

**Naison, Mark. *Communists in Harlem during the Depression.***  
**Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983. Pp. xxi, 335. \$19.95**  
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Karel D. Bicha

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fiume's phrase, the "forgotten decade" of Black history. Arnold Hirsch has sought to redress that imbalance by exploring the emergence of what he calls the "second ghetto," new areas of Black residence on the Southside of Chicago that emerged after the war.

Unlike the pre-war city, papered-over with restrictive covenants and the unwritten racial policies of realtors, the second ghetto emerged from the deliberate policies of the federal government and a city administration which capitulated to White violence. Perhaps Hirsch's most original insight is to point out the irony of the egalitarianism occasioned by the Second World War. The 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision that outlawed restrictive covenants, and even the 1954 Supreme Court decision on segregated schools, which all moved the nation in one direction while local political and economic decisions in Chicago, intensified the racial isolation and social stratification of its Black citizen.

The efficacy of White violence in holding the line against Black residential movement is the central theme of Hirsch's story. In the late 1940s there was one racially motivated bombing or arson every twenty days; and White riots in Fernwood Park, Trumbull Park and Cicero put pressure on the city council to grant aldermen veto power over the construction of public housing sites in their wards. Public housing, a major Black issue in the late 1930s, now served to reinforce the isolation of Blacks in mile-long concrete reservations that formed the dividing line between Black and White on the near Southside.

Yet only a few miles away, downtown businessmen and Hyde Park university administrators were devising more sophisticated techniques to "reclaim" the near Southside. Urban renewal "dehoused" Black residents: 70 per cent of the housing units condemned for urban renewal projects had been occupied by Blacks. University of Chicago intellectuals and Hyde Park liberals appalled at the "savagery" of White ethnic violence against Blacks, dared not look too deeply at the implications of the University of Chicago housing policies which accomplished the same ends and shared similar motives as the rioters they condemned. University president Lawrence A. Kimpton and Julian Levi, director of the university controlled South East Chicago Commission and used class as a "back-up" for race. Their Hyde Park "conservation" plan involved the dislocation of a few lower middle class Whites but their goal was the same as that of the "pathetic creatures" in the South Deering Improvement Association: to keep Blacks out. Julian Levi even intervened to prevent the distinguished Black sociologist St. Clair Drake from purchasing a home in an all-white section in south east Hyde Park.

*Making the Second Ghetto* makes a compelling case for the political powerlessness of Black Chicagoans. Congressman William L. Dawson was interested primarily in

patronage and maintaining his political powerbase. Sidney Williams, Executive Secretary of the Chicago Urban League lost his job when his Committee to End Mob Violence began to cost the League valuable White donations. By the summer of 1954, when Elizabeth Wood was fired as executive secretary of the Chicago Housing Authority and the Kennelly administration had completely capitulated to White racial interests, the contours of the "second ghetto" were complete.

Hirsch is not unsympathetic to the homeownership aspirations of White ethnics, but he believes the two decades between the Second World War and the civil rights movement were pivotal for the history of race relations in Chicago. Ultimately, the second ghetto would come to resemble the first, Blacks of divergent incomes and interests huddled together while a declining White population scrambled for different but thinly veiled strategies to maintain the colour line. The ghetto, and the legacy of racial isolation and antipathy it spawned, endures.

Charles Branham  
Department of History  
University of Illinois at Chicago

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Naison, Mark. *Communists in Harlem during the Depression*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983. Pp. xxi, 335. \$19.95 (U.S.).

This engrossing volume is a detailed study of the organization and activities of the Communist Party in Harlem, the largest Black community in the United States, from the early 1920s to the end of 1941. The establishment of the party in the twenties was the work of a small cadre, dominated by West Indian immigrants, but in the depression years the Comintern and the White leaders of the CPUSA targeted Harlem for a major effort, seeking to make the ghetto the showplace of its "Negro work." But Harlem was more than a ghetto; it contained Latin, Irish, Italian, Finnish, Estonian and Jewish neighbourhoods, and representatives of each of these ethnic groups, predominantly the Jews, contributed activists to the party's cause.

The primary focus of Naison's volume, however, is Black Harlem. Essentially the book contains three sections. The first details the formative years of party work and the recruitment of its first cadre. The second, and most substantial section, describes the complex of party efforts during the Popular Front years (1935-1939), the period in which Communist influence in Harlem (and elsewhere) was greatest. And the third section assesses the decline of the party in the aftermath of the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August, 1939.

