYWORDS
Civil Rights Movement; communism; Stanley Levison; Morris Childs; William Weiner

This article is inspired by Ben Kamin's new book, *Dangerous Friendship: Stanley Levison, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Kennedy Brothers*. The book is a biography about Stanley David Levison (1912–79) (Kamin 2014). From 1956 through the 1960s, he worked as an effective, unpaid fundraiser for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The funds that he raised, which came mainly from the Jewish community, paid for the SCLC office expenses, staff, newspaper advertising and litigation. His fundraising brought him into a close relation to Martin Luther King, who headed the SCLC. The friendship was "dangerous" because Levison as a communist was unwanted by the politicians who controlled the enactment of civil rights legislation.

Biographer Kamin is a cleric with no sympathy for the Communist Party or the Soviet Union. His interest in Levison is to hold up the work he did for the Civil Rights Movement as a credit to the Jewish community. To do this he makes Levison an anti-communist, especially after the mid-1950s. The evidence for Levison's anti-communism is not strong. The argument here is that while the book is a step in the right direction in keeping Levison from being wholly forgotten, his life has more to teach than what *Dangerous Friendship* offers.[1] As will be argued, his economic dealings within the Communist Party was one of the factors that contributed to a lack of party leadership in the Civil Rights Movement. This made both the party and the Civil Rights Movement weaker.

CONTACT Toby Terrar TobyTerrar@aol.com

[1] The gap in Civil Rights Movement scholarship can be seen in the fact that King's other SCLC collaborators, Bayard Rustin (1912–87) and Ella Baker (1903–86) have been remembered in a dozen biographies. Kamin, as Levison's first biographer, helps fill the gap. Biographies about Rustin and Baker include Anderson (1997), Haskins (1997), Levine (2000), Podair (2009), Brimner (2007), Miller (2005), D'Emilio (2003), Houtman, Naegle and Long (2014), Dallard (1990), Grant (1998), Moye (2013), Bohannon (2005) and Ransby (2003).

In discussing communist and civil rights finances from Levison's perspective, the article proceeds chronologically, beginning with his early years, his involvement in party finances up until 1956, his psychology, his commercial weakness and then his work in the Civil Rights Movement. In writing about Levison, Ben Kamin faced several difficulties in addition to his being neither a communist nor familiarizing himself with the party's history. Levison kept no diary and wrote little in the way of letters reflecting on his politics. Kamin did contact Levison's friends and relatives, but even his son was of little help. Levison's FBI file is extensive and useful, but the only use Kamin makes of it is to quote what he finds from it in the works about Martin Luther King by David Garrow and Taylor Branch.[2]

Early years: 1910s–1940s

Levison was born and lived out his life in the New York City area. His parents were Jewish with his father working as an accountant. By the time he graduated from high school, Levison had lived at seven different addresses in Manhattan and Far Rockaway, Queens (Levison 2015, pt. 1, 19). He attended the University of Michigan (1930–31) and Columbia University (1931–32) where he took pre-law courses, but did not obtain a degree (Levison 2015, 19).[3] However, starting in 1935 he earned a law degree at St. John's University by going to night school. During this time, he worked fulltime as a manufacturing agent for the Allyn M. Schiffer Company (Levison 2015, pt. 1, 19). Levison's father and twin brother, Roy, also worked there (Kamin 2014, 36). He was admitted to the bar and began to practice law in 1938. The following year he obtained a master's of law degree from St. Johns (Levison 2015, pt. 1, 19; Anonymous 1979; Friedman 1998, 109).

At the same time that he obtained his master of law degree, Levison married Jeanette Janice D. Alterman (died 2003) on June 8, 1939 in a religious ceremony. She was a psychotherapist-in-training. Three years later on June 21, 1942, the marriage was annulled, after which she married Levison's business acquaintance, Jay Richard Kennedy (1904–91) (Levison 2015, pt. 2, 15 and pt. 8, 6). The following year on July 4, 1943 Levison married Beatrice Meiker (pt. 2, 14–15). Rabbi Napttali Fishbey performed the service. That marriage lasted a lifetime. At the time of her marriage, Beatrice was a member of the American Labor Party, which was to the left of the Democratic Party and included communists (pt. 1, 35).[4]

Levison was not a "red-diaper baby" but communist politics were part of New York life during the Depression era. While in law school, he was a member of the newly established American Law Students, later called the National Lawyers Guild (Levison 2015, pt. 6, 21–22).[5] It was a pro-New Deal alternative to the corporate-oriented American Bar Association. It included communists. Whatever progressive beliefs Levison held, his main effort in the 1930s and 1940s involved commercial matters. Figure 1 depicts him in this period. In an interview he gave in 1960, he maintained that after law school he had considered an FBI career. Their file states:

[2] Levison's (2015) FBI record is 11,000–pages in length. Kamin uses David Garrow (1981) and Taylor Branch's trilogy (1988), (1998) and (2006).
[3] The FBI sources do not state the reasons (financial, academic or other) for Levison's abbreviated college career.
[4] The FBI file states that Stanley was registered in a "major political party."
[5] The American Law Students was established on December 27, 1936 (Levison 2015, pt. 11, 59; Bailey 1979).

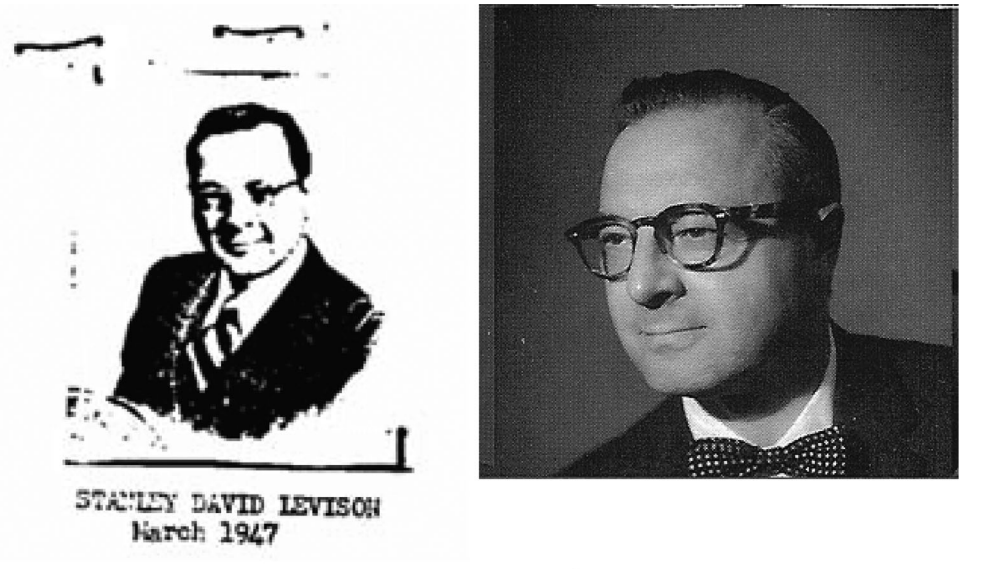


Figure 1. On the left Stanley Levison (age 35) in 1947, as the FBI viewed him in their file and on the right, as viewed in Kamin's book. Sources: Levison (2015, pt. 7, 61); Kamin (2014, front cover).

> Levison stated that at the time he graduated from law school he was in the top 10 percent in his class, which would have made him employable by the FBI. He did not join because he would be transferred throughout the country and because of the uncertain hours. (Levison 2015, pt. 8, 72)

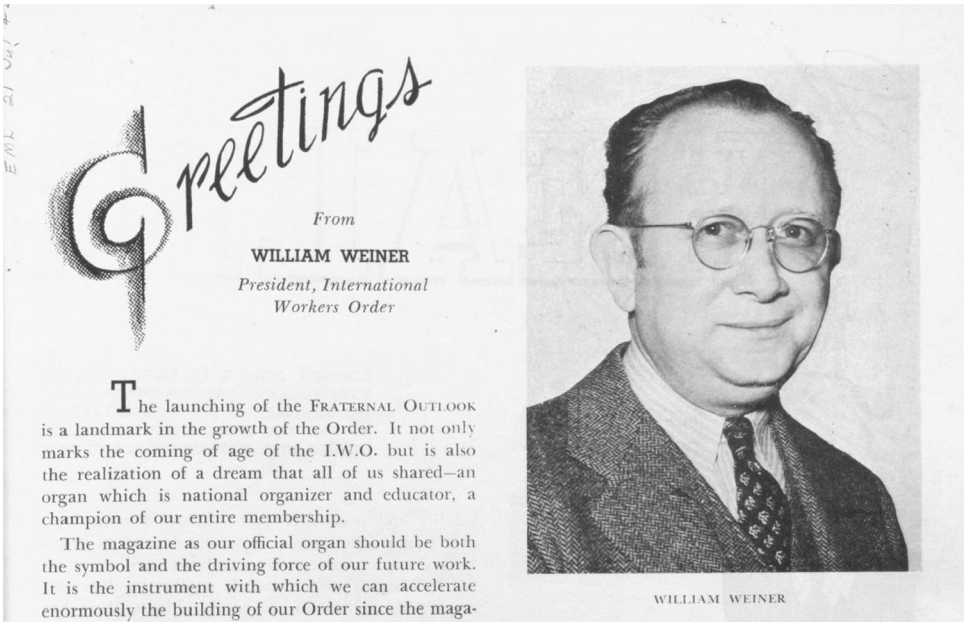
During World War II, Levison served in the Coast Guard (Anonymous 1979).[6] But he also continued to engage in business affairs with Jay Kennedy, whose birthname was Samuel Solomonick (Levison 2015, pt. 1, 19).[7] Eight years Levison's senior, Kennedy had left school in the seventh grade and spent his teen years working in 28 different trades all over the country. In the 1930s, he was employed as a circulation manager for the Communist Party's *Daily Worker*. He resigned from this position in 1939 because he disagreed with the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact.

After quitting the *Daily Worker*, Kennedy went into a business partnership with Andrew Loewi, whose family owned the Park Management Corporation. Levison became a lawyer for the partnership. In 1942, Levison was also named as the successor executor of Joseph E. Loewi (1882–1949), with Jay Kennedy the executor and Harold Cammer the witness. Cammer was an attorney and close to the Communist Party

[6] According to Levison (2015, pt. 11, 38), Levison was "medically deferred from military service" during World War II, being classified 4F on February 20, 1943 (see also, Garrow 2002, 85). The only specific medical problem mentioned in his FBI file is hemorrhoids during the 1960s.

[7] Kamin (2014, 36), writes negatively of Kennedy:

> This "Mr. Kennedy" (a pseudonym) was eventually found out as a major FBI snitch that pursued a notorious career of infiltrating other people's lives, from Frank Sinatra to Gene Kelly to Belafonte. This Mr. Kennedy was also Belafonte's personal manager and financial adviser—much to the calypso singer's eventual consternation and disbelief.


Greetings

From

WILLIAM WEINER

President, International Workers Order

The launching of the FRATERNAL OUTLOOK is a landmark in the growth of the Order. It not only marks the coming of age of the I.W.O. but is also the realization of a dream that all of us shared—an organ which is national organizer and educator, a champion of our entire membership.

The magazine as our official organ should be both the symbol and the driving force of our future work. It is the instrument with which we can accelerate enormously the building of our Order since the maga-

WILLIAM WEINER

Figure 2. William Weiner, Levison's mentor and president of the International Workers Order (IWO). Source: Weiner (1939, 3).

(Camp 1995, 226).[8] When Loewi died, Levison had a role in closing the estate (Levison 2015, pt. 6, 40).

During World War II, the Loewi-Kennedy partnership put up $50,000 to purchase the Unique Specialties Corporation, which was a munitions maker, producing artillery fuse parts (Levison 2015, pt. 4, 47; Karier 1986, 337). This was followed after the war by a real estate business called Kennedy Management Corporation that included investments in both the United States and Ecuador (Garrow 1981, 337).[9] Levison was the lawyer for this business. Another of Levison's positions with Kennedy was as secretary for the latter's Manor Art Manufacturing Company (Levison 2015, pt. 4, 57). At the same time that he worked for Kennedy, he also helped his brother to purchase in 1945 a New Jersey Ford dealership (Garrow 2002, 85).

