

The American Communist Party as an Auxiliary to Espionage:
From Asset to liability

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Espionage not the Chief Task

From the 1920s to the mid-1940s the American Communist party functioned as an auxiliary to Soviet espionage. Espionage, however, was not the central task of the Communist Party, USA, or CPUSA as it has been entitled since the late 1920s. The CPUSA's chief task was political. It sought to bring about the transformation of the United States from an open market capitalist democracy to a Marxist-Leninist socialist state modeled on the Soviet Union.

At its origins in 1919 and year or two thereafter and occasionally later it thought this transformation would be brought about directly by violent proletarian revolution. Chiefly, however, American Communists recognized the absence of a revolutionary situation and sought power through the democratic political process and the trade union movement in hopes of either bringing about a situation in which a revolutionary seizure of power was possible. Most often, this latter task expressed itself in using its political and organizational power to promote the interests of the Soviet Union with the expectation that Soviet power would eventually grow to the point that the USSR could force the United States into a situation where the CPUSA's seizure of power would be possible. The CPUSA's chief task, then, was

politics or, if you wish, subversion, but not espionage. And the history of the American Communist movement is chiefly a history of the party's work in politics and in the trade union movement.

Espionage, while not the CPUSA's chief task, was nonetheless an important task of the movement until the late 1940s. And it was a task that grew naturally out of the CPUSA's expectation that the growth of Soviet power would eventually bring about a situation where its seizure of power would move from the realm of the theoretical to the possible.

CPUSA Responded

In the history of the American Communist Party and espionage one can find example of CPUSA leaders initiating an espionage operation. But for the most part, the party's role was that of an auxiliary that responded to, assisted, and facilitated initiatives taken by a Soviet intelligence agency. The CPUSA assisted not only the two major Soviet agencies, the KGB and Soviet military intelligence, GRU, but even the very small Soviet naval espionage agency, the Naval GRU. It does not appear that the CPUSA had a closer relationship with one of the agencies, but responded as best to could to all three.

Why did the Soviets use the CPUSA?

The chief reason the Soviets used the CPUSA is an obvious one: it enabled them to accomplish a great deal more than they could otherwise have done. Prior to the Cold War the USSR put more resources into foreign intelligence than did any other nation, but its espionage ambitions still exceeded its resources, and the assistance of foreign Communist parties allowed Soviet agencies to make up for a large part of their shortfall. Indeed, the assistance of the American Communist party magnified the productivity of those professional intelligence officers sent to the United States. It is not possible to quantify with any precision how much assistance the CPUSA provided, but my own estimate is that American Communist party assistance certainly double, probably tripled, and possibly quadrupled the productivity of Soviet espionage efforts.

What did the CPUSA do for the Soviets?

The CPUSA freed professional Soviet officers from a great deal of the tedious and time-consuming tasks of spying. American Communists also compensated for the deficiencies of some Soviet

professionals, particularly problems with inadequate English and a lack of understanding of American culture and society.

Specifics: Passport Fraud

One of the tasks American Communists undertook for Soviet intelligence was the production of fraudulent passports. Passports are, of course, a basic document needed by intelligence agents traveling from one country to another and needed as well by a foreigner resident in a country other than his own.

All intelligence services need fake passport and fake identify documents. How do you get them? One method is simply to fabricate, to forge, a fake document. There are, however, problems with forged passports. First, doing it right isn't easy: to get the right paper, with the right watermarks, the right ink, to format the passport text correctly, to put it in the correct binding and so on. Experienced passport control officers can be very good at spotting defects that suggest a forged passport. Further, a border officer may not spot a defect in the passport but may have some suspicion of the person carrying the passport. Either way, the authenticity of the passport will be checked, and here the forged passport almost always fails. An inquiry to the passport authority that issued the passport will quickly reveal that a forged passport is a fake: there will be no record of the issue of that particular passport with that passport number or that passport name.

Much better is a passport that was genuinely issued by a real passport authority. This passport is not forged, but is real: but the person identified by the passport is someone other than who he or she is supposed to be. Nonetheless, a check with the passport authority will get a response that a passport with that number and that name was validly issued.

In 1938, shortly after his defection, Whittaker Chambers wrote an essay about CPUSA passport fraud and gave it to an old friend and journalist colleague, Herbert Solow. Signed by "Karl," Chambers's pseudonym in the underground, it was entitled "The Faking of Americans."ⁱ

Chambers described how Joseph Peters, the chief of the CPUSA's covert arm, ran a large passport faking enterprise for Soviet intelligence, specifically for the GRU in this case. Peters, by the way, is given the cover name "Sandor" in Chambers' essay.

Chambers said that the GRU paid for the faked passports that Peters and his covert apparatus not only met their expenses but made a profit that assisted in funding other activities. In his 1938 essay, he had also asserted that producing fake passports was a lucrative source of money: “the greatest handicap to Sandor’s expensive work is lack of funds and here was a sizable slice of the secret service budget at his disposal.” Peters and Ewald/Ikal struck a deal: “the Party supplied the secret service with naturalization papers, birth certificates, business and social fronts, cover addresses and reliable contacts of various kinds. And the Soviet Government pumped life-blood into the underground Communist Party in the form of money payment for such services.”ⁱⁱ

The GRU provided Peters with the approximate ages, gender, and ethnicity of persons for whom it wanted fake passports. Members of Peters’ secret apparatus did research in the genealogical division of the New York Public Library, looking for the names of children who had died young but whose birth date, gender, and ethnicity approximated the GRU request. (Why the ethnicity was sometimes of concern I’ll discuss later). A CPUSA researcher would then obtain a copy of the child’s birth certificate, a simple matter in New York and most American states.

Then another member of the CPUSA apparatus of roughly the right age and sex would use the genuine birth certificate to apply for a false passport. The CPUSA underground supplied an accommodation address when the fake person was supposed to live, generally the residence of some agreeable party member. It also provided witnesses who would falsely swear to the identity of the applicant before a passport official.

An alternative scheme used to obtain false passports used the naturalization papers of immigrants who joined the CPUSA rather than the birth certificates of deceased children. And finally, the apparatus sometimes simply had American Communists who never traveled abroad apply for passports under their own names. Those passports were then turned over to the secret apparatus and later the authentic photographs removed and a new photograph substituted.

Chambers wrote that during the time he was in contact with the GRU in the mid-1930s, it had received and paid for hundreds of fraudulent passports. He had received hundreds of fraudulent American passports from the CPUSA underground.

Now why of ethnicity of concern? Here is why American passports were greatly prized in the intelligence world. Because of the polyglot immigrant population of the United States, agents from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds, speaking English with all kinds of accents, could plausibly claim to hold valid American passports. If a border officer is staring at someone with a Slavic face and speaking English with a Slavic accent but holding a British passport in the name of Robert Roy MacGregor, he is going to have doubts. But if that person has an American passport then a Slavic accent (or even a Slavic name on the passport) will not set off any alarm bells. Thousands of American passport holders originated in the Slavic lands and many still retained an accent.

Let me add that American Communists' venture into faking American passports did not originate as a espionage task. It originated to facilitate the Comintern's and the CPUSA's own needs for fake passport to carry out clandestine political work. CPUSA officials and organizers traveled to the USSR in the 1920s and 1930s to report to the Comintern, attend Comintern schools, and work for the Comintern. Often they wished to travel under false names to frustrate security officials attempting to track them. Thus for its own purposed the CPUSA first went into the fake passport business. The Communist International, recognizing a good thing, also called on the CPUSA to provide fake American passports to assist its clandestine political agents operating in a variety of countries. The extension of the CPUSA's fake passport machinery to Soviet intelligence was a natural extension.