Establishing the Communist Party (CP) in Harlem was no easy task; the ghetto already possessed a rich network of reform and protest groups. Party policy, dictated by the Comintern, was resolutely interracial, and it quickly provoked the hostility of the powerful remnants of Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association, which espoused Black nationalism. The NAACP, and, to a lesser extent, the Urban League, distrusted the party's motives; established labour leaders of socialist leanings especially A. Philip Randolph, treated it with derision.

That the CP acquired respectability in Harlem resulted from a fortuitous event — the successful involvement of the party in the defense of the nine young Blacks in the famous Scottsboro (Alabama) rape case. With its credibility guaranteed, Harlem Communists proceeded to undertake work with the unemployed, tenants, and trade unions, to organize boycotts of merchants to force the employment of Blacks, and to permeate the professional and artistic communities. By late 1934 the shift in Comintern policy which produced the anti-fascist Popular Front obliged the party to become "Americanized." It embraced other groups and extended its influence far beyond its membership. Among the emerging Harlem leaders with whom the party forged an alliance was the young Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.

In negotiating his way through the maze of party activities, party groups and front groups, Naison establishes some salient points. The role of the CP in Harlem was catalytic. Its Black membership never exceeded 1,000 at any time, but its influence was considerable. It was, for example, the midwife which brought the National Negro Congress (1936) into existence, and from this confederation of Black organizations only the NAACP shied away. Yet the CP proved more attractive to the Black middle class and to trade unionists than to the unorganized working class, a striking parallel to its effect on White America in the 1930s. Through its consistent support of the arts, moreover, the party attracted extraordinary support from Black intellectuals, writers and performing artists, including the most widely known Black entertainer of the period, the actor-singer Paul Robeson.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, a cynical controversion of the Popular Front tradition, seriously eroded the influence and membership of the CP in Harlem. To the extent that the party retained any credibility it was among the established trade unionists and the performing artists; but this situation underwent a reversal with the Soviet-American alliance which congealed after Pearl Harbour.

Mark Naison has written an excellent book on a complex subject. It is based on extensive research in the newspaper and periodical press, and on a considerable number of oral interviews. The Black communists of Harlem in the thirties were, fortunately for the purposes of scholarship, a remarkably long-lived group. The prose is lucid and graceful, marred

only by an occasional split infinitive. In all, it is a work of sound scholarship.

Karel D. Bicha  
Marquette University

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Duke, Maurice and Daniel P. Jordan, editors. *A Richmond Reader*. Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1983. Pp. xxii, 446. \$19.95.

Maurice Duke, professor of English and director of creative writing, and Daniel P. Jordan, professor of history, both at Virginia Commonwealth University, have edited a collection of documents and literary comments relating to the history of Richmond, Virginia from its founding in 1733 to the present. The selections are arranged chronologically within two major sections. The first section entitled "The Times as Seen From the Times" presents selections from documents, newspapers, and eyewitness accounts concerning some of the notable events in the city's history. Included here are excerpts from the writings of William Byrd II, Thomas Jefferson, numerous foreign travelers, prominent city residents, a Black minister and the son of a Jewish immigrant. Some of the topics considered are Benedict Arnold's raid on the city during the Revolutionary War, the slave revolt led by Gabriel Prosser in 1800, the city's surrender to Union forces at the conclusion of the Civil War, the Great Depression and the impact of desegregation in the 1970s. Following a series of illustrations and photographs, a second section entitled "The People and Their Cultural Tradition" presents selections highlighting the lives of persons associated with the city, including such prominent figures as John Marshall, Edgar Allan Poe, Ellen Glasgow, Douglas Southall Freeman and Lewis F. Powell, Jr. In addition, some fictional accounts illustrate episodes and ways of life from the Richmond of a by-gone era. Each document is preceded by a detailed introductory statement that attempts to establish the historical context into which the selection fits. The volume begins with a personal introduction by southern journalist Louis D. Rubin, Jr. and concludes with an appendix that provides an annotated bibliography of the history of Richmond.

*A Richmond Reader* illustrates the transformation of Richmond from an eighteenth century trading post to the Confederate South's third largest city, to a major American metropolitan centre with a population of about 220,000 in 1981. Most of the documents used to illustrate this story have been published previously, but Duke and Jordan have compiled and edited them to form an interesting and handy anthology. Some of the documents provide striking insights into Richmond's social history. For example, the recollections of "The Ravages of War (1862-1865)," and a Black