LEWY, GUENTER. The Cause that Failed: Communism in American Political Life. Oxford University Press, New York [etc.] 1990. xiii, 359 pp. $ 24.95; £ 18.00.

It is a historiographical curiosity that when the CPUSA no longer counted as a political force in the States scholarship, beginning in the late 1960s, began to take it seriously. Connected to the upheaval in the country, studies by Roger Keeran, Maurice Isserman Gerald Horne, Robin Kelly and Mark Naison among others, looking primarily at the base of the Party, have affirmed in varying degree the legitimacy of US communism, its roots in US society and its having fought for a more decent and just country.

It is not easy to fit Guenter Lewy's *The Cause that Failed* into recent historiographical debates. His is certainly a violently anticommunist polemic but its lack of real scholarship sets it apart from works like those of Theodore Draper and his disciple Harvey Klehr who more recently has sought – unsuccessfully, I think – to contrast the new outlook. The subject matter of Lewy's book is not really the CPUSA but rather anticommunism, an ideology and political praxis which the author seeks to rehabilitate fully. Mildly critical of McCarthyism's excesses – e.g. the attacks on the NAACP – he remains firmy convinced of the need to have legally repressed communist organizations and to have used congressional probes. The rise of McCarthyism is interestingly enough attributed not only to the communists themselves, since they often had concealed their membership and thus were guilty of having a secret agenda, but also to the liberals, who were not themselves sufficiently anticommunist in the sense of rapidly cleaning their house of all CP influence.

The main part of the book charts the evolution – highly negative for the author – of various liberal organizations (ACLU, SANE, SDS) which, once solidly against communism, beginning in the late 1960s reversed this line and refused to exclude CP members or those considered such. He concludes worrying about how the apparent merger of the Old and New Left and affirming that anticommunism is a "moral imperative" rather than Cold War rhetoric or a prelude or accessory to McCarthyism. It is in short "an expression of man's yearning for freedom and human dignity".

This position is combined with a rather traditional patriotism. He seems to be a strong defender of US policy in Central America and is worried that the "anti-American Left" has tended "to make the United States a second-rate power unable to defend its vital interests". Given current difficulties of the US economy and the extension of poverty and conflictuality – certainly clear at the moment his book was written – it will be something of a surprise to read that the United States is "a basically self-satisfied nation" possessing "a dynamic social system with little class-consciousness".

His final evaluation is uncertain: on the one hand recent events in Europe have at least temporarily convalidated his idea of communism as an evil rejected by the masses. On the other hand, the cause that failed is also that of anticommunism itself insofar as this ideology is still resisted by those who remain on the left; moreover the still existing CP is seen as potentially dangerous in that it not only has secret members but that non communists are willing to collaborate with the Party.

Given the participation of the author in liberal anticommunist organizations of the post-war period it appears, more than critical history, to be that type of a memoir where the old warriors – in this case an old cold-warrior – seek to demonstrate tenaciously that they were on the right side. His general philosophy clearly dictates his positions: CP professors were obviously unfit to teach; Hiss was clearly a spy; cooperation with the FBI by liberal organizations is quite legitimate; rejection of anticommunism eased the New Left's descent into terrorism.

Despite – perhaps because of – the vigor of these positions Lewy has researched hardly at all in Party sources, printed or otherwise. While he does use material from the aforementioned liberal movements most of his quotes from CP leaders are taken from strongly partisan secondary works while the use of recent articles published in the ex-USSR is open to question since many there primarily seek accreditation in the West. More than a critical methodology we have an embarassing use of banal and slanted terminology which occasionally drifts into name calling: the CP "captures" or "infiltrates" other organizations; Party followers are "hacks"; CP membership is "estimated" by the FBI while the Party itself can only offer "claims". If his heroes are not surprisingly John Dewey, Sidney Hook and the later *Partisan Review* it is somewhat disconcerting to see Joseph Freeman and Malcolm Cowley described as "repugnant".