The productivity of the CPUSA-Soviet passport fraud ring is illustrated by the arrest in 1935 in Denmark of George Mink, Leon Josephson, and Nicholas Sherman. The three were traveling together and had all checked into the same hotel in Copenhagen. Mink, born in Russia in 1899, came to the U.S. in 1912. He was a leading CPUSA maritime union organizer in the 1920s and for a time headed its small Marine Workers Industrial Union. In the early 1930s he became a operative for the Red International of Labor Unions, also known as the Profintern, coordinating Communist trade union activities in the maritime field around the world.

In March 1935, Copenhagen police arrested Mink after a hotel chambermaid complained of attempt rape. Police found that he had in his possession four American passports, one in his name, one fraudulent passport with his photograph but in the name of Al Gottlieb, one for Harry H. Kaplan, and one

for Abraham Wexler. The Kaplan passport was authentic; when American authorities asked Harry Kaplan how his passport had gotten into Mink's hands, Kaplan stated that Barney Josephson, the brother of Leon, had stolen it from him. The Wexler passport was also authentic; Wexler also claimed it had been stolen, but he could not say when, where, or by whom. Wexler was a member of the small Marine Workers Industrial Union, of which Mink was the first national chairman, and Kaplan was an associate of the Josephson brothers and Mink. The obvious implication was that both had turned their passports over to Mink for later alteration by insertion of new photographs. A Danish court convicted Mink of espionage, and he served eighteen months in prison. He was then deported to the USSR

Leon Josephson was also arrested with Mink. He claimed to be on a business trip for Federated Trading Corporation, an American textile firm. After four months in jail a Danish court decided the evidence was insufficient to prosecute Levy, and he returned to America. State Department handwriting experts later determined that the application for the fraudulent Gottlieb passport carried by George Mink was in Josephson's hand. Nor was this his only venture into the illegal passport business. An analysis of the application for a fraudulent American passport in the name of Samuel Liptzen carried by Gerhart Eisler, the Comintern covert representative in the U.S. in the mid-1930s, was in Josephson's hand, as was the statement of a witness falsely vouching for Liptzen's identify.

Josephson had joined the CPUSA in 1926. He was a lawyer and in the late 1920s represented Amtorg, the USSR's foreign trade agency, and the party's interests in a variety of legal proceeding. In 1930 he was one of a group of Communist lawyers helping several unionists convicted of killing a local sheriff during a textile strike in Gastonia, North Carolina. Those convicted jumped bail and fled to the Soviet Union. Fred Beal, one of those who fled, later returned to the U.S., announced his disillusionment with communism, and served his prison sentence. He stated that Josephson had arranged for the false passports he and the others had used to flee the country.

The third person arrested with Mink and Josephson claimed to be and carried an American passport as Nicholas Sherman. However, he also had in his possession a Canadian passport in the name of Abraham Goldman and a German passport in the name of Wilhelm Brettschneider. The Sherman passport was fraudulent. The real Nicholas Sherman had died in 1926 and his naturalization papers along

with a false witness supplied by Peters' secret apparatus had been used to obtain the fake passport. When arrested, Sherman had on him correspondence from a business firm operated by Harry Kaplan, the same Kaplan's whose passport was in Mink's possession and which Kaplan claimed had been stolen. The Danish court convicted Sherman of espionage; he served eighteen months in prison, and was deported to the USSR.

Who was the fake Nicholas Sherman? Robert Switz, an American who worked for Soviet military intelligence (the GRU) in the 1930s, later identified a photograph of Sherman as that of a senior illegal GRU officer operating in the United States whose name was Alexander Petrovich Ulanovsky. Whittaker Chambers, who worked for Ulanovsky's GRU espionage apparatus in the early 1930s, discussed him in detail in his memoir, *Witness*.

The arrest of Mink, Josephson, and Sherman/Ulanovsky demonstrates the productivity of the CPUSA-Soviet fraudulent passport operations, but it demonstrates something else as well. Traveling together and arrested together were a CPUSA unionist and Profintern operative (Mink), a CPUSA lawyer and associate of its clandestine arm (Josephson), and a GRU officer and professional spy (Ulanovsky). Communist trade unionism, the CPUSA (above ground and below), and Soviet espionage were intermingled. They were not separated and kept at arms length. To use the jargon of Cold War espionage, there was no "compartmentalization." In the 1930s and early 1940s the organizational blending of these different aspects of the Communist movement allowed the Soviet Union to maximize its return on the assets it possessed. Later, as we will see, there was a price to pay. That, however, was for the future. In 1935 the U.S. State Department noticed the Danish arrests and began to look into the matter of false passports, but follow up was slow, the Justice Department had little interest in prosecuting Soviet espionage, and the popular press paid little attention.

Nor was there much more attention in 1936 when two Comintern agents, Arthur Ewert and his wife Elsie, turned up in Brazil with fake American passports. Ewert, a German Communist leader in the early and mid-1920s, became a covert Comintern agent in the late 1920s. In the mid-1930s he and his wife arrived by separate routes in Brazil, Ewert carrying an American passport as Harry Berger while his wife's American passport claimed that she was Machla Lencyski. The real Berger had died as an infant;

the CPUSA passport ring had again simply used the infant's birth certificate and provided witnesses who falsely swore that Ewert was Berger. Elsie Ewert's passport had been gained using the naturalization papers of Machla Lencsyski. When the passport fraud came to light, the real Lencsyski claimed that her naturalization papers had been lost and she had no idea how they had come to be used to obtain a fake passport. However, her brother was one of the perjuring witnesses to the fake Berger passport and, obviously, part of the CPUSA fake passport apparatus.

The Ewert/Bergers were in Brazil to assist an Communist-backed insurrection against the authoritarian Vargas regime. The insurrection failed when Brazilian police uncovered it: the Ewert/Bergers were arrested. The U.S. embassy initially took an interest in their fate when it thought they were American citizens. Once it became clear the two were using fraudulent U.S. passports and were not Americans, U.S. diplomats withdrew from the matter.

Arnold Ikal, a Soviet citizen of Latvian origin, was one of the GRU officers involved in the false passport operation. Ikal operated in the U.S. in the 1930s, obtaining fraudulent U.S. citizenship as Arnold Adolph Rubens, claiming he was Latvian and had come to the U.S. as a child, that his father had become naturalized and, thus, he qualified for derivative naturalized. In 1935 Ikal/Rubens also married an American Communist, Ruth Boergers. The GRU recalled Ikal to Moscow in late 1937, and he returned with his wife. The two were using false American passports as Mr. and Mrs. Donald L. Robinson. Unfortunately for Ikal, Stalin's terror had then extended to his intelligence services and many officers were recalled from their posts abroad and arrested. This purge of the intelligence services contributed to Whittaker Chambers' own decision to drop out of Soviet service in the spring of 1938 because his GRU superiors were suggesting that he should journey to Moscow. Whittaker Chambers, in fact, had worked with Ikal.

Diplomats at the U.S. embassy in Moscow first became involved in December 1937 when they heard from American newsmen that an American woman, Mrs. Donald L. Robinson, needed assistance at the nearby Hotel National. A junior diplomat visited the distraught woman, who said that her husband had disappeared. Promising to look into the matter, he went back to the U.S. embassy to fetch a senior diplomat, Loy Henderson, the embassy Chargé, and both returned to the hotel, only to find the hotel staff claiming that Mrs. Robinson had left without explanation. Henderson went to Soviet authorities and in-

sisted that Mrs. Robinson and her husband be located and that American embassy officials be allowed to speak to her in accordance with a Soviet-American diplomatic agreement.