While Levison's work was mainly commercial, he also showed the interest in progressive political fundraising that remained with him throughout his life. He helped with a direct mail program "Businessmen for Roosevelt Committee" during the 1944 campaign (Levison 2015, pt. 8, 72). In 1948, he was involved in an attempt to sell a campaign mailing list to Alfred Stern for use in the Henry A. Wallace campaign (pt. 8, 72).[10]

[8] Among other things, Cammer was one of the defense lawyers during the anti-communist prosecutions of the party leadership in the 1950s. Loewi was president of Michael Brothers Furniture Co., director of the Federation of Jewish Charities and a member of the Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce (Levison 2015, pt. 11, 35).

[9] When Kennedy moved to California, Levison managed the Kennedy firm until 1949, when they had a falling out (Karier 1986, 337).

[10] Stern rejected the list because it was out of date.

Party finances: 1940s–1950s

More significantly for *Dangerous Friendship*, Levison combined his commercial activities with communist finances. This involved his working with William Weiner (1893–1954), who was chief, along with a few others, of the Communist Party's finances from 1933 up until 1954 when he died (Garrow 2002, 81).[11] Weiner was Levison's senior by 19 years.

Communists donated not only money but real estate, businesses and other tangible property to the organization. Some of these assets the party did not liquidate but retained to produce income. Weiner invested party funds in businesses run by "sympathetic friends" (Garrow 1986b, 410; see also, Neikind 1951, 5–9).[12] Party activist Steve Nelson in his biography commented on the finances:

> A substantial number of small business people and professionals contributed generously, as did a number of Party-owned small enterprises. The latter included several drugstores and cleaning establishments—known only to a few, and I was only peripherally aware of it. But one thing I can attest to is that there was no "Moscow gold" pouring into the Party coffers in those years. (Nelson, Barrett and Ruck 1981, 292)

A Pennsylvania party activist, Joe Dougher (b.1897), relates that the party's investments significantly increased in the late 1940s as the organization came under heavy government attack. Some 7 million US dollars ended up in a legal defense fund. Dougher (1974, 47) writes about how the money was invested:

> As the Party was under serious attack and there was a real danger of the Party being outlawed during the Truman and Eisenhower administration, the money was divided up between the national and district leaders to invest it and be in a position to sell the investment when the Party would need the money. This was done to safeguard the money, because there was a real danger that if the Party were outlawed, the funds would be confiscated. There was nothing wrong with safeguarding the funds.[13]

[11] According to David Garrow (1986b, 409; see also, Levison 2015, pt. 1, 30 and pt. 3, 24), Weiner's family migrated from Russia to America when he was a child. He joined the Communist Party in the 1920s and worked as an assistant editor of the *Freiheit*, which was a party-related newspaper. In 1927–28 he was a party section organizer in New York and in 1933 became the party's financial secretary. As will later be discussed, he was also the president of the International Workers Order (IWO) and a member of the party's national board. He was convicted of passport fraud in 1940 for having stated he was born in America. He received a suspended sentence.

[12] Biographer John Barron (1996, 262), records that beginning in 1946 Weiner and Levison conferred frequently and that Levison consulted Morris Childs about setting up party businesses in Chicago and Michigan. Childs had been a party official in Chicago for many years.

[13] Dougher maintains that much of the defense funds never served their intended purpose. He writes:

> The person in the Party who had the records of who had the money, came to us and told us that large sums of money were being lost to the Party. This was so because some of the leaders who had it were leaving the Party and keeping it; sometimes as much as four hundred thousand dollars in the possession of one person. . . . All of the top district leaders and national leaders who left the Party with the money went into businesses such as service stations, parking lots, exterminating businesses, trucking businesses, or what have you. Some opened snake ranches, motels, bars, apartment buildings, just like any other manipulating scoundrel in business. Some of the National Committee members negotiated with each other to see how much each would leave the Party with. Some of them who were district and national leaders now are in business. I am sure the CIA and FBI agents in the Party could have used it against the leaders, although they could not use it now because the statutes of limitation have passed. I am sure in the past they used it as a club over their heads to keep them in line to mislead the workers and the rest of the people; the same as the Labor Reporting Act is used to keep union officials in line by the IRS, the Secretary of Labor, the CIA and the government. (Dougher 1974, 47)

Historian David Garrow has studied the help that Levison gave Weiner in managing the party's non-liquid assets.[14] He maintains that the Ford dealership that Levison and his brother obtained in 1945 had a relation to the party. Garrow (2002, 85) comments that Levison's overlapping relationships and financial transfers were "so complicated as to preclude any complete FBI analysis of Levison's little empire." He continues: "Among the top contributors were Stanley and Roy Levison, twin brothers who owned a Ford dealership in northern New Jersey that contributed well over $10,000 a year to the CPUSA" (81). In the same article Garrow (81) discusses an FBI memo detailing one of Jack Childs' earliest debriefings:

> On three or four occasions after Weiner had received money from Stanley Levison, Weiner gave the money to Jack Childs who placed it in a safe deposit box in Childs' name at a New York bank. . . . What's more, when Jack stopped working for Weiner, in 1948, "he transferred to Stanley Levison all cash, bonds, and lists of depositories and records there [to] fore under the informant's control." Stanley Levison was a new name to the FBI.[15]

When Weiner died in 1954, Levison temporarily took over his duties, acting analogously to an executor during a probate proceeding. This started on the evening of the death when Levison and his wife Beatrice called upon the widow at her Manhattan apartment. During the course of the visit, Levison looked through the deceased's personal files and removed a batch of party-related bank statements and ledgers. A few days later, Levison met with Morris Childs at the Statler Hotel and acknowledged that he, Levison, was now going to be managing the financial interests of the Party (Kamin 2014, 47–48).

Besides Levison, at that point the party's national finance committee was composed of Betty Gannett (1906–70) and Isadore Wofsy (1894–1964) of New York and Jack Kling (1911–90) of Chicago (Kling 1985). In late November of 1954, with Weiner dead and with the government shutting down the International Workers Order (IWO), an organization run by Weiner that had close economic ties to the party, the committee decided that the party would no longer invest in new businesses, for fear of their vulnerability to hostile government action. Instead the organization would focus more than ever on recruiting or reactivating major donors, or "angels," who could make annual contributions of five or six figures (Garrow 2002, 83).[16] In the same period Levison also had a role in obtaining $120,000 from the Canadian Communist Party and he continued to operate the organization's businesses that it already owned (Garrow 2002, 83).

[14] Unfortunately, Garrow's article does not cite where he obtained this information. One scholar, Marc Schneier (1999, 50), maintains that, "Though no conclusive evidence ever supported its contention, the FBI was convinced that Levison managed money for the Communist Party in the United States." That is, in Schneier's view, some of the non-footnoted "facts" concerning Levison in Garrow's *Atlantic Monthly* article may not be accurate.

[15] Ben Kamin, in referring merely to "an FBI memo" without giving any further information as to where it is located, gives a few more details of the dealings between Jack Childs and Levison:

> The FBI monitored a cloak-and-dagger type meeting between Morris and Stanley in front of the New York Public Library on a gray, blustery day in November 1952. In time, the Childs brothers divulged and uncovered a vast inventory of rendezvous, documents, bank records, hotel receipts, and conversation trails that unequivocally linked Stanley Levison to the top financial levels of the Communist Party-USA. Stanley even acquired various business firms and interests to which he consigned a percentage of profits to the Party and its work. (Kamin 2014, 47–48)

[16] The major donors included Frederick Vanderbilt Field (1905–2000), Harry Herman Kaplan, who was a Brooklyn, N Y builder and Abraham A. Heller (b. 1874). The latter was the founder of the International Oxygen Company, a source of tanked oxygen for the Allies during World War I. He helped establish International Publishers. At one point he contributed $110,000 to the publishing company (Starobin 1972, 279; Field 1983, 219, 276; Davis 1998, 139; Swearingen 1971, 592).

Weiner and then Levison attempted to keep the party's financial operations confidential because the government was seeking to bankrupt the organization. The 1950s was a difficult time. Between 1950 and 1955, there were 98 convictions of party leaders in federal courts from New York to Honolulu, which was what historian Gerald Horne calls a "remarkable decapitation" (Horne 2013, 16). Ten of its national officers served five-year prison terms for their politics. Others were underground and out of contact with friends and families (Starobin 1972, 219). Rank-and-filers were fired from their jobs, evicted from their homes and hounded by the IRS and immigration authorities. Their children were harassed by classmates. A majority of party clubs stopped meeting and their membership drifted away.[17] In financial terms, this meant no dues income for the organization's office expenses, staff and litigation.

Levison's role on the party's national finance committee was temporary. At the end of 1954, a longtime party operative named Phil Bart (b.1902) supplanted Jack Kling and took overall charge of the party's financial matters. In April 1956, Bart relinquished the operations to Isadore Wolfsy. An FBI memo explained that this change in the financial set-up was due to friction between Bart and the Levisons. After Bart's departure, the Levisons turned over the enterprises they controlled to Wofsy (Garrow 2002, 82–83).[18]

Top-down financing: 1954

The American party's 1954 shift of financial basis to a reliance on big donors brought negative long-term results for the rank-and-file. By 1958, the big-donor focus began a 23-year (1958–81) dependence on Soviet-FBI subsidies, as facilitated by the Childs brothers that averaged one million dollars per year in the 1960s and two million in the 1970s (Barron 1996, 302, 339–40; Childs 2015).[19] This reduced the influence that the districts were able to exercise on the center. It made it unnecessary for the leadership to do anything but hold their jobs. From the FBI's perspective, the easy money kept the leadership on a leash, making it lazy and less threatening. Historian David Garrow (1981, 38) summarizes:

[17] When the party held its 16th convention in February 1957, the membership was down from 100,000 in 1950 to 3,000. The organization's finances were reduced not only by the loss in dues income, but by the decline in party press sales and litigation expenses (Lannon 1998, 148; Johanningsmeier 1994, 347; Garrow 2002, 82).

[18] In mid-June 1956, Wofsy was still meeting Levison at least weekly, probably because Levison was holding a large portion of the Reserve Fund's cash assets.

[19] Party-activist Erwin Marquit (2014, 143), gives an example of the Childs' influence:

> At that time [1965] relations between the CPUSA and the Communist Party of Cuba had been strained because the CPUSA felt that the Cuban support for armed struggle in Latin America would hurt rather than advance the struggle for socialism. It was only several years later that the Cubans recognized this. When Bea Johnson went to Cuba to serve as liaison between the CPUSA and the Cuban party, she was initially treated only formally, and was denied access to the Cuban Communist Party leadership. After some time, however, she finally was received by the Communist Party leadership and cordial fraternal relations were reestablished between the two parties. How this came about was not described in the oral history that my wife and I taped in the 1980s. Apparently, she did not know the details herself. I found the explanation in *Operation Solo: The FBI's Man in the Kremlin*. . . . The Marxist historian Herbert Aptheker, who had long been a prominent member of the CPUSA National Committee, told me that he never could understand why Morris Childs was always seated in prominent positions at Party conventions, although he never had anything to say. During a visit to Moscow in 1965, Morris was told to inform the Cuban Communist Party leadership that the CPSU wanted them to mend their relationship with the CPUSA. Jack Childs went to Havana to convey this to the Cuban party leaders. The Cubans cooperated with the request, and Bea's subsequent access to the Cuban party leadership signified restoration of party-to-party relations.

> The Soviet subsidy, most [FBI] bureau officials felt, made the American CP relatively lazy and content, and less of a domestic threat than if it had to support itself rather than merely "launder" the Soviet funds that Jack Childs administered.

A 75-year-old party functionary in 1963, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn (1987, 227), wrote about the party's lethargy and fear of the youth:

> I'm strong for older people withdrawing to leave room for the young—but unfortunately they are still scarce in our ranks. When I said to Gus [Hall] maybe I should retire to set an example for others. I could name for you at least a half dozen who should not hold on so tightly but let go. Gus replies "Don't do it. You'll be the only one. They won't follow your example." They really don't trust the youth to take over. Nor do they see their shortcomings—some of which you suggest in your letter re *self-delusion*.

