

the text is augmented by photographs, maps, notes, bibliographies, and an index. *Colors of Courage* should interest not only Civil War history buffs but the general public too, as it incorporates changes in historical interpretation at Gettysburg and other Civil War sites. Although Creighton claims that she is telling "a story told time and time again" (p. vii), she retells it in a way that expands and enriches our understanding of the Battle of Gettysburg.

The State Museum of Pennsylvania

ERIC LEDELL SMITH

Forgotten Radicals: Communists in the Pennsylvania Anthracite, 1919–1950.

By WALTER T. HOWARD. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005. xiv, 268p. Bibliography, notes, index. \$38.)

For a decade Walter T. Howard has been pioneering the study of the history of the Communist Party in the anthracite coal region of Pennsylvania. In conference papers and journal articles, Professor Howard has examined the efforts of Communist organizers in the region, principally in the 1920s and 1930s. He has relied primarily on local newspapers and the *Daily Worker* to reconstruct the story of party organizers' efforts to reach out to working people and provide radical left-wing leadership in this period of economic crisis and decline. Howard provides a narrative of repeated campaigns and legal repression that left the Communist Party on the margins of political life in the region.

Howard argues that Communists were significant players in struggles between workers and employers, within trade unions, and in the politics of the New Deal in the anthracite region. He outlines successive campaigns in which party leaders and organizers sought to channel discontent into a conscious political movement to challenge the dominance of the two major political parties in the region. He also outlines an ideological war of words in local newspapers in which anticommunist editorials and spirited, usually anonymous, defenses of a left-wing perspective battled for the loyalty of the region's readers. Finally, we see the power of local police and the courts arrayed against Communist efforts to reach a broader public. Authorities repeatedly denied Communists the rights of free speech and assembly, abrogating basic constitutional rights.

What is most striking about the story of Communists in the region is how marginal they were, both in the region's broader politics and within the labor radicalism that did emerge in this period. Working people forged three distinct responses to the Depression crisis: a powerful movement for equalization of work centered in the Panther Valley; a violent struggle over dual unionism in the northern anthracite field; and coal bootlegging in the southern and western middle fields. In none of these campaigns did Communists play a significant role. These strategies emerged out of workplace struggles and community life and

the distinctive pressures evident in each area. In the equalization campaign and coal bootlegging workers developed strategies that resonated with local elites—including small business owners, clergy, and area professionals. Working-class protest quickly escalated into community struggles against managers and owners of the leading anthracite firms. These strategies provided mine workers power they did not possess in the broader political arena and a measure of relief from the insecurity of the Depression. The sectarianism of the Communist Party organizers was ill-suited to permit them to assume a leadership role in these efforts, though they did offer important support to the organization of independent miners that grew out of coal bootlegging.

Howard offers a parallel story in his account of anthracite-region Communists between 1919 and 1950. He argues for the significance of Communist efforts, but it is not at all clear that they had much influence on working-class or community protest in these decades. He concludes by describing Communists as “authentic American radicals” (p. 213), but the weakness of their appeal in the anthracite region undercuts that characterization. Other radical currents emerged in anthracite, with less ideological content and free of connections to broader left-wing traditions, that enabled miners to challenge the political and economic groups that dominated their lives.

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Voices of the Knox Mine Disaster: Stories, Remembrances, and Reflections on the Anthracite Coal Industry's Last Major Catastrophe, January 22, 1959. By ROBERT P. WOLENSKY, KENNETH C. WOLENSKY, and NICOLE H. WOLENSKY. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 2005. xi, 286p. Notes, glossary, illustrations, index. \$12.95.)

There have been many coal mine disasters in Pennsylvania that took more lives, but few can match the horror and drama of the Knox Mine disaster. Explosions or fires kill large numbers quickly: the Avondale fire took 110 lives, and the Darr Mine explosion 239. The 12 men who died in the Knox mine were victims of an illegal shaft breaking through the river bottom under the rampaging waters of the icy Susquehanna on January 22, 1959. Their lives were taken perhaps in minutes, perhaps days or even longer, as the water advanced inexorably through the tunnels. Their bodies were never recovered. Thirty-three men escaped after a harrowing trek through the maze of shafts and tunnels in search of higher ground and a way out. Billions of gallons of water surged through the interconnecting mines, effectively ending more than a century of mining in the northern anthracite field.

The Wolenskys have told this story in an earlier book, *The Knox Mine*