Meanwhile, a careful search of State Department passport records showed that the Robinsons also possessed a second set of passports, as Mr. and Mrs. Adolph A. Rubens. The wife of a former U.S. diplomat at the U.S. consulate in Latvia also recognized the photograph of Donald Robinson as that of a Latvian believed to have been a Soviet intelligence agent. The real Donald Robinson was born in Queens in 1905 and had died in 1909. Mrs. Robinson had used the birth certificate of Ruth Birkland, born 1909, for her passport. The real Ruth Birkland, however, died in 1915. And, of course, Ikal's fraudulent claim to naturalized citizenship as Rubens was also exposed. At this point Henderson concluded that the two were not innocent Americans but Soviet agents caught up in the nightmarish purges then sweeping the Soviet Union.

The U.S. government did not get around to doing very much about the CPUSA's fake passport operations until 1939. In the late 1930s the CPUSA has ardently supported the anti-Nazi foreign policy of President Roosevelt's administration. But after the Nazi-Soviet Pact in August, the CPUSA shifted to an even more ardent opposition to Roosevelt policy of assisting Britain and France in their war against Hitler. Irritated, the Roosevelt administration cracked down on the CPUSA's illegal activity. On the basis of the passport investigation in 1939, the U.S. Justice Department launched several prosecutions. Most prominently, it indicted Earl Browder, head of the CPUSA, for use of fraudulent passports. He was arrested in October 1939, tried, convicted, and after his appeals failed imprisoned in 1941. Although Browder was sentenced to four years in prison, after he had served fourteen months President Roosevelt commuted his sentence as a gesture of good will to the Soviet Union, by that time a ally of the U.S. against Nazi Germany. William Weiner, the CPUSA's national treasurer was also convicted, but the court suspended his sentence when he claimed to have a life-threatening heart condition. The government indicted party official Harry Gannes for passport fraud, but his case was repeatedly delayed and he died in 1941 before trial. Virtually all the other Communists identified in the investigation as having obtained fraudulent passports, as well as the many witnesses who falsely vouched for them, escaped prosecution.

Also prosecuted for passport fraud at this time was Nicholas Dozenberg. Dozenberg exemplifies the close relationship of the American Communist party and Soviet espionage in the late 1920s and 1930s. Dozenberg had been born in Latvia in 1882 and immigrated to the United States in 1904. He joined the radical Lettish Workingmen's Society, the Latvian-language affiliate of the Socialist party, which split from the S.P. in 1919 to form the new American Communist movement. Dozenberg by 1923 held the position of literature director of the "Workers Party," as the CPUSA then termed itself. He dropped out of open party work in 1927 to become an agent of the GRU, working under Alfred Tilton, a professional Soviet Military Intelligence officer.

Over the next decade Dozenberg carried out a variety of tasks for Soviet intelligence. Several involved use of American territory as the staging grounds for Soviet espionage operations aimed at foreign nations, particularly France and Rumania. (In that era those nations as well as others were of higher priority to Soviet intelligence than the United States.) He also assisted a Soviet officer in obtaining American identity documents and a U.S. passport as Frank Kleges (the real Kleges was dead). The fake Kleges then proceeded to France to carry out GRU operations there under cover of his American identity. While working for the GRU, Dozenberg also established cover offices in China (representing a American radio manufacturer) and an agency marketing Bell and Howell motion picture equipment in the Philippines.

Now I would like you to consider enormity of the aid the CPUSA's false passport operation made to Soviet intelligence. Obtaining these passports was time-consuming, tedious work: the research of finding people of the right age who had died young, obtaining birth certificates, obtaining accommodation addresses, and obtaining witnesses willing to perjure themselves. Certainly a professional Soviet intelligence officer could on his own have done some of this work or recruited people to do it, but it would have been enormously time consuming and very risky of being exposed. Having the CPUSA available to do the work was an enormous advantage, an asset multiplier, for Soviet intelligence.

Dozenberg's ability to gain a Bell and Howell franchise for a cover business also illustrates another way in which the American Communist movement assisted Soviet intelligence operations. Dozenberg received authorization to represent Bell and Howell with the assistance of William Kruse, head of Bell and Howell's film division. Like Dozenberg, Kruse had been a mid-level CPUSA leader in the

1920s and had also served with the Comintern in Moscow for a time. In 1929 Jay Lovestone and several hundred of his adherents, including William Kruse, were expelled for ideological deviation. For several years Lovestone and his followers termed themselves the Communist Party (Opposition) and continued to proclaim their loyalty to the Soviet Union. Several covertly demonstrated their continued loyalty by assisting Soviet espionage. Dozenberg had entered GRU service before Lovestone was expelled from the CPUSA, but he had been aligned with Lovestone and made full use of the continued willingness of some of Lovestone's followers to undertake Soviet intelligence tasks.

In the late 1930s Stalin unleashed a purge of the Soviet intelligence services in which hundreds of GRU and KGB officers were executed. Numerous Soviet intelligence officers serving abroad were recalled and arrested. Fearing the terror, some dropped out of Soviet service. Whittaker Chambers, who worked for a GRU network in the U.S., attributed his defection in part to fear of being called to Moscow. Nicholas Dozenberg also dropped out in the late 1930s. Nicholas Dozenberg also dropped out in the late 1930s. He attempted to live quietly in Oregon but a more vocal Soviet intelligence defector, General Walter Krivitsky, exposed him as a GRU agent in an article published in the *Saturday Evening Post* as well as in his autobiography *In Stalin's Secret Service* published the same year.ⁱⁱⁱ Arrested in December 1939, Dozenberg confessed in exchange for being allowed to plead guilty to a single charge of using a false passport, and was sentenced to a year in prison in 1940.

Arthur Adams

And, as we have seen with Dozenberg, not only could the CPUSA supply fake passports, it could assist in supplying business cover for Soviet agents operating around the world. Let me give another example. A professional GRU officer, Arthur Adams, entered the United States through Canada with a false passport in 1938. With the support of a New Jersey businessman named Philip Levy, Adams set up a business called Technological Laboratories with Levy as one of its officers. On the surface Levy, born in Russia in 1893, was a respectable businessman, the president of Federated Trading Corporation in NY, a textile firm engaged in importing and exporting. Levy, however, was a secret Communist and close associate of the veteran Communist lawyer Leon Josephson, who was arrested in Copenhagen and charged with espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. At the time of his arrest Josephson claimed he was

on a business trip in connection with Levy's firm. Levy did more than merely provide a business cover for Josephson's covert activities. Josephson's files and those of other members of the CPUSA's underground arm were hidden in Levy's residence, found there in a secret FBI search in 1944.

Nor was Technological Laboratories Adams' only business cover. Two other companies headed by Communists also employed him. The Electronics Corporation of America, headed by Sam Novick, held Navy contracts for the manufacture of radar. Novick had signed Adams' papers when he entered the US illegally from Canada in 1938, falsely stating that he had employed Adams for ten years. Keynote Recording company, headed by Eric Bernay, a former editor of *New Masses*, paid Adams a salary. Early in 1945 Bernay helped Adams escape FBI surveillance and leave New York. Adams left Victoria Stone's apartment walking a dog up a one-way street, got a taxicab and fled before FBI agents, whose following car could not go up the on-way street, could get around the block. He then boarded a train with Bernay. They were identified in Chicago and Adams was trailed to Portland and prevented from boarding a Soviet ship. The State Department, fearing offending the Soviets, ordered the FBI not to arrest him but also not to let him leave the country. Adams, however, later evaded FBI surveillance, disappeared, and presumably returned to the USSR

Again, give some thought to how much effort, time, and expense the CPUSA saved the GRU by establishing business cover for Arthur Adams.