It might appear that government repression mainly caused the leadership problem. But this was not the view of the leaders. New York district organizer George Charney (1968, 253) commented, "In 1956, the trials were a thing of the past; McCarthyism had been effectively checked in 1954–55. . . . We looked forward optimistically."[20] If the FBI was accurate, graft more than repression slowed the organization.[21] Not until 1981, when the Soviet–FBI subsidy was disrupted, did the center initiate a membership drive. Biographers Mark Lapitsky and Nikolai Mostovets (1985, 130–31) describe the newfound devotion to the districts and the rank-and-file:

> A very important period opened in the life of the Party, marked by its greater activity and increases in its membership. [General secretary] Gus Hall (1910–2000) himself organized the new membership drive. From late July to mid-October 1981 he, together with his aides toured the country from New York to California, from the state of Washington to Washington, DC. He visited New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maine, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Virginia, Maryland, North Dakota, Iowa, Arizona, Texas and Colorado. . . . The tour ended in Chicago where the final rally was staged. Gus Hall had spoken at a total of 65 rallies and held 55 meetings with local Party leaders. People of different age groups joined the Party during his tour.[22]

The scholar David Garrow (2002, 82–83), in his study of the party's finances, does not mention what, if any, discussion there was by the party's finance committee in 1954 about the political desirability of changing to a big-donor base for party funding. An alternative would have been to reduce expenses, including dropping paid staff and relying on volunteers, to match the reduced dues income and retain the rank-and-file as the focus of funding.[23] The general practice of communist parties is to fund themselves through

[20] Charney (1968, 253, 280–83) lists Khrushchev's 1956 attack on Stalin and Hungary as demoralizing many in the New York district, but of little influence in the Midwest and Western districts.

[21] Similarly, the Chinese political scientist, Li Shenming argues that the million-dollar book contracts that Gorbachev and his wife received from Western publishers did more to undermine the Soviet Union than the World War II Nazi invasion. Li (2011, 183) writes, "We can safely conclude that bribes in US dollars played a considerable part in causing the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the downfall of the Soviet Communist Party."

[22] The membership went up by a half from below 10,000 in the 1970s to 15,000 immediately after the campaign (Andrew and Mitrokhin 1999, 292).

[23] As union and party organizers in the 1920s and 1930s, the 1950s party leadership knew how to live cheap. In the earlier period, they stayed with friends, hitchhiked, remained single and their wages, which were from $12 to $25 per week in 1935 for a Chicago organizer, were sometimes more theoretical than real. A factory worker averaged $1,000 per year (Gates 1958, 29–30; Davis 1998, 140; Barron 1996, 29). Party member Hope Davis (1994, 70) comments, "There were unknown comrades in the South living on almost nothing—eating with the sharecroppers they were trying to organize—alone and always in danger of being beaten up or shot." John Gates (1958, 111), who was one of its editors, describes in heroic terms the production of the party newspaper with minimal funding:

membership dues.[24] It is one of the ways the rank-and-file exercise control. In contrast, capitalist parties are funded by and serve the big donors.[25]

The rank-and-file control by membership dues is ancillary to its control by democratic centralism in which party officials are held accountable to the body that elects them. However, as rank-and-filer Erwin Marquit (2014, 464) points out, if the elective body is chosen on the recommendation from above, which he saw as a problem in the American party, just as was top-down funding a problem, then the elective body will regard themselves responsible to the upper body and not to the rank-and-file.[26] This is why the Communist Party of Cuba adopted the policy that higher bodies should not recommend who the lower bodies should elect to leadership positions. In the election of delegates to the congress of the Communist Party of China in 2007, no recommendations were to be made from above concerning who to elect as delegates (Marquit 2014, 464).[27] Communists favor egalitarian

> It had always been extraordinarily difficult for a radical movement in the United States to sustain a daily newspaper because of high costs and lack of advertising. The *Daily Worker* was a deficit operation which had to be subsidized by the heroic efforts and sacrifices of all too few readers. For the last ten years of its existence the *Daily Worker* operated under an annual deficit of $200,000 which was raised chiefly by the Herculean labors of the Communist Party. The existence of the *Daily Worker* as a daily newspaper for 34 years was a small miracle, admired by radicals in general and by many in the newspaper profession who knew what it meant to get out a daily paper on a shoestring and with our tiny staff.

[24] Starting with its founding, the International Working Men's Association (The First International), which existed between 1864 and 1876, made rank-and-file dues payers their funding base. In 1866, the dues payers exercised their power of the purse by forcing a reduction from the initial three pennies per member per year to ½ penny. A history of the International (Anonymous 1964, 45–46) summarized, "It seemed unlikely that any organizations would pay the more onerous rate and the impoverished council sought to get at least some money rather than none." The organization's secretary, its only employee, initially worked without pay and later with minimal wages (Braunthal 1967, 108). Similarly, in most of the Soviet party's existence, it was entirely supported by membership dues and literature sales. The dues were 4% of wages, while the income tax was 7% of wages (Belova and Lazarev 2007, 444; 2013).

[25] In his study of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), Kevin Morgan (2006, 30), similarly finds that periods of self-financing were marked by greatly enhanced political effectiveness. As he puts it, "When recipients of Moscow 'gold' were forced to fall back on 'proverbial workers and their pennies' for support, the fund raising strategy provided a form of bonding, commitment and motivation essential to any broadly-based political movement."

[26] Marquit was among the rank-and-file who resisted the center because of its approach to democratic centralism. He (2014, 445) wrote about the problem:

> The election to the National Committee followed the traditional undemocratic practice that prevented any delegate from being elected from the floor that was not on the list recommended by the outgoing National Committee. A valid ballot had to have effectively as many votes for as many candidates as were on the recommended list. To elect a person nominated from the floor, supporters of that candidate would have to get the majority delegates to agree not to vote for a particular recommended candidate and vote for the newly nominated one. This practice essentially continues to this day, although a slight lowering of the percentage of candidates that have to be voted on is being introduced.

In 1991 a third of the comrades, including Marquit, exercised their power of the purse and stopped paying dues because of this problem. In Marquit's view, the center is in a difficult position. If it becomes activist, the government will go after its resources. If it opens to the rank-and-file, its jobs will be lost to the youth.

[27] As a youth, Marquit learned about the limitations of democratic centralism from his communist father. He (2014, 47) explains:

> One day, upon coming home rather confused after reading a pamphlet entitled *Lenin in October*, I asked Leo [Erwin's father] about something Lenin had written that disturbed me. Toward the end of September 1917, Lenin was convinced that the Bolsheviks had the support of the majority of the Workers Councils (Soviets) in Moscow and Petrograd and that the time was ripe for the revolution for which they had been preparing. He was unable at the time, however, to convince the majority of the Central Committee of the Bolsheviks of the correctness of his assessment. He complained that his viewpoint was being suppressed by those who favored an electoral path, which he was convinced was not really open. In despair, he sent a letter to the Central Committee in which he wrote, "I am compelled to tender my resignation from the Central Committee, which I hereby do, reserving for myself freedom to campaign among the rank and file of the Party and at the Party Congress." I asked Leo, "Isn't this a violation of democratic centralism? When can you do this?" "When you are Lenin," replied Leo.

funding and electoral practices not only to keep balance between top and bottom, but for harmonious relations within the leadership.[28]

Illustrative of the rank-and-file's power of the purse when democratic centralism failed it, was the episode in the period from 1944 to 1945 when the organization switched to being an "association" similar to a capitalist party. Under the association system, dues were collected annually from the top, not monthly at the club level as formerly.[29] The dues and literature income dropped by half and the membership dropped from 90,000 to 40,000 (Starobin 1972, 100–102; Lapitsky and Mostovets 1985, 50).[30] Similarly, the Soviet party in a single year, 1990, saw its dues income and literature sales cut in half and lost four million of its 19-million members because Gorbachev was taking a path similar to Browder (Ogushi 2008, 112–13, 119).

While self-financing is the ideal for communist parties, there is another ideal that follows the principle of working class internationalism. This ideal was voiced in 1919 at the formation of the Third Communist International (Comintern), which existed between 1919 and 1943:

> The International, which puts the interests of the international revolution ahead of so-called national interests, will make mutual aid among the proletariat of different countries a reality. Without economic and other forms of mutual assistance, the proletariat cannot organize the new society. By the same token, in contrast to the Yellow social-patriotic International, international proletarian communism will support exploited colonial people in their struggles against imperialism in order to hasten the ultimate downfall of the world imperialist system. (Ridell 1987, 248)

Historically, larger and more prosperous parties, such as the former Soviet, East European, Cuban or Chinese parties help fraternal parties, especially those that are outlawed or facing difficulty in funding themselves, such as those in the developing countries of Africa and the Middle East (Anonymous 1982, 10, 31). For example, in 1920 when the bulk of the American party's leadership was in prison, they requested $20,000 from the Comintern to support their legal defense and families. In the same request, they sought $10,000 to support their "agitation among the soldiers and sailors" and $15,000 toward their work in the civil rights movement, stating:

[28] If rank-and-file biographies are any indication, the high-living Morris Childs would have been unmasked had he been attending a neighborhood club. Party leader Dorothy Healey did not know about Childs, but she explains the inharmonious relations at the center caused by the top-down funding:

> There are all kinds of subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which [general secretary] Gus Hall has learned to reinforce his power. There are extra funds available for vacations for Party leaders, and he gets to decide who gets those. When Party delegations are made up to travel to the Soviet Union or Cuba, his choices will get first priority. If you want to publish a book Gus can make it very easy for you to do so, through International Publishers or by finding you a ghost-writer if that's what you need. It's a very effective patronage system. (Healey 1993, 176)

[29] Under the club system, there were no membership records at the center, which made it difficult for the government to learn who were party members (Bedacht 1951, 3555).

[30] Lapitsky and Mostovets (1985, 48) summarize the rank-and-file concern in the 1944–45 episode:

> In practical terms, Browder's course obliterated the distinctions between the Communist Party and the democratic movement, abandoned the basic Marxist–Leninist principles concerning the leading role of the Party and led to a renunciation of an independent proletarian policy and, subsequently, to the actual dissolution of the Party. The Communist Party was going through a painful period of ideological and organizational confusion. In 1940, it withdrew from the Communist International. Gus Hall criticized this move. He wrote that the withdrawal was due not only to anti-communist legislation but also to the deep-rooted opportunism and Browder's revisionism. In turn, the withdrawal itself fed opportunism and revisionism.

> The problem of the Negro is a vital problem in the American movement. In addition to the general propaganda among the Negro workers in the North, there must be special agitation among the Negro masses in the South. The Negro in the South is deprived of all rights, and the work there is exceptionally difficult [and important]. (Anonymous 1920, f. 515, op. 1, d. 20, l. 40)

In the 1930s, in turn the then prosperous American party helped the smaller Mexican, Cuban and Philippine parties (Davis 1998, 145).

Rank-and-file funding

It should be noted that the party's 1954 top-down shift in funding contrasted with and disrupted a 25-year-old policy of rank-and-file funding. The earlier policy had been established out of the negative consequences of top-down funding in the 1920s. The party's greater responsiveness to the working class in the 1930s and 1940s, as compared to the 1920s, as one historian put it, argued for "tight-knit" believers (Starobin 1972, 101). The 1920s problem came to a head with Jay Lovestone's factional split. He had used big donors to keep power. A party functionary at the time, H. Davis, commented on the advantages of emphasizing the "working masses," not the "capricious bourgeois benefactors," and of enlisting the districts, which had formally kept all the dues and funds for themselves. Davis (1998, 143) wrote:

> The party was living from day-to-day, the question of where to get money was the principal question at every meeting of its leadership organs. Every four or five days the *Daily Worker* or *Freiheit* would face the threat of its next numbers not coming out or of a strike by typesetters who were not receiving their wages, etc. . . . The solution was to move to regular maintenance by party and working masses, rather than by chance and quite capricious bourgeois "benefactors." Out of this grew the reform of the dues collection system, including running a campaign about it in the newspaper and leaflets. . . . Initially the districts were loath to part with the old patriarchal order in which they took all the dues and all funds for themselves, giving nothing to the center.[31]

Rank-and-file funding was promoted by the Comintern as an effective way to motivate party building (McDermott 1997, 33–34). In the years after the American reform, the party quickly expanded and the very year of the reform the dues income to the center increased by a factor of four to $1,500 per month (Davis 1998, 144). The American reform paralleled the anti-bureaucratic cleansings of the Soviet party during the 1930s, during which the rank-and-file helped address the lethargy problem (Rossman 2005, 81–82, 98, 115, 142; Kotkin 1995, 298, 300, 307; Davies 1997, 127; Thurston 1996, 155; Getty 1983, 69). The Comintern similarly cut funding to parties that were not producing (McDermott 1997, 33–34).

