

Between a River & a Mountain

Between a River & a Mountain

The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War

Edmund F. Wehrle

The University of Michigan Press
Ann Arbor

For Jacqueline, My Love

Copyright © by the University of Michigan 2005
All rights reserved
Published in the United States of America by
The University of Michigan Press
Manufactured in the United States of America
⊗ Printed on acid-free paper

2008 2007 2006 2005 4 3 2 1

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system,
or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical,
or otherwise, without the written permission of the publisher.

A CIP catalog record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wehrle, Edmund F., 1964—

Between a river and a mountain : the AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War /
Edmund F. Wehrle.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-472-09900-9 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-472-09900-0 (cloth : alk. paper)

ISBN-13: 978-0-472-06900-2 (pbk. : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-472-06900-4 (pbk. : alk. paper)

1. AFL-CIO—History. 2. Labor movement—United States—History—
20th century. 3. Vietnamese Conflict, 1961–1975. 4. Labor
movement—Vietnam—History—20th century. I. Title.

HD8055.A6W44 2005

331.8'0973'09047—dc22

2005014441

Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
1 Free Trade Unionism	9
2 “No More Pressing Task Than Organizing in Southeast Asia”	29
3 “It’s a Vast Jungle and We’re Working on the Periphery”	51
4 New Frontiers	75
5 Into the Quagmire	101
6 Free Fall, 1968–69	135
7 Entangling Alliances and Mounting Costs, 1970–71	153
8 “The Last of the Cold War Mohicans,” 1972–75	173
Notes	201
Bibliography	279
Index	297

Illustrations following page 152

Acknowledgments

I have incurred a great many debts in the preparation and writing of this book. The faculty and staff at the University of Maryland at College Park provided significant encouragement and support as I began my initial investigations. Stuart Kaufman, the sage editor of the *Samuel Gompers Papers*, provided invaluable early guidance. That this project survived his sudden death is a testament to his powers to inspire. I am indebted to a number of other individuals, who carefully read my manuscript for both style and substance, including David Sicilia, Gary Clifford, Frank Ninkovich, Peter Levy, Marc Jason Gilbert, and Allan E. Goodman. One individual's support and aid stands out, that of my father, Edmund S. Wehrle, who read and commented on countless drafts, offering crucial insights and encouragement. In the final stages of manuscript preparation, my wife Jacqueline carefully read drafts and attended to footnotes.

The staff at the George Meany Memorial Archives, especially Lee Sayres, put up with my almost constant presence for several years. My European research was greatly enhanced by the help of Marie-Paule Blasini at the French National Archives for Overseas Affairs and by Pascal Clerc at the French Confederation of Democratic Workers Archives. Likewise I am indebted to archivists at the Kheel Center for Labor Documentation; the Gerald Ford Library; the Hoover Institute on War, Revolution, and Peace; the National Security Archives; the National Archives; the British National Archives; the Wagner Archives; the Walter Reuther Library; the Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library; the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library; and the Library of Congress Manuscript Reading Room. Numerous individuals provided me with invaluable firsthand impressions; particular thanks go to Nguyen Duc Dat, Robert Senser, and Vy Pham.

Acknowledgments

A Hearst Travel Grant from the University of Maryland History Department, as well as grants from the Lyndon Johnson Foundation and the Eastern Illinois University Office of Grants and Research, facilitated my extensive research for this project.

While the aid and support of these many individuals have enhanced this work, its flaws and shortcomings rest solely on my shoulders.