Safe Houses

The CPUSA also assisted Soviet intelligence by providing "safe houses" where Soviet intelligence officers could meet with their sources and couriers. For example, in the summer of 1944 the KGB station in New York reported to Moscow that it had asked its CPUSA liaison, Bernard Schuster, to provide new safe hoses for KGB use. Schuster promptly offered the apartments of Louis D. Horvitz and Paul Burns. Both were long-time CPUSA members both were veterans of the Spanish Civil War where they had fought with the American Communist Lincoln Battalion. Thus with very little effort on its part, the New York KGB station had gained access to two safe houses. Imagine what sort of work a foreign agency operating against the USSR would have had to have gone to get access to two Moscow safe houses.

Vetting

The CPUSA also assisted Soviet intelligence by checking on the background and reliability of potential recruits. In late 1944 Theodore Hall, a young physicist working at Los Alamos on the atomic bomb, offered to spy for the Soviet Union. Hall was a young Communist, and the KGB's New York station asked its CPUSA liaison, Bernard Schuster, to check on Hall's background. This was a task Schuster and his party colleagues carried out on numerous occasions, and more than once they waved the KGB off from recruitment on the basis that the potential recruits had a reputation for untrustworthiness, unreliability, of some other risk factor.

Another example, James Walter Miller was a Russian-language translator with the financial and trade section of the U.S. government wartime mail censorship office in California. With its legal access to mail and to U.S. security agencies' watch list of mail given special scrutiny, this office was of considerable interest to Soviet intelligence. Miller was also a secret member of the Communist party in Los Angeles under the name of Victor Milo. The KGB decided to recruit Miller in 1943 but on basis of a West Coast CPUSA report that Miller, while devoted and reliable, had a tendency to be "talkative," the KGB decided have him deliver his espionage product through a CPUSA cutout rather than directly to the KGB so that any talkativeness would not directly endanger a KGB officer.^{iv}

Talent Scouting: Hiss

Finally, of course, the CPUSA aided Soviet intelligence by acting as a talent spotter of potential sources and directly recruiting its own members as spies and turning them over to the KGB or the GRU. An early example of this is the story Whittaker Chambers told of the part of Alger Hiss into espionage. Hiss originally had been a member of a small group of secret Communists, mostly young professionals, who worked for various New Deal agencies in Washington in the mid-1930s. Chamber referred to Hiss's group as the Ware group because it was first organized by the CPUSA's agricultural expert, Harold Ware, and most of its members were young lawyers who worked of the New Deal's Agricultural Adjustment Administration. The Ware group, however, was not involved in espionage. Rather it was a secret Communist party political caucus. Its members met to discuss Communist party policy and how they could use their government posts to promote Communist political goals. This was covert politics and subversion, but not espionage.

However, Chambers related that Joseph Peters, chief of the party's underground operations, guided a select few of this secret political caucus toward espionage by urging them to transfer to departments of interest to Soviet espionage: the Agricultural Adjustment Administration didn't have much information of any interest to Moscow. Hiss found his way to the State Department and others to Treasury or other agencies with more access to sensitive information. Chambers arrived in Washington to take on the role of liaison between Hiss and the other newly minted spies and Soviet GRU.

Talent Scouting: Winston Burdett

In late 1939 the Soviet Union attacked its small neighbor, Finland, but received an unexpected bloody nose when the determined Finns fought the initial Soviet attack to a standstill. Realizing their prewar intelligence about the Finns had been faulty, Soviet intelligence agency hastily recruited new spies and send them to Finland to get a better understanding of what was going on.

Winston Burdett as a young man was a Communist, a secret one, and in 1940 was working as a journalist for the *Brooklyn Eagle* newspaper. Early in 1940 a fellow reporter, Nathan Einhorn, who was then serving as executive secretary of the New York local of the American Newspaper Guild and was also a secret Communist, asked Burdett to meet with Joseph North, a prominent Communist and editor of *New Masses*, the CPUSA literary/intellectual journal. North informed Burdett that the party had a mission for him and introduced him to a man whose name Burdett was not told. Burdett later identified a photograph of the man he met as that of Jacob Golos, a shadowy figure in the CPUSA's leadership who was also the liaison between the CPUSA and the KGB at the time. Golos instructed the young reporter that he should persuade the *Eagle* to give him credentials as a foreign correspondent with Burdett financing his own way (Golos promised to furnish the funds) and the *Eagle* paying only for those stories it used. Golos told Burdett to suggest as his first assignment going to Finland to cover the war that had just broken out between the Finns and the USSR. Golos also had Burdett turn in his CPUSA membership card, hand over photographs of himself (for use by Soviet agents to identify him), and write out an autobiography, the latter a standard Soviet intelligence practice for new agents.

The *Eagle* was delighted to obtain a war correspondent on the cheap, and Golos provided Burdett with funds and instructions for a covert meeting with a Soviet contact in Stockholm where he was to stop

on his way to Finland (the September 13th cable had called for a meeting in Stockholm). Burdett left the United States in February 1940; as he had been instructed, when he reached Stockholm he cabled confirmation of his arrival to a name he recalled only as that of a woman and sounding Anglo-Saxon [likely Elizabeth Bentley] and with an address in New York City. He met his Soviet contact in Stockholm and was instructed to use his position as a reporter to find out about the morale of the Finnish population and its psychological willingness to continue fighting. (Tiny Finland was vastly overmatched against the USSR, and the Soviets had been shocked when the Finns not only failed to collapse after the Soviet invasion but also had halted the initial Soviet assault.) His Stockholm contact also handed over more funds to supplement those Golos had provided earlier.

After the Finnish-Soviet war ended, Burdett made a final report to his Stockholm contact and received an additional payment. Burdett then undertook other journalistic assignments for American newspapers, reporting from Norway, Rumania, Yugoslavia and Turkey and all the while meeting with Soviet intelligence contacts as well. Burdett gradually grew dissatisfied with his clandestine work and his ideological loyalty to Communism weakened as well. He quietly dropped his ties to Soviet intelligence in 1942 when he went to work for CBS Radio News where he eventually became a prominent radio and later television correspondent.

Talent Scouting: Julius Rosenberg

Julius Rosenberg had been a leading member of the YCL when he attended engineering school at City College of New York in the late 1930s. His early 1940s work for the US Army Signal Corps afforded him an exemption from the Army; a routine security investigation in 1941 had almost cost him his job when evidence of Communist connections surfaced. According to his one-time Soviet controller, Alexander Feklisov, Julius Rosenberg was first recruited by Soviet intelligence around Labor Day, 1942, after being referred by Bernard Schuster, the CPUSA's liaison to Soviet intelligence. There is evidence, however, that Rosenberg first attempted to approach Soviet intelligence via the CPUSA in early 1941, prior to the Nazi attack on the USSR. Once in touch with the KGB, Rosenberg quickly began supplying confidential documents and then recruited several of his friends to do the same. By 1943 Julius was overseeing an extensive network of spies, most of them former CCNY Communist engineer classmates work-

ing in classified military technology research and he and Ethel had dropped out of public Communist activity, although they continued to pay Party dues clandestinely through Schuster.