In later years, the success of the rank-and-file funding was attested to by the party's organizational secretary, Henry Winston (1911–86). When the party was under attack in 1948, it had a 10-million citizen economic base. Historian Joseph Starobin (1972, 112) comments:

[31] H. Davis (1998, 143) goes on to comment that during the time that Lovestone headed the party, he (Lovestone) would single-handedly exert pressure on sources of which only he knew the source and present them with a great flourish, as if to say, as Davis puts it, "See how I always manage to save the party in times of trouble."

> The Communist Party did not lack for funds or political support when it made "defense of the Party" the urgent issue. In response to the [Secretary of Labor Lewis] Schwellenbach threat [to outlaw the party], the Communists launched a financial and political campaign which, on the authority of organizational secretary Henry Winston, reached no fewer than ten million citizens. A quarter of a million dollars were raised for the national organization within 25 days. Winston indicated that perhaps four times as much money went into the Party's coffers on the state and local level. In 1948, the threat of the Mundt-Nixon bill brought the Party's defense fund of half a million dollars—an impressive figure when it is realized that this came on top of the annual Party-Press Fighting Fund Drive, which had just brought in a quarter of a million dollars, and when it is recalled that by the spring of 1948 the Progressive Party's electoral campaign, competing for some of the same sources of funds, was already underway.[32]

During the period of the rank-and-file funding, the party's economic base included non-party workers who acted as sustainers through membership in mass organizations that had fraternal relations with the party. The largest of these was the IWO, which had 200,000 members in 19,000 branches. As noted, the government closed the IWO down in 1954.[33] Levison's mentor, William Weiner, was its president from the founding in 1930 until his death (Garrow 1986a, 168; Levison 2015, pt. 4, 46 and pt. 7, 20; Kamin 2014, 35). Working with Weiner during the 1930s and 1940s was the IWO general secretary, Max Bedacht (1883–1972), who was also a party activist.[34] Levison himself was active as the treasurer of another group, the American Jewish Congress's (AJC) Manhattan branch.[35] The IWO's Jewish section, the Jewish People's Fraternal Organization (JPFO), was a member of the AJC from 1945 to 1949, when it was expelled for anti-communist reasons (Walker 1991, 59–60; Sabin 1993, 23).[36] About the IWO's relation to party finances, Joseph Starobin (1972, 25) summarizes:

> Drawing on the influence of more than a dozen foreign-language dailies and weeklies, inherited from the foreign-language federations of the twenties, the Communists had succeeded [in 1930] in creating a powerful left-wing fraternal society, the International Workers Order. The IWO grouped those sympathizers who still clung to ethnic allegiances. This agency proved to be an important adjunct, serving as a reservoir of finances and a custodian of Party funds. Headed by the Communist leader, Max Bedacht, it gave shelter and an arena of activity to older cadres and to some important anti-fascist refugees. With the rise of the Nazi threat and the mobilization of the "national groups" for the war effort, the IWO with

[32] As described by Starobin (1972, 119), with the war came a disruption in communications between the American and Soviet parties that was not restored until 1951. During the war the Soviets through Lend–Lease received "Washington gold," in contrast to "Moscow gold" going in the opposite direction.

[33] Other mass organizations that helped the party included the American League Against War and Fascism/American League for Peace and Democracy, Friends of Soviet Russia/Friends of the Soviet Union/National Council of American-Soviet Friendship, International Labor Defense/Civil Rights Congress, Trade Union Educational League/Trade Union Unity League, World Peace Congress and Women's Liberation Movement (Goldstein 2009; Cohen 1993; Horne 1988).

[34] Bedacht was a party leader in the 1920s and its acting secretary in the interim between the expulsion of Lovestone and the establishment of the secretariat, of which he was a member, which led the party until Earl Browder's leadership became stabilized in 1934 (Starobin 1972, 249). Bedacht remained a party leader, but as Starobin describes it, the specific preoccupations of running his own organization kept him at a "discreet" distance from the centers of power. In the later 1940s, Bedacht was critical of the party support to the Progressive Party and its position on the "Jewish question." He was one of many old-timers who were expelled as "leftists" during the Foster-Dennis leadership. His appeal to the 14th National Convention, August 1948, was published in the oppositional *Manhattan Communist Bulletin*, No. 3, which was published in April 1949.

[35] While the government shut down the IWO in the 1950s, the AJC, which was liberal controlled, continued to function and was Levison's donor base for SCLC funding (Garrow 1986a, 168; Levison 2015, pt. 4, 46 and pt. 7, 20; Kamin 2014, 35).

[36] The AJC's Manhattan branch was to the left of the national body.

its summer camps, schools and political activities in its own name served to enlarge the Party's contact with trade unions and Democratic Party politics.

Concerning the IWO's help to the *Daily Worker*, which Weiner facilitated, a participant observed:

> The tie between the Party's financial apparatus and the IWO was maintained through William Weiner, who was for a time both the Party's treasurer and an official of the Jewish People's Fraternal Order. While direct contributions from the IWO to the Party can hardly be proven, no secret was made of contributions to the *Daily Worker*'s sustaining fund drives. (Starobin 1972, 249)

Levison's psychology

Levison wrote no autobiography describing his political thinking or psychology about the rank-and-file and its role in fund raising and party government. In analyzing the psychology of fellow activists, party-member Charles H. Garrigues (1902–74) offered a description of various communist types (Garrigues 1936, 8, 39, 189; see also Terrar 2014, 157–58). Some communists hate capitalism and want a revolutionary party that will overthrow the government. Others come because they want to reform the capitalist system. They are not against co-existence with capitalism but want something better than the Democratic and Republican Parties, which do not represent workers and make concessions only begrudgingly and out of fear of the Communist Party. For them the Communist Party is effective not directly in politics but indirectly, in coercing the other parties and politicians and in showing them, as in the Soviet Union, that health care, social security, housing, and a full-employment economy are possible.

There is also a third group mentioned by Garrigues who join the party or are friendly to it from only a desire to obtain a job, either directly because the party provides jobs as organizers or because being part of its network, they look out for each other. This aspect attracts the ambitious, job conscious professionals who see and use the party as an employment agency (Levison 2015, pt. 8, 73–74).[37] In Garrigues's view, over a period of time, most individuals embody a mix of these and other motivations, such as nationalist, ethical, religious, social or anti-imperialist reasons. These motivations along with varied class membership, sometimes give rise to inter-party difficulties. For those whose interest in communism is mainly to obtain a job, their party connections are more a hindrance than an asset during periods of political repression.[38]

As has been summarized, Levison's financial dealings and those of the party coincided. But following Garrigues's typology, there is evidence that Levison's interest in the party

[37] See also, Margaret Fuchs Singer (2009, 121), which discusses the employment advantages and disadvantages which party membership offered for lawyers. Yuri (Gregory) M. Stekloff mentions a typology for the First International that is similar to that outlined by Garrigues. Stekloff (1968, 369) writes:

> The First International contained the rudiments of all three of the fundamental trends of the contemporary international working-class movements: revolutionary communism, the moderate socialism of the class-collaborationists, and anarchism. . . . In the First International they existed side by side, worrying along somehow under the one roof.

Party leader William Foster outlined a similar motivation typology in the trade union movement. They are: pure and simple, social democratic, and anarchist-syndicalist (Foster [1955] 1968, 157).

[38] Garrigues (1936, 8, 39, 189) maintains that the value which is attached to concepts such as proletarian dictatorship, class struggle, the labor theory of value, dialectical materialism and democratic centralism is related to the communist types.

was ideological as well as economic. In international affairs he believed in the communist notion that the world is divided between the East, which is his ally, and the West, which is his enemy. About this pro-Soviet view Kamin (2014, 98) quotes an FBI report, which discusses Levison's position in late January 1953 that Israel is a "Fascist" state:

> Stanley said that Israel had moved over to the West and now was a real danger spot; that Zionism had become a major menace, and that Israel is now an enemy state—a Fascist state just like Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia had been. Stanley said that a year ago Israel pretended to have a foot in each camp.[39]

Kamin attributes anti-Soviet beliefs to Levison, but what he documents, as in the above passage, is anti-capitalism.

Levison confessed that his involvement in commerce was a shortcoming, but he did not see his communism as mere economic opportunism (Levison 2015, pt. 8, 73–74).[40] To the contrary, his personal life style was a denial of commercial values. Instead of consumerism and self-indulgence, he lived below his means and expressed contempt for the would-be capitalists he encountered. He lived in a two-bedroom rental apartment, never owned a car, dunned Martin Luther King to return a borrowed overcoat and similar to King, he took no money from the movement as compensation (Kamin 2014, 91).[41] His attitude toward would-be capitalists, such as Alfred Stern, is reflected in the following FBI report:

> Levison remarked that Alfred Stern impressed him as a "rube," obsessed with the fact that he was a millionaire and that being a millionaire made him an important person. Levison added, "If Stern was a millionaire, he just barely made it and was the 'cheapest' millionaire he ever met. . . . His contributions to various charitable organizations were nominal. He was always trying to impress people with the fact that he was an important man. He was a great name dropper and claimed to know all the big shots: Henry Wallace, Marshall Field. His wife, Martha Dodd Sterns, was a typical snob." (Levison 2015, pt. 8, 72)[42]

Levison's communism is also apparent in his work as Martin Luther King's literary agent. He criticized a draft of the preacher's first book, *Stride toward Freedom* (1958), arguing that even if the 1956 Montgomery success owed much to King's personal leadership, and even if there was merit to "self-help," such should not be the focus, but rather the 50,000 Alabamians who took to the streets. Historian David Garrow (1981, 27) writes about Levison's contribution to the book:

> By late march, 1958, Levison was carefully reviewing the book manuscript counseling King against including a segment on black self-improvement [Booker T. Washington] and urging that he add a section on registration and voting, which King had not touched upon. Levison also told King that the manuscript left an impression that in the Montgomery protest "everything depended on you. This could create unnecessary charges of an ego-centric presentation of the situation and is important to avoid even if it were the fact." Levison in particular concentrated on the concluding chapter of the book, telling King that it was repetitious and poorly organized. Levison drafted new passages which were incorporated verbatim into the published text.

[39] Kamin in this passage quotes Garrow (2002, 82). Garrow in turn cites an FBI report, without giving its exact location.
[40] Garrow (1981, 28) describes Levison's negative view toward commerce.
[41] Murray Friedman (1998, 109) notes that Levison always traveled economy and, when forced to dine out, ate in cheap restaurants.
[42] Levison, as quoted in Garrow (1981, 28), called commercial skills "abhorrent."

The same communist bent is seen in Levison's facilitation of labor movement participation in the Civil Rights Movement. About this Kamin (2014, 64) comments:

> Levison told [Harry] Belafonte, "We have to connect the Negro struggle with the labor movement." This standardized a principle that would be embraced by King throughout his thirteen-year tenure as the *de facto* head of the freedom campaign. It was not coincidence that when King was shot in Memphis in 1968, he was there helping the sanitation workers accredit their labor union. In light of the Montgomery boycott, labor organizations ranging from the Sleeping Car Porters to an assortment of car assembly workers and fishermen's unions contributed to the cause.[43]

Levison's advocacy to bring labor into the movement also contributed to the 1963 March on Washington, which followed up on the earlier victory at Birmingham.[44]

Levison's use of communist vocabulary like "state power" and historical "stages," and tactics such as mass disruption likewise differentiates him from being only an economic opportunist.[45] His older Southern comrades were veterans of the International Labor Defense (ILD) of the 1930s and 1940s.[46] It was the ILD's confrontational approach that King imitated in the struggle at Birmingham in 1963. About Levison's sense of history and tactics, Kamin (2014, 152–53) writes:

> Stanley Levison took a grim, realistic view of the prospects in Birmingham, "Look, we may not like Bull Connor," he told King, "but we better respect his record." Levison did his homework and reported to King that in the 1930s before and during Connor's original tenure as commissioner of public safety, Connor had masterfully written out suspected leftists from the local labor unions. "His methods were ruthless but he won the people's allegiance. They love him. He made sure there have never been any interracial unions. The movement he started then, with a pure white leadership and no blacks anywhere was stronger than our civil rights movement is now."

