

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

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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.

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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

minister's account of the "Slavery Chain Done Broke at Last" (1865), offer a dramatic and revealing picture of life in this city during the Civil War. Yet the collection is not an unqualified success from a scholar's perspective. A number of documents focus on isolated events whose broad significance remains unclear. Selections concerning the collapse of the capitol floor in 1870 or the impact of the 1972 hurricane, for example, appear to serve little more than as objects of antiquarian interest. Perhaps the root of the limitations of this collection can be traced to the lack of clarity concerning the criteria according to which the documents were selected. As a result the picture of the city's history that emerges is somewhat spotty and superficial. Duke and Jordan contend that their volume was designed to attract a wide variety of readers ranging from the scholar to the interested layman. Some scholars might find this anthology to be a convenient reference source; most will undoubtedly prefer to seek out the original sources in their complete versions. *A Richmond Reader* will most likely appeal to general readers interested in southern history and, more specifically, to Richmonders themselves. Louis Rubin's introductory remarks about the book are fitting and revealing: it is "a Richmond treasury — writings about Richmond, writings by Richmonders, writings about Richmonders. May those who cherish the old city find in it reminders of things both familiar and felicitous" (p. xxii).

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Sanchez Korrol, Virginia E. *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983. Pp. xix, 242. Figures, maps, plates, tables, appendix, index. \$29.95.

In *From Colonia to Community*, Virginia E. Sanchez Korrol has placed the Puerto Ricans squarely in the middle of revisionist immigration historiography. By directly attacking the standard interpretation presented by Daniel P. Moynihan and Nathan Glazer in *Beyond the Melting Pot*, Sanchez Korrol provides conclusive evidence that a viable and thriving Puerto Rican community existed in New York City prior to World War II. In addition, she also shows that the residents built and sustained this community with values brought from Puerto Rico. As other revisionist studies of immigrant groups have shown, the work ethic, strong supportive family values and a desire for neighbourhood associations were values brought to America by the newcomers; they were not inculcated by an Americanization assimilation process.

While focusing mainly on the period between the two world wars, Sanchez Korrol illustrates that the *colonias*

(*infants enclaves*) initially appeared prior to the Spanish-American War. Inhabited at first by merchants and students, later by political exiles involved in Caribbean revolutionary movements, and finally by a small working class contingent, the foundation for the future Puerto Rican community took shape. After the war with Spain, the political exiles vanished while working class Puerto Ricans, armed with their new status as American citizens, surged into New York City. This new wave of immigration, in turn, increased the demand for the community's commercial and professional development.

This pattern of immigration continued into the interwar years. According to Sanchez Korrol, it was stimulated by three factors: job opportunities, congressional legislation, and favourable transportation. Among these, the economic attraction of New York City was paramount. Another "pull factor" (p. 28) was the passage of the Johnson Act limiting East European immigration, which increased the demand in New York City for Puerto Rican workers left destitute by the mechanization of the island's agriculture. They, in effect, assumed the jobs previously held by their East European counterparts. The only problem with this description is Sanchez Korrol's argument that Puerto Ricans emigrated to New York because transportation costs were less expensive than to other U. S. cities, especially the Gulf ports. A stronger argument would indicate that economic opportunities were not as great in New Orleans, Miami and other southern cities, and by being less attractive, a competitive transportation system was not developed between these urban centres and Puerto Rico.

While this work can be recommended, other problems exist. The failure to mention the role of the Catholic Church is a great omission, especially since Patricia Cayo Sexton, who belongs to the Moynihan-Glazer school, strongly suggested in *Spanish Harlem* that the church was the community's "main religious tranquilizer." Other revisionist studies of Irish and Italian immigrants have argued the reverse, that the church was cardinal to the development of the immigrant community. On the other hand, one of this work's main contributions is its chapter on women, "The Other Side of the Ocean." Sanchez Korrol's observation, "What has usually been classified as idle female chatter" was, in effect "the family intelligence service," where "women exchanged information on housing, jobs, folk remedies, the best places to shop, their churches, and their children's schools," portrays women as active members in the community building process. It should be elaborated upon in future works.

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