Jacob Golos, also a link between the party and the KGB, and his assistant Elizabeth Bentley, recruited several dozen secret Communists into espionage. The most notable of the Golos/Bentley networks were the two massively large Silvermaster and Perlo groups in Washington.

Talent Scouting: Silvermaster and Perlo

Nathan Gregory Silvermaster, with the assistance of his wife and William Ludwig Ullmann, a close family friend, headed the largest apparatus. Silvermaster was a mid-level government economist who worked for the Board of Economic Warfare. Ullmann was an officer of the Army Air Force working at the Pentagon in World War II. Silvermaster's apparatus included two of the most highly placed espionage sources the Soviets ever possessed in the U.S. government. Harry Dexter White, a Soviet sympathizer rather than a CPUSA member, held the influential position of Assistant Secretary of the Treasury. Lauchlin Currie, like White a Soviet sympathizer rather than secret Communist, was a White House aide to President Roosevelt and assigned during the war to assist in administering the Board of Economic Warfare and its successor, the Foreign Economic Administration. Others included George Silverman worked as civilian chief of analysis and plans for an assistant chief of staff for the U.S. Army Air Force at the Pentagon. Other valuable members of the Silvermaster network included Frank Coe, director of the Division of Monetary Research in the Treasury Department and Solomon Adler, Treasury representative in China.

As for the Perlo apparatus, Victor Perlo himself was a senior economist in the War Production Board. The Perlo group included Harold Glasser, a senior Treasury Department economist and vice-chairman of the War Production Board, Charles Kramer, a lawyer and professional staff member of the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on War Mobilization, and Donald Wheeler, a professional staff employee of the Research and Analysis Section of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), America's World War II foreign intelligence agency and forerunner to the CIA.

Bentley's independent single agents included a number serving in sensitive positions, including four OSS employees in addition to Wheeler of the Perlo network. One was particularly highly placed:

Duncan Lee, who held OSS rank as a Lieutenant Colonel, and who served as an aide to General William Donovan, head of the OSS as well as participating in OSS field operations in China. Another Bentley source at the OSS was Julius Joseph, deputy chief of the OSS's Far Eastern operations. Yet another was Helen Tenney, an analyst in the Spanish section of OSS. However, the most energetic source Bentley developed at the then leading U.S. intelligence agency was Maurice Halperin, chief of the research and analysis section of OSS's Latin American division. Halperin used his position to collect U.S. State Department reports, documents and diplomatic cables by the score and deliver them to the USSR via Bentley.

The Chief of the CPUSA as Talent Scout

One could go on with dozens of other Soviet spies recruited through the American Communist Party. A 1946 KGB memo gave Earl Browder, chief of the CPUSA, personal credit for recruiting eighteen agents for the KGB. Let me mention one. Browder delivered to the KGB in the fall of 1940 a report regarding Pierre Cot, a member of the Radical party in France who had served in more than half a dozen of the short-lived French cabinets of the 1930s and was a passionate supporter of a Franco-Soviet alliance against Germany. After the fall of France in 1940 Cot fled to London but was rebuffed in his efforts to join General de Gaulle's Free French government which regarded him as an embarrassment. In September 1940 Cot arrived in the United States where he quickly established contact with Earl Browder.

Browder's report on the meeting originally went via KGB cable from General Fitin, head of the KGB's foreign intelligence directorate, to Lavrenti Beria, chief of the KGB, who briefed both Stalin and Molotov about its contents and who forwarded it to the Comintern, in whose archive it was eventually found. Browder reported that Cot had asked him to notify the USSR that he continued to work "for a full alliance between France and the Soviet Union," a coalition that could "be achieved only through the French Com[unist]party." And, Cot "wants the leaders of the Soviet Union to know of his willingness to perform whatever mission we might choose, for which purpose he is even prepared to break faith with his own position."^v The reference to Cot's willingness "to break faith with his own position" refers to the politics of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. After the Pact in August, 1939, the French Communist Party had dropped its bellicose anti-Hitler position and adopted a defeatist position toward France's decision to get

to war with Nazi Germany. After France's surrender in mid-1940, French Communists did not actively support the pro-Nazi Vichy regime, but neither did they oppose it either. And, French Communists were hostile to de Gaulle and his supporters who refused to recognize the surrender and continued the fight against Hitler. Cot, too, had refused to accept the surrender or the Vichy regime and fled into exile. Through Browder, however, Cot offered to give up this stance if that was the Soviets' wish.

The KGB followed up on Browder's report. It did not ask Cot to embrace the Nazi-Soviet Pact, but it did ask him to spy for the Soviet Union. Vladimir Pravdin, a KGB officer with a cover as a Soviet journalist, took advantage of a speech given by Cot in June 1942 to meet him. A decrypted Venona message indicates that Cot welcomed the approach. In response to this message, on July 1, 1942 Moscow cabled "about the signing on of Pierre Cot (henceforth "Daedalus")." For at least the next year KGB contact with Cot was under the direct supervision of Vasily Zubilin. A number of deciphered KGB messages show that Cot turned over reports on his activities and analysis of events throughout 1943. In addition to cooperating with the KGB he also worked closely with the Comintern and the French Communist Party (one KGB message from San Francisco refers to a message for Cot from French Communist leader and Comintern official Andre Marty). In one badly broken message, dated July 1, 1943, Zubilin relayed a report in which Cot offered to go to Algiers to assist on some problem and noted "he will obey unquestionably."^{vi} Cot also sent analyses of French politicians surrounding de Gaulle, in Algiers, and in the United States. After World War II Cot successfully reentered French politics and briefly served once again as aviation minister. He continued to champion French-Soviet friendship and in 1953 received the Stalin Peace Prize. By the time the Venona documents revealing his cooperation with Soviet intelligence were decrypted, his political career was over and French authorities chose to keep secret his relationship with the KGB.

The Good Times Come to an End

From the point of view of Soviet espionage productivity, the U.S. in the 1930s and until 1945 must have seemed a golden era when the living was easy. First there was an American Communist Party to carry out all of the tedious and boring work of espionage, faking identify documents, setting up cover businesses, doing background checks, finding safe houses, providing couriers, but the party's membership

or its sympathizers furnished scores of enthusiastic sources with access to sensitive and valuable information. Indeed, the GRU and the KGB often did not have to “recruit” them, they sought out Soviet intelligence and volunteered to hand over American secrets and usually refused to accept any money beyond expenses.

American Counter-Intelligence

Second, American counter-intelligence before 1940 was nearly non-existent and after that time focused elsewhere. In the 1930s the U.S. government had a hodgepodge of internal security laws, no clear executive order on what constituted government secrets, no clear policy on the security fitness of government personnel with access to sensitive information, and divided and unclear authority as to which government agencies were responsible for internal security enforcement.

This disarray had historical precedent. American had entered World War I in 1917 with a governmental structure ill prepared for a major international conflict. Nor had the nation’s history up to that point given it any serious experience with the espionage, sabotage, or political subversion linked to a foreign power. Yet these were legitimate concerns, if in retrospect exaggerated, when the U.S. entered the war against Imperial Germany. In 1917 and 1918 the government under emergency wartime conditions created a large security system based on the Justice Department’s Bureau of Investigation (predecessor to the FBI) and the counter-intelligence sections of U.S. Army military intelligence and the Office of Naval Intelligence. Unable to expand its own agencies rapidly enough, the federal government also sponsored the creation a series of state and local authorities (for example, the New York City Committee on Aliens and Minnesota’s Commission of Public Safety) as auxiliaries of the national government. The federal government also sanctioned an array of quasi-private organizations manned by eager volunteers (the American Protective League and the American Defense Society were among the largest) that watched for sabotage, espionage or other acts of resistance to the war effort.