[43] Kamin (2014, 222) mentions other examples of Levison's union work including incorporating into the movement union officials such as Leonard Woodcock of the United Auto Workers. Similarly, he helped write speeches for King that promoted unity with labor. An example is when King addressed a union meeting of District 65 of the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Unions, American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO) at New York City's Madison Square Garden on October 23, 1963. The speech that Levison worked on urged that the union work for strong civil rights legislation (Karier 1986, 463–75, quoted in Kamin 2014, 178).

[44] Levison, as quoted in Kamin (2014, 60), told King during the planning period:

> Well, it can't just be a march. The demonstrations must be carefully organized and peaceful. That's the biggest challenge, that everything be peaceful. The Kennedys will try and prevent it but they can't knock it down if it is really peaceful. There need to be nonviolent sit-ins outside congressional offices and rallies and other strategic sessions with congressmen and senators. And we can't do this by ourselves. We need to bring in all the big labor unions to make it work as a message for jobs. Kennedy doesn't relate to "civil rights." He does relate to jobs.

[45] Illustrative were his comments about the 1960 student sit-ins, which he called a "new stage" in the attack on "state power." Kamin, quoting Garrow (1981, 27), who quotes from an undated letter from Levison to King in the King papers at Boston University, Drawer, writes:

> Levison had been disappointed by SCLC's and King's relative quiescence in 1958 and 1959, and when the spontaneous college student sit-ins began in Greensboro on February 1, 1960, he welcomed them with special relish. "This," he wrote to King, "is a new stage in the struggle. It begins at the higher point where Montgomery left off. The students are taking on the strongest state power and demonstrating real will and determination. By their actions they are making the shadow boxing in Congress clear as a farce. They are by contrast exposing the lack of real fight that exists among allegedly friendly congressmen and presidential aspirants. And by example they are demonstrating the bankruptcy of the policy of relying upon courts and legislation to achieve real results."

Kamin (2014, 100) discusses the NAACP–SCLC acrimony.

[46] The ILD became the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) in 1945, and was led by William L. Patterson (Horne 2013).

In picturing Levison as an anti-communist, Kamin (2014, 50) speculates at several points that the 1939 Soviet-Nazi Pact turned Levison against Stalin. However, there is no documentation about this. What Kamin (2014, 9) offers as a substitute is the liberal thinking of Levison's cousin. Liberals were outraged. They had counted on the Nazis and communists to destroy each other.[47] Since Levison was a communist, one might consult the communists' views. Party activist Al Lannon saw the coming war as a conflict between British-American and German imperialists. He hoped they would destroy each other to the benefit of the communist movement. In his view, the pact was a smart move. It encouraged the Germans to first move against the British-Americans, rather than the Soviets. Al Lannon's (1998, 84) biography summarizes that only a minority of the comrades disagreed with the pact:

> When the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed in August 1939, Lannon and many other communists never blinked, although the Party lost some fifteen percent of its membership following the announcement. Accepting the premise that the coming war was between rival imperialisms, Lannon propounded the new Party line vigorously.[48]

Even in the more conservative American South, the communist reaction to the pact was similar. Historian Robin Kelley (1990, 190–91) in writing about the pre-war party finds that the pact was a problem for the liberals but not the communists:

> Most Birmingham Communists were more concerned with the CIO work than foreign policy issues, and in the midst of growing sentiment to expel them from the labor movement. Party members simply had more pressing problems to contend with. Even the black middle class refrained from criticizing local Communists for their support of the pact. On the other hand, the Nazi-Soviet Pact was acid to the already deteriorating relations between Communists and liberals, especially within the Southern Conference for Human Welfare (SCHW), where heightened suspicions gave way to bitter conflicts.[49]

[47] The thinking of Harry Truman and Winston Churchill in desiring to bleed the Soviets is illustrative. The scholar Erwin Marquit (2014, 50) writes:

> After the Soviet Union had been attacked by the Nazis in 1941, Harry S. Truman, then a U.S. senator, said that if the Germans are winning, we should help the Soviets, and if the Soviets are winning, we should help the Germans, so that the two could kill each other off. This sentiment persisted among reactionary politicians in both the United States and Great Britain. As a result, the opening of a second front in Western Europe was delayed until the Soviet Red Army had driven the German troops back to the Polish border. In 1942, however, President Roosevelt, with the support of U.S. chief of staff General George C. Marshall had assured the Soviets that the Western allies would open the second front in Western Europe that same year. Later in 1942, after it became clear that the Roosevelt administration had given in to the demand by Churchill that landing of British and U.S. be deliberately delayed to bleed the Soviets, progressives raised publicly the demand for the opening of the second front. This demand was even joined by some segments of monopoly capital that did not want to risk a possible Nazi victory in Europe or cause any further delay recovering their investments in Europe.

[48] Another communist, Steve Nelson (Nelson, Barnett and Ruck 1981, 253), who was a veteran of the Spanish Civil War, summarized a similar view in his biography, "Those of us who had some military experience analyzed the nonaggression pact as a device to allow the Soviets a chance to prepare for war." American Jews, as discussed in Helen Camp (1995, 149), reported that their relatives in the Polish-occupied Ukraine welcomed the Red Army in 1939 and joined it against the Nazi and the former Polish governments.

[49] Kelley (1990, 190–91) goes on to comment:

> For his rather mild defense of the Soviet Union's actions, Joe Gelders was accused of being a Communist, prompting several SCHW members to call for his immediate expulsion. Gelders denied the allegation, claiming only a perfunctory knowledge of Marxism and a soft spot in his heart for any defender of civil liberties. So adamant were his denials that during the 1940 campaign for city commission, Gelders threatened to sue candidate W. B. Houseal for calling him a Communist. Lying about his Party affiliation was undoubtedly a painful experience for a man who had desired to be an open Communist from the moment he joined.

Another communist that Kamin might have consulted about the 1939 pact and anti-imperialism in general is Levison's contemporary, Milt Felsen. Felsen in his biography, titled *The Anti-warrior*, points out that in war, each side becomes like the other.[50] For liberals and communists, peaceful methods cannot suffice. There is a shared military ideology that the end justifies the means and of survival of the fittest. Each side is inured to the massive loss of life. They prepare for a nuclear war in which half or more of the world's population might be lost. For Felsen (1989, 202), war comes because of the need of capitalism for profit. In his view, the Soviets in 1939 and later were militantly anti-imperialist, as seen in their support for anti-colonial movements and disadvantaged people all over the world and in their official anti-militarist culture, which in films and literature never glorified war or minimized its horrors.

Felsen goes on to describe a sector of liberals in the 1930s who came into the party. They were disturbed because their parties were complicit with Nazism. He comments, "Munich was still fresh in the news. I asked Jerry Cook what he made of Neville Chamberlain and the pact in Munich. "'A bribe for Hitler to go ahead and attack the Soviet Union—everybody knows that,' he said" (Felsen 1989, 110). The liberal parties feared the working class more than they feared the Nazis. A scholar Thomas Sakmyster (2011, 97) describes a liberal, Henry Julian Wadleigh, who disagreed with such politics and became associated with the communists:

> Henry Julian Wadleigh was an economist who had trained at the University of Oxford, the London School of Economics and the University of Chicago. In 1934, while working in the Department of Agriculture, he had become deeply alarmed by the rise of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. He thought of himself as a "Fabian Socialist," but he was increasingly attracted to Communism. Finally, in 1935 he decided that he would have to "come out of my cocoon and work with the Communists. . . ." He believed that the Communist Party had become the only reliable opponent of Fascism, since the "Social Democrats had shown a remarkable lack of vitality and ability to resist the Nazis."

The Soviet-Nazi Pact was a problem for those like Wadleigh, whose interest in communism was narrow.

Randi Storch (2007, 216), reports the same pattern in Chicago:

> Communists' newfound popularity made the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its consequences particularly difficult for local activists. The agreement devastated Communists' allies, especially those who were Jews, intellectuals, and/or middle-class sympathizers. Yet even with the loss of some fellow travelers, the party's own forces were not seriously depleted during this year-and-a-half-long hiatus in the Popular Front. Local party experiences explain their persistence in Chicago; the Soviet Union's about-face in 1939 did not seriously affect the work of most local Communists who pushed for civil rights, fought for the unemployed, and organized industrial unions. As Claude Lightfoot states, "From 1935 onward, the Black and labor movements became the main spark plugs igniting the engines of the struggle." Ties Communists had forged in the black community, in unemployed organizing, and within the labor movement offered them local network and concrete issues that overshadowed unpopular international twists.

[50] Milt Felsen (1989, 161), writes about his 1940 military indoctrination class given by a West Point lieutenant colonel:

> "Forget everything you ever were taught about honor, truth, decency, fair play, or your instinct for ethical behavior," he began. "Your life will depend on being able to lie, cheat, and deceive and to kill quickly, silently, and without hesitation. You must think dirty and fight dirty." In other words, we were to become morally indistinguishable from the enemy. Is it always true, I thought, that you become those you fight?
> "So what do you think?" I asked Irv Goff afterward.
> "If I read von Clausewitz correctly," said Irv, "it's a good argument for settling disputes other than by war."

Not a party member and factionalism

Levison's ties to the party were economic and ideological, but an aspect of his communism that Kamin misses is that he never joined the Communist Party. The party constitution (Article III, section 2) in defining membership, states:

> A Party member is one who accepts the Party program, attends the regular meetings of the membership Branch of his place of work or of his territory or trade, who pays dues regularly, and is active in Party work. (Anonymous 1938, quoted in Anonymous 1953, 99)

There is no evidence that Levison was ever a dues payer with the right to vote on party matters. The scholar Randi Storch (2007, 41) points out that those who are friends or "sustainers" of the organization are always greater in number than those who pay dues. Prominent non-party communists include Harry Bridges (1901–90), leader of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and the entertainer, Paul Robeson (1898–1976). Storch explains that there are legal, immigration, family, personality and political reasons why communists choose to be party friends rather than dues payers.[51] Union constitutions and federal and state loyalty laws have at times outlawed party membership under various circumstances. Teachers have been fired for their party membership and lawyers disbarred. Both the AFL and CIO have conducted internal investigations and expelled party members (Kelley 1990, 190). Marriages have ended in divorce because a spouse objected to the other's party membership. To keep their job or spouse, communists might choose to be friends to the party but not dues payers.

The best evidence that Levison was never a party member is that he so testified under oath during a time when the government was motivated to convict him of perjury if he was lying.[52] Levison's denial came on April 30, 1962 at an executive session of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee hearing. Assisted by National Lawyers Guild attorney William Kunstler, he testified, "To dispose of a question causing current apprehension, I am a loyal American and I am not now and never have been a member of the Communist Party" (Schlesinger 1978, 588, quoted in Kamin 2014, 145). About any dealings with the party as a non-member, he invoked the Fifth Amendment.

Kamin (2014, 18–24) shows that the Kennedy administration was anxious to eliminate Levison's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and a perjury conviction would have helped. But government prosecutors evidently understood that "party membership" had a precise definition as spelt out in the party constitution. A long-time activist, Frederick Field called himself a party member and at one point requested to be a "real" member. But Eugene Dennis, the party general secretary, knew the rules and would not let him join. Field (1983, 182) writes in his autobiography about this:

> Usually, we [Field and Dennis] just talked about what I was writing for the Party press, but on one occasion I remember saying to him, "Instead of my being a special or general member, why don't you let me become a regular rank-and filer with credentials, an assignment to a local or occupational group and the financial responsibilities everyone else has?" Gene gave me a direct answer: "It wouldn't be of any advantage to you or to the Party." I never again brought up the subject.