If, in fact, the ideological enemy is anti-anticommunism the social strata most under attack is that of the intellectuals, alienated from their society; fond of "social engineering" and always busy trying to liberate people from "false consciousness" they are considered especially susceptible to communism and pro-Sovietism. It is true that as the New Left moved towards the non exclusion of communists it was detached from the masses it sought to reach and on whose behalf it claimed to speak. On the other hand, less clear is Lewy's assertion, common to the neo-conservatives, that the "ordinary folks" are the ones who keep their feet on the ground.

With such a world view much is missed from the drama of the CPUSA's history: the often hesitant evolution of its political posture (as opposed to a supposed rapid monocord response to the USSR); the differences between the leadership and the general membership which at least in certain moments was rooted in US society and did fight effectively for the rights of classes and groups (dependent workers and blacks primarily) previously on the margins; the international background within which the USSR acted and which can amply explain and perhaps justify its more controversial foreign policy positions.

Moreover, even if the history of the CPUSA were the mere exercise in deceit he pretends it to have been, anticommunist ideology was not simply an opposition to this: this ideology has continually functioned as a mask of the US domestic reality and the country's foreign policy and a study of it in the postwar period should have confronted the question. In this way it might have been possible to investigate why exactly the liberal organizations at a certain moment did move away from their initial anticommunism.

The failure of this book to illuminate hardly anything in the Party's history does not exclude that many questions are still open. With regard to the relations of the CPUSA to the Comintern and Soviet Communism Draper and his followers have scored points. While the older historiography has always concentrated on this point in order to delegitimize the CPUSA, most of the newer studies have avoided this

area perhaps wary of the pitfalls which seemed to be built in to it. And yet, as Draper has pointed out, the CPUSA was no New Left organization but an integral part of an international movement with all that this meant; it is then a question that cannot be skirted. Moreover the way the CPUSA dealt with anticommunism has to be explored further: was "hiding the face of the Party", that is not admitting membership even if subversion was not the motive, the best way to confront exclusionary tendencies in the society? How deep had in fact anticommunism remained during the most favorable period for the CP?

An attempt must also be made to evaluate the almost continually unsuccessful history of the CPUSA no longer as an exception in the international communist movement but as something which perhaps forshadowed, in the 1950s, the general destiny of the entire movement born of the 1917 Revolution. Lastly one should continue to reflect on the ultimate meaning of the CPUSA experience. As some have already suggested it is possible that the efforts – heroic at times – of the CP led primarily to a softening of US capitalism's sharp edges and an inclusion of new strata in the great bourgeois synthesis.

Unfortunately, on these and other germane points of the Party's history Lewy has little to offer although it fits in quite well with a reading of daily newspapers. Perhaps greatly shortened, more directly personal and shorn of historiographical pretensions, it could have been a somewhat interesting political tract. In any case, that an entire period in the history of communism has come to a close cannot be taken to have retrospective application. Recent political victories on the international level give greater luster to old-fashioned anticommunism but research on the CPUSA will not advance by being harnessed to it.

Malcolm Sylvers

SEIDMAN, MICHAEL. Workers Against Work. Labor in Paris and Barcelona During the Popular Fronts. University of California Press, Berkeley [etc.] 1991. xiv, 399 pp. $ 39.95.

This is an interesting but ultimately unsatisfactory book. Its unsatisfactoriness stems from the very disparateness of the project which makes for a very uneven level of analysis. To be fair, the problem identified here is closely bound up with the comparative 'genre' itself. Michael Seidman, in attempting a comparison of Paris and Barcelona illustrates the extreme difficulty of using the same term – Popular Front – to describe situations which, though they existed in the same chronological period, represented very different political conjunctures and socio-economic structures. As a result, both the comparisons and contrasts made by the author often seem forced and sometimes downright banal. The structure Dr Seidman adopts straight away alerts one to the difficulty. What we get is not really a thematic comparison but two more or less separate studies in one volume. While the author provides comparative elements in his analyses of the Spanish and French bourgeoisies, he is really telling two stories which reveal the abyss between the two national experiences in terms both of economic development and cultural projects. These sections, although providing an intelligent synthesis, really just illustrate the evident