This hastily created arrangement worked. German government financial support for American antiwar activities, significant before the U.S. entered the war, was stopped and its recipients largely silenced. German intelligence made a number of efforts to penetrate the U.S. but most were blocked or broken. Domestic resistance to conscription was also suppressed. The cost, however, had been high.

The hastily thrown-together arrangements were inefficient, inconsistent, and prone to abuse. Several of the state-level security agencies became tools of partisan politics. The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, for example, used its extensive official power to suppress the political ambitions of Minnesota's Non-Partisan League, a populist farm organization that threatened the position of the dominant Republican party. Several of the private organization that received federal government support also ventured into vigilante justice and engaged in egregious violations of basic legal norms.

After the war ended in November 1918 some parts of the wartime security apparatus continued to operate, turning their attention to Bolshevism, which seemed on the threshold of sweeping Europe in the chaos that followed World War I. But the panic over the new Red threat receded by 1921 and the Harding administration completed the dismantling of the wartime security apparatus. The Justice Department Bureau of Investigation withdrew almost entirely from the internal security field. The military's intelligence agencies shrank drastically in size. Both the Army's and the Navy's counter-intelligence branches continued to monitor domestic radicalism, but neither service had any jurisdiction to prosecute espionage or subversion that did not directly involve military personnel. Their reports went largely unread by military commanders and usually unshared with civilian agencies that might actually have had jurisdiction.

In the mid-1930s President Roosevelt, concerned about the pro-Nazi German-American Bund and domestic fascist groups such as the Silver Shirts and the Black Legion, ordered the Federal Bureau of Investigation (successor to the Justice Department's Bureau of Investigation) to reenter the domestic security field. FBI head J. Edgar Hoover did so eagerly and included American Communists among those under observation. The FBI of the 1930s, however, was very small in size, only a few over 300 agents in 1933 and still less than 900 by the end of the decade despite the New Deal's rapid expansion of federal authority. While the agency had become skilled in criminal investigation, it took some years for its agents to develop knowledge and procedures geared to counter-intelligence activities.

Internal security concerns grew in the late 1930s when it appeared that fascists had created a new strategy of combining internal subversion with external military aggression. During the Spanish Civil War the Nationalist forces of General Francisco Franco, backed by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, advanced in four columns on Madrid, the besieged capital of the Spanish Republicans. The Nationalist gen-

eral directing the offensive boasted that he had a secret “fifth column” of fascists inside the city sowing disaffection and defeatism which would assail the Republicans from within as his troops assaulted the city’s defenses from without. Thus was born the image of the “fifth column” as a clandestine underground that spread subversion, engaged in sabotage and espionage, and prepared the way for military conquest. Fifth column imagery grew stronger as Hitler used covertly organized Nazi sympathizers first in Austria and then in Czechoslovakia to pave the way for German conquest of those nations.

As a consequence, the FBI devoted more of its resources to internal security, and both the Army and the Navy also expanded their efforts, although all three agencies were still on depression-era austerity budgets with limited personnel until mobilization began in earnest in 1941. The State Department took an interest in the area, and the Treasury Department, which had the Secret Service, thought it might have a role as well. Even the U.S. Post Office claimed a role with its jurisdiction over the mail, and the Commerce Department, concerned about foreign trade manipulation, asserted an interest. It became clear to U.S. Attorney General Frank Murphy that the overlapping and uncoordinated efforts in this field were wasting what few resources the government had. In 1939 he asked President Roosevelt to issue an order clarifying the situation. The president did so in a June 16, 1939 confidential memoranda to the Secretaries of State, Treasury, War, Navy, and Commerce and to the Attorney General and Postmaster General. Roosevelt stated:

It is my desire that the investigation of all espionage, counter-espionage, and sabotage matters be controlled and handled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation of the Department of Justice, the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department, and the office of naval Intelligence of the Navy Department.... [Y]ou will instruct the heads of all other investigative agencies other than the three named, to refer immediately to the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation any data, information, or material that may come to their notice bearing directly or indirectly on espionage, counter-espionage, or sabotage.^{vii}

Roosevelt’s order imposed some system on the threatening chaos of American counter-intelligence operations. As it worked out, the Navy and the Army would take care of internal security for their own personnel, bases, and facilities. The FBI would cover everything else. There was overlap in

regard to war plants and their civilian workers as American military mobilization got underway, and the military agencies kept a finger in civilian counter-intelligence, but the main jurisdictional lines were clear. Inter-agency cooperation, however, continued to be poor.

The system worked fairly well on its chief targets. After World War II began, German intelligence made repeated efforts to establish espionage and sabotage networks in the U.S. with little success. In a 1940 report with justifiable pride Hoover boasted that the FBI had so infiltrated German intelligence networks in the U.S. that a German clandestine short-wave radio was run by FBI penetration agents. He noted that “all material furnished by German Agents through their complicated channels of communication to this station for transmittal to Europe is cleared by State, War and Navy Department officials prior to the time that it is actually transmitted to Germany.”^{viii} Once the U.S. entered the war in December 1941, German and Japanese intelligence networks were easily and largely rolled up and new penetrations were few. Dozens of Americans who had covertly accepted German and Japanese money during the 1939-1941 period to finance pro-Nazi propaganda, anti-intervention literature, or anti-Semitic publications were prosecuted or silenced. The German-American Bund collapsed and its chief figures were imprisoned. Pro-Mussolini Italian-American networks were broken and dispersed. Key leaders of other domestic fascist organizations were also imprisoned or faced such strict official attention that their ability to impede the war effort was reduced to a nullity. With the glaring exception of the internment of West Coast Japanese-Americans, an act that Hoover and the FBI advised against, the internal security regime in World War II also worked with much greater sensitivity to individual rights and democratic liberties than did that of World War I. Because of the abuses that had occurred at that time, the World War I experience of delegating internal security authority to semi-autonomous state and local governmental entities or semi-private volunteer organizations was not repeated.

It would be poor history to use the clarity of hindsight to fault officials for not giving Soviet espionage priority consideration in this era. German, Italian, and Japanese espionage was the overriding concern of security officials in the late 1930s and during World War II, and rightly so. However, even though Soviet intelligence operations in the U.S. were a secondary and even a tertiary concern, the

American response to Soviet espionage was noticeably weak, and the limited follow-through on the uncovering of the massive CPUSA-Soviet passport operation was but one example.

Security Services Shift Focus

But, times changed. By 1945 the German, Japanese and Italian espionage threat was no more. The FBI's internal security resources, vastly expanded during the war, shifted toward the Soviet threat and the sophistication of the FBI's understanding of Soviet espionage rose over time.

Key Defections: Gouzenko, Bentley

There were also several key defections that greatly assisted the FBI's understanding of Soviet espionage. One was the defection of Igor Gouzenko, a GRU code clerk, in Canada some of whose information had American implications, but more importantly, the fall 1945 defection of Elizabeth Bentley that uncovered the several dozen Soviet sources she had worked with. And of the key points of Bentley's story was the role of the CPUSA as an auxiliary to Soviet espionage.

And at that point, the CPUSA ceased to be an asset to Soviet espionage and became a massive liability. Over the next several years not all but many and probably most of the Soviet espionage networks in the United States collapsed in ruin.