[51] Dorothy Healey (1993, 85) notes that even those who are party members go on leave when they take a job that restricts party membership. They remain communists but not party members.

[52] Ellen Schrecker (1998) discusses those convicted for perjury.

Dennis was familiar with Browder's attempt to make the organization a general membership association in 1944. That episode culminated in Browder's expulsion. As noted, general membership with the elimination of democratic centralism destroys the balance between the center and the districts. General membership and the graft-type funding which it entails is the norm in capitalist parties. The norm for the Communist Party in cities where there were enough communist teachers, lawyers, nurses, artists or government officials, was that they met in "professional" clubs. There were instances where for security reasons the center attempted to keep professionals from joining left-wing mass organizations, but not from joining party clubs.[53]

When a professional obtained a government position for which party membership was prohibited by a state or federal law, they would resign from the party for the period they held the job. For example, Dorothy Healey in November 1941 was working for a state welfare agency when she was called on to testify before a government investigating committee about her party affiliation. She had gone on leave from the party at the time she took the government job. As she puts it, "There was nothing they could prove about my current involvement with the Communist movement. . . . I had been a Party member since 1932; technically I had been on leave from the Party since August 1940" (Healey 1993, 85).[54]

If one were to assume that "members at large" were actual party members, the main argument that Kamin makes in support of Levison's party membership at large is that his first wife in 1939 supposedly told the FBI that he was a party member. But Kamin does not cite where he found the wife's allegation.[55] Further, Kamin admits that he is not sure she made the allegation. He writes, "She apparently informed on the brothers when they originally became members of the American Communist Party" (Kamin 2014, 36).[56]

Others have argued that Levison was a member because he attended party functions in the mid-1950s.[57] A scholar, Murray Friedman (1998, 111), writes:

[53] Biographer Margaret Singer discusses those in her father's professional club who could not be deterred from participating in mass organizations. At one point she quotes his description of their intransigence, "I have seen also situations in which a group, persistently arguing with the boss, finally has its way" (Singer 2009, 123). In his autobiography the New York district organizer, George Charney discusses the "members at large" with which he worked. He writes:

> Perhaps it is an odd footnote that the most intransigent supporters on the "left" came from the professional groups—doctors, lawyers and assorted businessmen classified as members at large (MAL). They operated in tightly knit circles far from the center of party life. Ideology was the decisive question. In some respects the best educated, they were also the most indoctrinated and the most rigid. Their party life was untouched by big disasters. They were fund raisers and fund givers, and at regular intervals, if doubts arouse about the progress of the party, a representative would come to give them reassurances. I was often that representative. (Charney 1968, 284)

[54] See also, Jane Foster's (1912–79) biography (1980, 103). She likewise dropped her party membership upon entering government service during World War II:

> I did not feel that I was contributing much to the war effort. One of my friends asked me to transfer to the Board of Economic Warfare, the head of which was Henry Wallace, the Vice President, where I could be more useful, which I did. I was put to work in a section called "Reoccupation and Rehabilitation of Liberated Territories." It would have been great, except that, in 1942, there was nothing to reoccupy. Before leaving New York I had been told by the Party that, if I went to work for the U.S. Government, I would have to turn in my Party card to my last unit organizer. The question never arose for me, as my card was either lost or stolen before I left for Washington.

At other times, such as the 1930s, entire party units were comprised of government workers (Davis 1994, 69, 100, 138).

[55] If Levison's first wife told the FBI, one would think it would be in his FBI file. But it is not.

[56] Kamin (2014, 30) also mentions Levison's attendance at Young Communist League (YCL) events in the 1930s as evidence of his party membership. But the YCL was not the party.

[57] Garrigues (1936, 8, 39, 189), points out that only the club treasurer would know who at a meeting is a dues payer and who is only a sustainer or friend.

> Lillian Gates—an upper echelon leader of the New York State Communist Party in the 1950s, whose husband, John, was editor of the *Daily Worker*, the party organ—claims Levison attended one or more meetings of the party convened late in 1956 or early in 1957, when it was split into three warring factions and faced extinction. The meetings, she reports, were convened to hear the views of Levison and one other person, neither of whom was a formal party member. Lillian Gates believes Levison was a "submarine" in the King movement, that is, a secret party agent whose mission was to infiltrate the civil rights organization to promote party purposes. Janet Kennedy, Levison's first wife, believes this too. But neither woman can produce hard evidence, and Levison's subsequent behavior suggests this is hardly likely. Branch in *Parting the Waters*, 211–14, has an account of a party meeting. It was Lillian Gates, not John, who was present. The latter claims not to have been involved at this "truce" meeting or meetings. Branch reports that at one point Levison took a call from King, causing those present to become worried. They feared, he claims, the FBI was listening in and might use such a conversation to destroy King as they did Paul Robeson. Garrow doubts that Levison attended the truce meetings or that King would call him in such a setting.

In Kamin's view, Levison was a party member but by 1956 he quit because of opposition to what Kamin (2014, 7) calls the "brutish slaughter of Hungarian freedom fighters by Russian soldiers in 1956." But, as noted, there is no documentation that Levison belonged to the party or quit it or shared liberal views about Hungary. Like other communists he called Israel fascist, so would he have thought differently about what fellow-communist Herbert Aptheker ([1957] 1977, 14, 20, 39, 97, 237) documented as a "proto-fascist counter-revolution" in Hungary?

There was a decline in Levison's relations with the party after the mid-1950s, as Kamin observes, but that had more to do with William Weiner's death than with ideology. Levison's participation in the party centered on the economic help he gave Weiner. There was a general decline in the party membership in the mid-1950s that had an ideological component, but there is evidence that Levison opposed that decline. The decline was related to the left-right factionalism within the party mentioned in the quote above from Murray Friedman.

Between 1956 and 1958 the party's right-wing was led by John Gates, the left by William Foster and the middle by Eugene Dennis. Because the middle often sided with it, the Gates faction was in the majority in 1956 and early 1957. It controlled both the press and the February 1957 national convention. This was the party's first convention since 1950. In foreign policy, Gates was an anti-Soviet. He supported the Polish nationalist Wladyslaw Gomulka, who opposed agrarian reform and a state-planned, full-employment, worker-owned economy. Gates condemned the Soviet invasion of Hungary. He advocated transforming the party along neo-Browderite lines into a "political association" that would work within the Democratic Party.[58]

In the middle of the left-right split was Eugene Dennis. His interest was in keeping the organization from falling apart and preventing the factions from expelling each other

[58] Biographer Helen Camp (1995, 279) summarizes the historiography about Dennis:

> David Shannon has described him as "a cautious party bureaucrat with a damp finger always in the air to detect both rank-and-file and Kremlin breezes." On a more earthy note, Junius Scales later remembered that whenever the New York delegation to the 1957 party convention took a controversial vote, Dennis could be found "haunting" the men's room. Dennis's wife Peggy remembered him as a poor factionalist, trying vainly to stay above the fray and to convince others by cool, rational argument. She saw him as trying to function as a balance wheel between the two extremes: to keep the party intact by propitiating the Foster faction while protecting the Gates wing from the "old man's" retaliation. . . . Dennis often blocked any effort to expel outspoken members for their heretical views; the party was dwindling fast enough as it was.

(Camp 1995, 277–78). While the Gates faction was a majority at the convention, many of his supporters soon left the organization to join the Democratic Party. Gates controlled the *Daily Worker*, but it closed down on January 13, 1958 and became a weekly, after the left, which controlled the finances, defunded it. At that point Gates quit the party.

In the left-right antagonism the main documented comment Levison made was that the organization had lost its direction. He said this in an interview he gave about this to an FBI agent in 1960. The file states:

> He said he did not know much about the CP other than the fact that those who apparently were in it, now seemed thoroughly confused. Levison stated that he knew some people who probably could be called liberals, progressives or communists, but that he would not name them because he believed a person should have "freedom of political thought." Levison continued by stating that you really can't classify these people today because there are communists, anticommunists, communists who are anticommunists, people who are left, people who are right, and people in between. (Levison 2015, pt. 8, 74; see also, Camp 1995, 270)

Not being in the party made it easier for Levison not to take sides in the factionalism. However, the fact that he spoke at a "truce" meeting, as indicated by the quote from Lillian Gates above, suggests he was in the middle. Like Eugene Dennis, he was trying to keep the organization from falling apart. His comments to the FBI that the party had lost its direction indicate he believed there was a direction and role for the party. He was not a liquidator.

Levison's mediation attempts and belief in the party's role rebut Kamin's (2014, 33) assertion that he felt betrayed about Hungary and was disillusioned or that he "divorced himself from the CPUSA by 1956." Communists followed the party and its leadership because, as a veteran member, Hosea Hudson (1979, 110) put it, they (the leaders) had "guts." They were out in front, getting arrested and beaten up. When the party was crushed by the government, communists fought back. Levison did so in one of the areas where the capitalist class was weak, the Civil Rights Movement.

Commercial weakness

To the extent he was a communist, Levison, as quoted by Kamin (2015, 16), admitted that as a merchant-landlord in the "commercial jungle," he fell short of the ideal. For him communism was a way of life as well as an ideology. His ideology was communist but his capitalist way of life was, as Levison put it, "abhorrent" (Garrow 1981, 28). In that context his failure to join the party was simply an extension of the commercial aspect of his life. There was nothing to be gained by belonging to a proletarian organization, the rank-and-file membership of which gave a low priority to profit-seeking. In this he differed from another commercially involved communist, Friedrich Engels (1820–95), who helped establish the Communist League in 1847 and the International Workingmen's Association (First International) in 1864. At age 50 in 1869, he sold his interest in the corporation he inherited at a heavy loss, such was his desire to pursue revolution fulltime (Henderson 1976, 503).[59]

[59] Soviet academician Leonid F. Ilyichov (1974, 217, 238) writes about Engels's contrasting views on party work and commercial participation:

> By the terms of his agreement with his brothers he could not leave the firm until July 1, 1869. Until then, he could only yearn for deliverance from the "accursed commerce" which, he wrote, "completely demoralizes

Levison's type of commercial psychology is discussed by the cleric, Marc Ellis. Unlike Kamin, Ellis preaches liberation, not liberal, theology. He observes that Jews are historically working class (Ellis 2004, 117). Their God is the *Exodus* liberator of slaves. For this God, it is idolatry to be ashamed at being on the periphery, un-rewarded with money and status.[60] Levison was critical of Alfred Stern for putting on airs, but Levison never showed any working-class pride. Ellis points out that labor and the labor theory of value give communism its legitimacy. These are absent from Levison's way of life. He associated with movement leaders, entertainers, politicians and union bosses, not with the rank-and-file.[61] He focused on top-down fundraising dinners for the wealthy in high-class hotels.

Levison's way of life explains why he lacked the courage of his communist convictions, as in 1967 when he advised Martin Luther King not to come out against the Vietnam War. It would disturb the SCLC's liberal donor base (Kamin 2014, 207; see also King 1967).[62] In his early years his communist peers had joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and fought in Spain, but Levison went to law school. Fellow communist-lawyer Doris Brin Walker (1919–2009) in the 1940s quit what she considered a frivolous law practice and went to work in a cannery to unite with and organize workers (Cohn 2009). Levison on the other hand helped landlords and merchants.

Levison's way of life interfered with his judgment, which resulted in difficulties for the party. In 1952, William Weiner sent him to Chicago to size-up Morris Childs (1902–91), who was requesting to resume his relations with the party (Garrow 2002, 81).[63] Childs had been a party bureaucrat with Browderite sympathies when he left the organization in the 1940s (Gates 1958, 110; Starobin 1972, 119; Barron 1996, 36). Then in the 1950s, the FBI put him on its payroll and encouraged him to return to the organization as an agent. In his admittance interview before Levison, Childs presented himself as involved in international commerce. Levison did not see through him. Levison recommended him to Weiner and the party.

me with its waste of time. . . ." When Engels' contract with Gottfried Ermen, his partner, ran out on June 30, 1869, he was able to end his hateful work in the firm. . . . On July 1, 1869, he was able to write to his friend: "Dear Moor! Hurray! Today, it's all over with *doux commerce* and I'm a free man!" Eleanor Marx later recollected: "I was with Engels when he reached the end of this forced labour and I saw what he must have gone through all those years. I shall never forget the triumph with which he exclaimed: 'For the last time!' as he put on his boots in the morning to go to the office. . . ." At long last, Engels could devote himself entirely to party work and science. "Of course, I need not say how glad I am that I am free of this damned commerce and can again do what I choose, and especially that it happened now, when things in Europe are getting warmer and when, one fine day, the storm may break out quite unexpectedly."

