Margaret Stevens, *Red International and Black Caribbean: Communist Organisations in New York City, Mexico and the West Indies, 1919–1940*. London: Pluto, 2017. xii + 303 pp. (Paper US\$30.00)

Although a number of notable works on early twentieth-century black radicals in New York and the Caribbean have been written, it is rare to find a history of Communism that combines U.S., Caribbean, and Latin American perspectives. As such, Margaret Stevens's *Red International and Black Caribbean* is a welcome contribution to the field. Drawing together Mexico, the Caribbean, and New York in what could be considered an extended Caribbean, it weaves together an original narrative focused on matters of race and on figures often occluded from mainstream histories of Communism, Socialism, and trade unionism. In particular, it is informed by an approach that has special currency in historical research to tell history from the ground up—or, as Stevens puts it in the introduction, to refute “the revisionist tendency to theorize twentieth-century black radicalism as a ‘tradition’ of ‘great men’” (p. 3). The claim is a bold one and for the most part she holds up her end of the bargain. Hence, she includes letters from readers in various periodicals (including an ex-marine and Caribbean UNIA members such as Herman Thompson), the relatively obscure Virgin Islands journalist Romeo L. Dougherty, and other lesser-known figures in leftist spheres. In this respect, Stevens's work sits alongside histories of the Caribbean and Caribbean diaspora that critique the “great men” tradition, such as Lara Putnam's *Radical Moves* (2013) and Lorna Chessum's *From Immigrants to Ethnic Minority* (2000).

Stevens's trans-American framework presents a broad network across the continent, extending from New York to Panama. We get a sense of submerged histories within and between organizations and individuals: the African Blood Brotherhood's outposts in Colón, Panama, and San Pedro de Macoris, Dominican Republic; connections between trade unionists such as Sandalio Junco in Cuba with Communist organizations such as the American Negro Labor Congress and All-American Anti-Imperialist League (AAAIL) in Mexico and the United States; dialogue between leaders of the Communist (Workers) Party of America (CPUSA) such as Charles Emil Ruthenberg and non-U.S. advocates of Communism such as Navares Sager in Puerto Rico and Mexican AAAIL General Secretary Manuel Gómez. Stevens's vast canvas may on occasions lead readers to long for more on the particular associations between Communist party members and sympathetic, nonaffiliated fellow travelers.

What emerges from her history more often than not is the somewhat high-handed approach to nationalist movements in tropical America by the Com-

munist International and the CPUSA. Correspondence between Ruthenberg and the Chicago-based Gómez reveal the cultural chauvinism evident within the CPUSA, as both concurred that Mexico, unlike the United States, was unready for its own headquarters. This paternalistic paradigm almost repeated itself in Puerto Rico as Ruthenberg, alert to the island's neocolonial dependence on the United States, only envisaged it as having a district affiliation to the U.S. party. The irony here is that the Communist International's American wing mimicked the socioeconomic models it sought to destroy, bolstering New York and Chicago headquarters at the expense of apparently peripheral movements elsewhere on the continent. Stevens's strongest and most sustained critique is of this uneven, U.S. hegemony.

That critique, however, is produced from the perspective of a Communist historian, as is apparent in such occasional affirmations as "Revolution ... requires pervasive class consciousness" or "workers' power requires individual allegiance to the collective strategy" (pp. 77, 78). Such interjections do not tell us strictly what "happened," but their rare occurrence means the overall flow of the historical narrative is fairly undisturbed. Stevens's position perhaps goes some way toward explaining her departure from academic convention with respect to secondary sources, which are almost entirely absent from her end-notes. She points out in her introduction that this is "an organization-based history" (p. 2), and the thoroughness of her research into the archives of CP or CP-related organizations is impressive. The evident downside to the purity of this approach is the book's lack of engagement with other historians' work. One perhaps assumes that Stevens is conversant with the seminal work of writers like Winston James, Robert Hill, Mark Solomon, Hakim Adi, Joyce Moore Turner, and Minkah Makalani, but their names are never mentioned, their work never referenced. Lastly, while the odd error crops up in relation to names—a fault that should have been picked up in the copyediting—one unfortunate mistake is that Hubert Critchlow, founder of the British Guiana Labour Union, is rechristened as Henry Critchlow. The lack of engagement with other scholars' work may limit the reach of Stevens's book. Yet in spite of this, it offers a valuable internal history of early twentieth-century, red-black activism.

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