KGB Saw It Coming But Couldn't Prevent It

To an extent, the KGB saw it coming. The KGB realized the enormous benefits it gained from CPUSA assistance but realized as well the risks inherent in the relationship. In early 1945, Iskhak Akhmerov, the chief KGB illegal officer in the United States, sent a long cable to Moscow discussing the large Silvermaster apparatus in Washington. He informed Moscow, "it is doubtful whether we [the KGB] could get same results as Robert [Silvermaster]" He gave the example of Treasury Department employees, William and Sonia Gold, two Silvermaster network "probationers," the KGB term for agents who were not professional KGB officers. Akhmerov described them as devoted to the Communist cause but difficult to manage due to unspecified "caprices." He told Moscow "it costs Robert [Silvermaster] great pains to keep the couple and other Probationers in line. Robert [Silvermaster] being their leader in the CPUSA line helps him give them orders." Akhmerov stressed that Silvermaster's position as an underground CPUSA leader gave him added ability to direct these ideologically-motivated agents, noting "that

our workers [KGB officers] would not manage to work with the same success under the CPUSA flag.”^{ix} The productivity of the CPUSA-based networks supervised by Akhmerov is illustrated by KGB records of the numbers of reels of microfilm of U.S. government documents delivered to Moscow via Akhmerov: 59 in 1942, 211 in 1943, 600 in 1944, and 1,896 in 1945.

In other cables Akhmerov noted that a few of the sources in the networks reporting to him liked to think that the intelligence they were provided was for the CPUSA rather than for the KGB. He also told Moscow that some of the sources were perfectly happy that their information went to Moscow but wanted to be sure that the CPUSA also got a copy. Such sharing of information without an operational necessity was, of course, a violation of good espionage tradecraft. An irritated Akhmerov had to ask Moscow to make an exception and allow him to transmit some information to Earl Browder. Otherwise, the Akhmerov stated, the “Fellow Countrymen [American Communists] may try to realize transmission passing us by,” which would be even more insecure than if Akhmerov did for them.^x

The risks in this situation are obvious, and inside the KGB there were occasional angry arguments about just how risky it was. In 1944 Stepan Apresyan headed the KGB’s New York station, but he did not have the broad authority over all KGB operations that his predecessor had. Vasily Zubilin’s move from New York to Washington in 1943 indicated that the senior KGB officer in the U.S. would henceforth be in the capital. However, Zubilin was hastily recalled from the U.S. in 1944 after his subordinate Vasily Mironov accused him of treason. Until the arrival of Anatoly Gromov several months later as Zubilin’s replacement, this temporarily left uncertain who was the chief of KGB activity, and Vladimir Pravdin, the head of Tass in the USA and a senior KGB officer, asserted independent authority from Apresyan. Both sent cables to Moscow accusing the other of poor performance. Apresyan denounced Pravdin for believing that “without the help of the Fellowcountrymen [American Communists] we are completely powerless.” Apresyan argued that “it is ... untrue that without Helmsman [Browder] we are ‘powerless.’” While “we shall have to have recourse to the Fellow Countrymen [American Communists] ... they ought not to be the one and only base especially if you take into account the fact that in the event of Kulak’s [Thomas Dewey’s] being elected [U.S. president] this source may dry up.”^{xi}

In order to reduce the risks, in 1944 and 1945 the KGB moved to separate its espionage sources from the CPUSA and end the overlap of Party and KGB activities. Akhmerov, for example, moved to take direct control of the sources previously supervised by Jacob Golos, particularly the large Silvermaster group. Akhmerov tried to professionalize the group's operations and break up the large organization into smaller and more secure cells of only a few sources, but ran into resistance from Silvermaster who explained "that he did not believe in our orthodox methods and so on."^{xii} Eventually, however, it was done.

Unfortunately, from the KGB point of view, by then it was too late. In order to reorganize the Silvermaster network, as well as the large Perlo network, Akhmerov had first removed Elizabeth Bentley. Akhmerov had said in a 27 April 1944 report to the KGB in Moscow "it will be necessary to remove her" [Bentley].^{xiii} By the end of the year on Soviet orders Bentley had cut all ties to the Perlo Network, the Silvermaster apparatus, and the numerous independent agents she and Golos had developed.

Bentley essentially functioned as a transitional figure. She took a group that had reported to the CPUSA directly and only through intermediaries (Browder and Golos) to Soviet intelligence, and transformed it into one that reported directly to Soviet intelligence, initially with her as an intermediary. The KGB, clearly, intended to remove her as a middleman as soon as it was practical to do so. On orders from her KGB contacts Bentley prepared biographies of those sources she knew best, a preliminary step for reducing the need to keep her involved as well as assisting in the KGB's checking of her agents prior to taking them under direct KGB control.

In December 1944 she met covertly with Anatoly Gromov, the chief of the KGB Washington office and Zubilin's successor as head of KGB operations in the U.S. In her memoir Bentley reconstructed the conversation and had him stating: "We have at last decided what to do about all the contacts that Golos handled. You cannot, obviously, continue to handle them; the set-up is too full of holes and therefore too dangerous. I'm afraid our friend Golos was not too cautious a man, and there is the risk that you, because of your connection with him, may endanger the apparatus. You will therefore turn them over to us; we will look into their backgrounds thoroughly and decide which ones we will keep."^{xiv}

He ordered Bentley to inform her sources of the pending change and to confine herself to the U.S. Service and Shipping Corporation. Gromov also suggested that later she would be removed from that task as well and placed on ice for a period.

Bentley's memory of the KGB concern about Golos's practices not living up to its increasingly professional security standards is corroborated by Venona. In October 1944 a deciphered KGB message reports that Gregory Silvermaster, head of another and larger network managed by Golos and Bentley, was resisting KGB advice that the group be broken into smaller units and that the KGB establish direct liaison with key agents. Akhmerov complained to Moscow that Silvermaster's reluctance unfortunately showed that Golos's "education is making itself felt."^{xv}

The logic of the KGB's position was clear. Bentley simply was not attuned to the increasingly professional rules of espionage tradecraft it was implementing. Golos, Bentley, and their agents moved back and forth between CPUSA political activities and Soviet espionage, readily socialized with each other, and only barely disguised their political attitudes. In the 1930s and early 1940s, with government policy makers largely oblivious to Soviet espionage and the FBI's then limited resources focused elsewhere, these amateurish practices had gone unscathed. But the KGB feared that this era was ending and a higher professional standard of tradecraft was needed.

The KGB, however, did not handle Bentley well in this transition. Bentley had been in love with Jacob Golos, and had sustained a great loss when he died in late 1943. She had then thrown herself into continuing his work. But by the end of 1944 the KGB had taken that away. In 1945 it further urged her to give up U.S. Service and Shipping Corporation, the only thing she had left of her life with Jacob Golos. The most important part of her life and the most important people in it had been taken from her, and her morale hit rock bottom. By the late summer of 1945 she was convinced that the FBI was closing in. It was not, but her fear of arrest and disillusionment led her to defection. The KGB had pushed Bentley out because it wanted a more secure system. What it got by doing so was the exposure and neutralization of the very networks it was trying to protect.

One footnote on Bentley, Akhmerov was sensitive to Bentley's condition and had earlier suggested to the KGB that it find a husband for Bentley, someone attached to the KGB to keep her occupied

and content. This was not done, however. As her morale deteriorated in 1945, Anatoly Gorsky, after meetings with Bentley in which she made drunken hints of disaffection, began to fear that she might defect. Gorsky proposed killing her, but the KGB headquarters Moscow thought that too drastic and less fearful than he that she would defect, orders Gorsky to provide cash to her to keep her content. As we know, Gorsky's fears were well founded. Bentley defected in the fall of 1945.