[60] Ellis (2004, 90) writes, "There is no doubt that parts of the Jewish community have their own recently acquired idols: capitalism, patriotism, and national security."

[61] As seen in Levison (2015, pt. 20, 32), those whom Levison cultivated were the politicians Richard Hatcher, mayor of Gary, Indiana, and John Conyers, Detroit Congressman (Levison 2015, pt. 14, 59), the entertainers Harry Bellefonte and Sidney Poitier (Levison 2015, pt. 20, 64), and the leaders of the Teamsters Union, Packing House Workers, Hospital Workers and the United Auto Workers (Levison 2015, pt. 14, 91; pt. 20, 5, 17, 29, 72).

[62] Levison feared loss of revenue, but King saw his Vietnam involvement as enhancing revenue. Levison (1966) acknowledged the problem that Vietnam presented for his fundraising:

> The Vietnamese War is increasingly seizing the emotions of the people and is reducing their civil rights concerns to a very secondary level. The impression that people gained that the civil rights struggle is over with the passage of legislation and anti-poverty funding further reduces civil rights appeals and the absence of dramatic events takes attention from the needs and still further reduces interest and concern. Finally, the recent stock market decline has an effect.

[63] See Louis Budenz (1947, 329) for a negative description of dealings between Weiner and Childs in 1938.

When he returned to the party, Childs, like Levison, did not belong to a party club. His dealings with the rank-and-file focused on inhibiting their militancy and helping the FBI arrest them. This is discussed by John Abt, a communist lawyer, who, unlike Levison, joined the party. One of Abt's clients was party-member Irving Potash, a leader in the Furriers' Union in New York City. In 1957, Potash entered the country illegally. He came to Abt for advice. Before Abt could help him, Childs reported him to the FBI and he was arrested. Abt (1993, 215) writes:

> Morris [Childs] was constantly around. It was commonly understood in the Party that he was one of Gus Hall's trusted confidants after Gus became general secretary, following Gene Dennis's tenure. For example, though not a member of the body, Morris was invited to attend every meeting of the Party's Central Committee, its highest governing body between conventions, where he was referred to, with a wink, as "the ambassador." When the Garrow book came out, I fully understood the circumstances of Irving's arrest.[64]

Childs's negative dealings with the rank-and-file is also discussed in Gerald Horne's biography about civil rights activist William Patterson (1891–1980), who was another lawyer that joined the party. Childs sabotaged Patterson's work of rallying support in Latin America and Eastern Europe for the Civil Rights Movement.[65]

The good that Levison's fundraising did the movement was undercut not only by Childs's sabotage of Patterson. As was discussed, Levison was part of the finance committee, which reversed in 1954 the party's funding basis from the rank-and-file toward a top-down fiscal policy (Garrow 2002, 83). The reliance on large donors, rather than rank-and-file dues payers, set the stage for Soviet–FBI money becoming the big donor starting in 1958 and lethargy at the party center (Garrow 1981, 38). In later years Levison complained, as his son puts it, that the party "was completely isolated and irrelevant to the larger trade union, Negro freedom and other progressive social movements of the era" (Kamin 2014, 57).[66]

However, party activists such as Erwin Marquit argue that it was Levison that was isolated. Marquit (2014, 264–66) points out that the organization's clubs and fraternal organizations are where it does its mass work. In the 1960s, these groups stabilized as young people recruited themselves and veterans that had drifted away returned (see also Kaplan and Shapiro 1998, 299–301). He notes the boost in class pride and party recruitment that Angela Davis made in putting politics before career. The biographies

[64] In 1971 a tip from Childs led to the arrest of Angela Davis (Barron 1996, 8).

[65] Horne (2013, 12–13) writes about Childs's sabotage:

> As is now well known, the party had been penetrated at the highest levels by Washington's agents, and they were adroit in blocking his ambitious plans, particularly those that spelled black freedom. Thus, in 1957 he met with the CP's leading international representative, Morris Childs, who also happened to be the authorities' main agent within the ranks—and who spent an inordinate amount of time kneading Patterson's capacious plans into curlicue knots. They were in the basement of the CP headquarters in Lower Manhattan on a summer day when Patterson indicated that—assuming he could get a passport (not a given)—he would like to tour Latin America to rally support for US Negroes. With bureaucratic deftness, Childs replied that such a journey would require discussions with and permission from the "entire leadership" of the CP and that, besides, it might be dangerous. Childs took careful note of Patterson's idea of obtaining funds from Eastern Europe for such a venture, as the plan was suffocated in embryo. Nevertheless, Patterson continued to push aggressively for global support for the unfolding civil-rights movement in the face of Childs's bureaucratic jujitsu and FBI interference.

[66] In March 1963 an FBI report quoted in Garrow (1981, 60, 257 [note 31]), stated that Jack Childs had learned from a Levison acquaintance that he was "disenchanted" with the party.

of rank-and-file members from the 1960s forward show party activism in every dimension of the mass struggle.

For example, California organizer Dorothy Healey (1993, 125, 138, 150) summarized the party activism in her district:

> We continued to hold public meetings in the name of the *People's World*. This was very important as far as the morale of Party members was concerned, because they could see that the Party was still there. . . . Our Party offices were still open, our Party press was still publishing, the labor movement was able to function legally and there were the first stirrings of what would become the civil rights movement. . . . In 1955 the Party's membership stood at about the same size it had been in 1933.[67]

Whatever the center's lethargy, it did not prevent rank-and-file activism. Levison took no part in this work, even within the SCLC.

Civil rights movement, finances and communism: 1956–1970s

Levison worked as the SCLC's main fundraiser beginning with its inception in 1956 and continued in this role even after King's death in 1968. He raised the funds from a 9,000-member, American Jewish Congress (AJC) direct-mail donor base.[68] Over an eight-year period he brought in $600,000. This does not include his help with several fund raising dinners and concerts held annually in New York, Los Angeles, Atlanta and other cities. Each of these brought in as much as $100,000 (Levison 2015, pt. 20, 10, 24, 46, 70).[69] Figure 3 depicts Levison at one of his fundraising events in 1961.

[67] Similarly, in the East and Midwest districts it was business as usual. Daniel Rosenberg (2008, 189) writes:

> The Communist Party retained its legality, despite legislation that would have outlawed it. Pressures to conform notwithstanding, critics in press and public could and did speak out. The *Daily Worker*, accused of "sedition" for opposing the Korean War, continued to publish. The Party held public meetings in New York, for example, at a center in Brighton Beach (where classes and dances also took place), and operated several public headquarters. In the most difficult moments, Communists ran for electoral office and spoke on the radio and television. Radio station WSAR in Fall River, Massachusetts even extended a "frequency discount" to the Communist Party for using its airwaves so often in 1940 and 1950. The Party's national office stayed open for business, reachable by telephone through its listed number. While leading members were railroaded to trial and prison, the Party and other organizations, such as civil rights groups (whose leaders were investigated) and labor unions (whose rights were restricted) struggling for justice and reform were not outlawed. . .
>
> Communists in Michigan participated energetically in civil liberties and civil rights endeavors. Members in St. Louis gave much attention to movements for integrated education and housing. A Cleveland club joined a campaign to end segregation at a public swimming pool. A biographer characterizes a Chicago Party stalwart as "not intimidated" by the FBI, adding: "He did not go underground and did not stop organizing." In fact, persistent interaction with neighbors and co-workers "helped him survive the McCarthy repression of the '50s."

According to Eugene Dennis, who was general secretary between 1945 and 1959, party membership was at 25,000 in January 1957, down from 80,000 in 1945. See Harris (2010, 463).

[68] As noted, Levison was treasurer for the Manhattan branch of AJC in the 1950s (Garrow 1986a, 168; Levison 2015, pt. 4, 46 and pt. 7, 20; Kamin 2014, 35).

[69] In 1966 as treasurer for the SCLC, the annual budget was $1 million dollars. In Levison (1966), he listed the following as donations:

> $400,000 Direct mail
> $200,000 Foreign affairs
> $50,000 Al Duckett project
> $150,000 Wachtel
> $100,000 Miscellaneous
> $40,000 Chicago benefit
> $50,000 General drive among unions, churches, etc.
> $990,000 Total donations

Figure 3. Levison (center), Martin Luther King and unidentified man at New York reception in 1961. Source: Branch (1988, 336).

Levison's fundraising helped make the SCLC a powerful organization. However, his significance for most scholars is not about the funding, but to show communist influence, or, as with Kamin, its lack of influence, in the Civil Rights Movement. Scholars such as Mary Dudziak (2000), Gerald Horne (2013), Larry Garner and Roberta Garner (2011, 91), with less prejudice than Kamin, find that communist influence was pervasive. In their view, the influence was based primarily on the Soviets and the Cold War. The Soviet victory in World War II helped liberation movements worldwide.

In defending this position, Dudziak argues that as early as 1947 President Harry Truman's Committee on Civil Rights was complaining that race discrimination was harming foreign commerce. Dudziak (2000, 250) comments:

> Soviet manipulation of American racial problems ensured that race in America would be an important Cold War narrative. U.S. government effort to contain and manage the story of race in America was a component of the government's broader Cold War policy of containing communism.

Dudziak emphasizes that the plight of American blacks was of propaganda value for the Soviets and an embarrassment to the establishment in fighting against the mass disruption led by those such as Patrice Lumumba and the African liberation movement (Branch 1988, 476). This meant that in the period of the Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson

Figure 4. Print Soviet journal *Krokodil* (August 24, 1963) comments on capitalism. Signs say "Nigger Go Away," "Lynch Him," "We Want Segregation and Put the Colored on Their Knees." Source: Dudziak (2000, 196).

administrations in the 1950s and 1960s, the American Civil Rights Movement was able to split parts of the once unified Northern and Southern establishment, so that the federal government at times even used military force, as at Little Rock in 1957, on the side of the movement. Figures 4 and 5 depict Soviet anti-racist propaganda and its embarrassment to American imperialism.

Martin Luther King understood and baited the establishment's weak spot, which was the exposure to the "world" of its violence. He stated:

> When the movement's opponents chose to employ their clubs, dogs and guns, they found the world was watching, and then the power of nonviolent protest became magnified. It dramatized the essential meaning of the conflict and in magnified strokes made clear who was the evildoer and who was the undeserving victim. The nation and the world was sickened. (Garrow 1978, 226)[70]

[70] See also Larry Garner and Roberta Garner (2011, 95), who likewise discuss the effect of Soviet influence:

> The effect of the competitive factor was stronger globally than it was inside the United States, since it was possible to "play off" socialist and capitalist patrons against each other in an effort to obtain foreign aid and military

Figure 5. *Oakland Tribune* (September 11, 1957) cartoon summarizing concern about communist propaganda. Source: Dudziak (2000, 123).

Similarly, movement leader James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) stated that when they planned the Freedom Ride in 1961, the strategy centered on damaging the nation's image abroad. He wrote:

> We planned the Freedom Ride with the specific intention of creating a crisis. We were counting on the bigots in the South to do our work for us. We figured that the government would have to respond if we created a situation that was headline news all over the world and affected the nation's image abroad. An international crisis, that was our strategy. (Garrow 1986a, 156)[71]

King (1967, 103–17) spoke of the movement's internationalism and unity with the Soviet-backed African and Vietnam anti-imperialist struggle. From Dudziak's perspective, the government's particular hatred of Levison was not because of the funds he raised, but

support: but even in the United States, competition with the Soviet Union had many salutary consequences. The USSR had an important role for example in fighting racism and segregation in the USA and in the success of the civil rights movement, because in competition for the hearts and minds of the new nations *de jure* segregation had to be brought to an end. The Soviet Union also showed leadership in integrating women into the work force as independent wage earners, in providing universal health care, and in instituting educational policies that promoted rapid social mobility of peasants' and workers' children into the intelligentsia and managerial strata.

[71] How the rank-and-file made the Freedom Ride an international crisis is seen in the biography of Terry Sullivan (2010). For more on Sullivan's work as a rank-and-file freedom rider, see Branch (1988, 484) and Perry (2013, 371).

because American communists connected the movement with the international anti-capitalist struggle.[72]

The movement made use of Soviet internationalism. But as historians Gerald Horne (2013, 12) and Jennifer Uhlmann (2007, 6) point out, to the extent that communists like Levison and rank-and-filers throughout the country participated, they did it without effective leadership from the party's center.[73] Compared to the civil rights movement that started in the 1920s, the mid-century was, if anything, a regression. The earlier civil rights movement was working-class based with a broader scope than the top-down funded, liberal-clerical led 1950s movement. It included not only racial justice but full employment, trade unionism, anti-imperialism and free health care, education, housing and culture. The later liberal-clerical SCLC program was anemic. Uhlmann (2007, 6) writes of the two movements:

> The scope of the Communist Civil Rights Movement was much broader than the later one. Communists and contemporaries defined civil rights expansively and often used the term interchangeably with civil liberties. To a Communist, civil rights included workers' rights to unionize and strike, foreign immigrants' rights to political conscience, radicals' rights to First Amendment freedoms, African-American rights to full, integrated and equal political and civic participation, and finally, inalienable human rights. They felt that all the demands packed into the expression "civil rights" were the inheritance of working people around the world. For this reason, their civil rights movement never narrowly focused on the South, or on African Americans, but included the rest of the United States and globe in an ambitious and multi-faceted revolutionary program.

Jennifer Uhlmann argues that because it was Communist Party led, the earlier movement differed qualitatively in its ideological make-up, institutional frameworks and in its historical trajectories. She writes,

> The party was at the center of the early flurry of activity, and catalyzed liberal, radical, union, church and legal groups to adopt more expansive and aggressive policies for civil rights. While individual Communists, former communists, sympathizers and "red-diaper babies"

[72] Gerald Horne discusses the thinking of black communist William Patterson, whose focus in the party was connecting the movement to the international forces. Horne (2013, 12) writes:

> Implicit in his farsighted remarks was the notion that white supremacy was so ingrained in the United States that weighty global forces were necessary to erode it. Domestic forces were insufficient—and, at that juncture, only the organized left had the necessary global network.

[73] Gerald Horne's *Black Liberation/Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* is about New York City councilman Ben Davis, who was one of the black communist leaders imprisoned in the 1950s (Horne 1994). In his discussion, Horne lists some of the full-time, black "revolutionaries" that participated in the Civil Rights Movement. He writes:

> The party was still one of the few national organizations with a disciplined and sophisticated core of full-time black revolutionaries that included figures with many contacts and allies still within the emerging movement. William Patterson, Doxey Wilkerson, Henry Winston, James Ford, James Jackson, Augusta Strong, Bill Taylor, Abner Berry, Claude Lightfoot and Geraldine Lightfoot were just a few of the black comrades. That they would take advantage of the moment to play a role in the movement, recruit, and help to blare headlines abroad trumpeting the fight against Jim Crow was of grave concern to the authorities. (Horne 2013, 12)

A party organizer in the South, Junius Scales (1920–2002), in his biography (Scales and Nickson 1987, 293) notes "with pride" that a black communist was one of the organizers of the 1955 Montgomery boycott that brought Martin Luther King to prominence. At the time Scales himself was being prosecuted in the federal courts under the Smith Act for his activism.

> participated in the mid-century civil rights movement, the party itself was not the generating force behind that movement or in any sense directing its development. (Uhlmann 2007, 5)[74]

Where Kamin briefly acknowledges the "Bolsheviks," as he calls them, he faults them because they pushed for separate black national development in the 1930s (Kamin 2014, 56). But the black comrades from that period who ended up in the later movement thought differently. They maintained that the national question means the right to self-determination and support for land reform, which leads to millions of acres taken out of the control of Wall Street landlord families and placed in the hands of African Americans. Hosea Hudson was a veteran communist. His biographer explained:

> Hudson held back his criticism of the hegemony of the Soviet Party in the international community, remembering that the Negro Commission that had mandated the Party's move into the South in 1930 had met under Stalin's chairmanship. Without the Negro Commission, Hudson would never even had heard of the CP. In the way most Americans attribute whatever happens during a President's term in office to the President, Hudson gave Stalin credit for the Comintern position on the Negro Question. (Hudson 1979, 25–26)[75]

Historian Robin Kelley corroborates Uhlmann's conclusion that the party's earlier program was more expansive than that of the 1950s–1960s movement, centering on integration, voting rights, agrarian reform, full employment and unionization of the textile, steel, coal and other industries.[76] As summarized by Kelley, the sharecropper unions, which the communists helped establish in the 1930s, had 73 locals and thousands of members. The hunger marches and boycotts, which they led in the Black Belt, had success in preventing evictions and in obtaining government relief and the expansion of public school and health care programs (Kelley 1990, 38, 49, 52).[77]

[74] Historian Terry Sullivan complains that his mid-century CORE group ended up a disappointment. Arguably this was because it started off in the 1940s with an orientation that was both narrow and anti-communist. He writes:

> Jim Peck was active in CORE until he and other remaining whites were pushed out by the black nationalists (and the careerists who pretended to be militants) who took it over after 1965. What was left of the CORE by the end of the 1960s was a small gang of pistol-packing, capitalist-oriented hoodlums. . . . How did something so good turn into something so bad? (Sullivan 2010)

[75] Hosea Hudson (1979, 25–26) goes on to comment:

> Stalin had done more than anybody else for the rights of the Negro in the South, because Stalin, way back there in the early stages of the Party, along in the late '20s, first of the '30s, he called a conference of some of the Negro American comrades, and out from that, they discussed the Negro question in America. You know, how can we approach it. And they came out with the slogan of the right of self-determination. . . . Stalin did something nobody else had done, to make it possible for us to be able to struggle.

[76] Contrary to Kamin, Robin Kelley (1990, 38) maintains that the party's program in the 1930s South was broad ranged, embodying the mass popular demands among blacks and whites. Kelley (1990, 38) writes:

> The first taste of the party's rural organizing was in northern Alabama among a small group of white tenant farmers who had asked the Trade Union Unity League (TUUL) for help obtaining government relief. Then, in January 1931, an uprising of some five hundred sharecroppers in England, Arkansas, compelled Southern Communists to take the rural poor more seriously. Birmingham Party leaders immediately issued a statement exhorting Alabama farmers to follow the Arkansas example: "Call mass meetings in each township and on each large plantation. Set up farmers Relief Councils in these meetings. Organize hunger marches on the towns to demand food and clothing from the supply merchants and bankers who have sucked you dry year after year. Join hands with the unemployed workers of the towns and with their organizations which are fighting the same battle for bread." The response was startling. The *Southern Worker* was flooded with letters from poor black Alabama farmers.

[77] There were similar fundraising counterparts to Levison in the earlier period, such as the communist rabbi, Benjamin Goldstein, who led Temple Beth Or in Montgomery, Alabama. He raised what Kelley (1990, 48) describes as "crucial financial and moral support for Communist activities in Birmingham, Montgomery and the cotton belt." Like Levison, who was forced out of the Civil Rights Movement, Goldstein was run out of Montgomery. Goldstein's financial

It is ironic that those in the party leadership, who as viewed by Levison were confused, isolated and irrelevant to the needs of the 1960s, were the same people who were at the district level in the 1930s and focused on the needs of their class. They were leaders of the revolutionary movement, the vanguard of some 5,000 paid organizers. The scholars Mark Lapitsky and Nikolai Mostovets describe the supportive balance between the party's center and districts in the earlier period, with William Z. Foster, the party head, in direct communication, guiding and encouraging the rank-and-file organizers. Lapitsky and Mostovets (1985, 34) write of the steel industry campaign:

> Over 5,000 activists, many of them Communists, were busy organizing the steel industry. Sixty Communists formed the nucleus of the organizing staff, in the words of Art Shields, they "had the benefit of Foster's rich experience and his sound Marxist judgment. I attended several conferences in Pittsburgh in which staff men discussed their problems with Foster. I saw these organizers at work, and I was proud of my comrades. Their job needed guts. I remember, for instance, how Gus Hall was harassed by Republic Steel's gorillas while he was enrolling many union members from the big Warren, Ohio, mill." In June 1936, the Steel Workers Organizing Committee was set up; it soon opened three major local branches in Pittsburgh, Chicago and Birmingham. In November the Committee united only 82,000 members, but a few months later the figure rose to 150,000.

In the later period young activists re-established a youth organization, the Du Bois Clubs. But as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn noted, the center feared the youth. With its Soviet–FBI funding, it did not need the districts and an influx of youth that would take power and destroy its funding. At a founding conference in 1964 militants were excluded and with a steady decline in the original membership to below 100 by 1969, the organization was renamed the Young Communist Liberation League. As noted, the center that feared the youth in the 1960s were themselves the 1930s youth that with the support of the center fomented civil insurrection. The SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), SCLC and the anti-war movement were the worse off for the lack of such communist guidance and the 5,000 paid organizers of the earlier era. Lapitsky and Mostovets (1985, 36) describe the effectiveness of the earlier tactics:

> The strike was a school of unity and organization for the workers. Over 200,000 people working for the Little Steel companies staged a walkout. In Warren (Youngstown's suburb) and in other places where the strike was held, the strikers and their families had their meals in large mess halls. This is how Gus Hall recalls those days: "In Warren, the strikers, with the help of the community, simply closed off more than half of the city area. This was the part of the city in which the steel mills were situated. They closed it off by steel barricades. No person, no automobile could pass into this liberated people's area without a signed, authorized pass—signed by the head of the strike committee. This upset the authorities more than the strike itself. They saw the handwriting on the wall. Because of this the injunctions issued by the court were totally ignored. Even the massive presence of the National Guard did not change the determined attitude of the people."

support of the International Labor Defense (ILD) brought his banishment (Kelley 1990, 87; see also, 63, 196, 228, 230). The ILD aided working people involved in the Southern legal system. As noted, more sympathetic to Levison's and Goldstein's activism than Kamin is the liberation theology of those like Marc Ellis (2004, 117).

Conclusion

Ben Kamin's *Dangerous Friendship* is positive in discussing Stanley Levison's financial role in the communist and Civil Rights Movement. In the process of looking at Levison's early years, his involvement in party finances up until 1956, his psychology, and then his work in the Civil Rights Movement, this article has attempted to fill a gap left by the book. In difficult times Levison helped the SCLC attack capitalism where it was vulnerable. On the negative side, Levison had limitations, as in abetting the 1954 shift to a top-down Communist Party financing policy. This undermined the balance within the party between the center and the districts. The party's center became lethargic. In earlier times financing from the bottom was one of the factors that kept the balance and made for a responsive leadership.

As positive as was the SCLC, it was diminished because it lacked the party's vision. Levison complained about the party being out-of-touch with reality. But his work in changing the party's funding source contributed to it being out of touch. In the 1930s and 1940s, when the center depended on the districts, it gave leadership, as in the civil rights movement of that era. Paraphrasing historian Jennifer Uhlmann, the earlier movement viewed "civil rights" as the inheritance of working people around the world. It never narrowly focused on the South or on African Americans, but included the rest of the United States and globe in an ambitious and multi-faceted revolutionary program. As Uhlmann (2007, 6) puts it, "The party was at the center of the early flurry of activity, and catalyzed liberal, radical, union, church and legal groups to adopt more expansive and aggressive policies for civil rights."

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Notes on contributor

Toby Terrar is an adjunct in the Department of History, City University of Los Angeles. He is a graduate of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), where he majored in history. He has published essays in *Journal of San Diego History*, *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* and *The Journal of Military History*. His web page is http://www.angelfire.com/un/cwp/.

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