In 1948 Anatoly Gorsky, now back in Moscow as senior staff for the KGB, or to be precise the KI, the Committee of Information as the KGB was then termed, wrote a memo entitled "Failure in the U.S.A, (1938-1948)" that listed ninety-two (92) KGB sources and field officers likely compromised by five American defectors.^{xvi} Bentley was among them, and she alone was credited at compromising forty-three (43) sources and officers, an extraordinary number.

After the Bentley defection, the FBI's counter-intelligence efforts focused on what was clear: many of the Soviet Union's sources in the United States were members of or close to the American Communist party. The Bureau launched a full-court press against the party. And the party was vulnerable. It was an organization with 30,000 to 50,000 members in the late 1940s. Some were hard-core fanatics. Others were transitory members who joined and then dropped out after a year or two. Others move in and out of party circles through the cloud front organizations that surrounded it. Such an organization is vulnerable to penetration by a sustained counter-intelligence effort, and the FBI did penetrate it, over time developing scores of informants. Many of the informants were low level, but others were very highly placed and on the edge of the party's ruling Political Bureau. Use of the CPUSA as an auxiliary to Soviet espionage became impossible under this kind of counter-intelligence infiltration.

By assisting Soviet espionage, the CPUSA itself laid the basis for the anti-Communist era that followed World War II. The investigations and prosecutions of the American Communist movement undertaken by the federal government in the late 1940s and early 1950s were premised on an assumption that the CPUSA had assisted Soviet espionage. This view contributed to President Truman's executive order in 1947, reinforced in the early 1950s by President Eisenhower, to subject U.S. government employees to loyalty/security investigations. Evidence of secret Communist party membership or ideological sympathy became grounds for removal from federal government service due to perceived connection

between communism and espionage. This policy was also extended to many federal defense contractors as well. Some state and local governments adopted parallel policies.

Concern about the assistance the CPUSA had provided Soviet espionage also contributed to the 1948 decision by the Truman administration to prosecute Eugene Dennis and, eventually, nearly two hundred other CPUSA leaders under the sedition sections of the Smith Act.

Further, the CPUSA's ability to pursue one of its chief activities, covert political organization and subversion, was also crippled by FBI penetration. The FBI onslaught on the party was aimed at frustrating espionage but it also produced enormous information on the party's covert political activities. J. Edgar Hoover selectively furnished information about Communist covert political activity to labor unions and civic groups, to state and local governments, to congressional committees, and to the press, and such information usually led to the isolation and frustration of the CPUSA activity.

The tainting of the American Communist movement with Soviet espionage also contributed to its becoming a pariah in American political life. It was not the only reason, but it was a major one. From 1947 to 1950 a largely quiet but sometimes noisy civil war developed among liberals about the role of Communists. In the late 1930s and early 1940s some liberal institutions and leaders quietly welcomed Communists as partners in the New Deal coalition. But the coming of the Cold War, increasing recognition of the murderous totalitarian nature of Stalinism, and the taint of Soviet espionage led an increasing numbers of liberals to reject Communists as legitimate political allies. Increasingly, Democratic office holders and political candidates also began to regard association with the CPUSA, tainted as it was with Soviet espionage and sympathy of Stalin's blood-soaked regime, as a political disaster.

The defeat of Henry Wallace's Progressive Party and the victory of Harry Truman and Cold War Democrats of Truman's type drove Communists and their allies out of mainstream politics. In New York, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Oregon, California, and the State of Washington, states where Communists had played a significant role in mainstream politics, they found themselves either destroyed as a political force or driven to the periphery of politics.

Communists had won a significant role in the labor movement, chiefly in the CIO, Congress of Industrial Organizations, where Communists led or were part of the leadership unions with, depending on

how you count it, led a fifth to a quarter of CIO members, nearly three million workers. These Communists-led unions were the chief institutional supports possessed by the CPUSA from the late 1930s into the mid-1940s. But, again, the coming of the Cold War, recognition of the nature of Stalinism, and the taint of Soviet espionage led to the dislodgement of Communists from the CIO. By 1950 all of the Communists-led unions were expelled from the CIO, and most quickly collapsed, raided by hostile AFL and rival anti-Communist CIO unions. By the early 1950s the once significant role of Communists in the trade union movement was reduced to West Coast longshoremen's union, strong but small, and an anemic remnant of the once large United Electrical Workers Union kept alive in part because General Electric found it convenient to use the UEW as a foil against rival AFL and CIO unions.

Conclusion

From the late 1920s until 1945 the CPUSA's assistance to Soviet intelligence vastly increased the effectiveness of Soviet espionage against the United States as well as assisting Soviet espionage in other nations by providing American passports and American business cover for Soviet agents operating elsewhere. But this era ended when American counter-intelligence turned its attention to the CPUSA. The result was not only the collapse of the CPUSA-based espionage rings but the tainting of the American Communist Party with betrayal and contributed to the marginalization of the CPUSA's political and trade union work.

Notes

i. Karl [Whittaker Chambers], "The Faking of Americans," unpublished essay (Herbert Solow Papers, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford University, Stanford, CA., 1938).

ii. Ibid.

iii. Walter G. Krivitsky, *In Stalin's Secret Service; an Exposé of Russia's Secret Policies by the Former Chief of the Soviet Intelligence in Western Europe* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939).

iv. Venona 450 San Francisco to Moscow 1 November 1943; 472 San Francisco to Moscow 9 November 1943.

v. Beria to Dimitrov, 29/30 November 1940 with attached Fitin "The Secretary of the CC of the American Comparty....," Archive of the Dimitrov Secretariat of the Comintern, RTsKhIDNI 495-74-478.

vi. Venona 424 Moscow to New York, 1 July 1942.

vii. Roosevelt to the Secretary of State et al, 26 June 1939, President's Secretary's Files (Confidential File), "State 1939-40," box 9, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, reproduced in Robert Louis Benson and Michael Warner, *Venona: Soviet Espionage and the American Response 1939–1957* (Washington, D.C.: National Security Agency; Central Intelligence Agency, 1996), 13.

viii. Hoover memo, "Present Status of Espionage and Counter Espionage Operations of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, 24 October 1940, attached to Hoover to Major General Edwin Watson (secretary to the president), 25 October, 1940, White House Official Files, "Justice Department--FBI Reports," box 12, FDR Library, reproduced in Benson and Warner, *Venona*, 15–26.

ix. Venona 12 - 13 - 15 - 16 KGB New York to Moscow, 4 January 1945.

x. Venona 1818 New York to Moscow, 16 December 1944.

xi. Venona 1433-1435 New York to Moscow, 10 October 1944; Pravdin's reply, making no mention of the CPUSA issue, is Venona 1442, 1447 New York to Moscow 11 October 1944.

xii. Venona 12, 13, 15, 16 New York to Moscow, 4 January 1945.

xiii. Venona 588 KGB New York to Moscow, 29 April 1944.

xiv. Elizabeth Bentley, *Out of Bondage: The Story of Elizabeth Bentley*. (New York: Devin-Adair, 1951), 184.

xv. Venona 1388-1389 KGB New York to Moscow, 1 October 1944.

xvi. On the memo, see: < <http://www.johnearlhaynes.org/page48.html> >.

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