

THUMBNAIL REVIEWS

THE NEGRO AND THE DEMOCRATIC FRONT, by James Ford, International Publishers, \$1.75.

Reviewed by ANGELO HERNDON

After the Munich betrayal and Hitler's continued pressure upon the small and weak nations of Southeastern Europe, the problem of the oppressed national groups assumes world significance.

The very fact that Hitler perverted the principle of self-determination, for small nations in his agitation for the Sudeten areas makes the problem increasingly important for all of us.

Similar questions emerge at the moment in connection with the large scale Arab rebellion against British rule in Palestine, which is merely an intimation of the great colonial upheaval that is maturing in the whole Arab Near East.

And because Hitler is creating new problems of national oppression and colonial domination as quickly as he claims to be solving the old ones, it is fitting and proper to give renewed attention to the Marxist position on colonial and national liberation.

The Negro and the Democratic Front is a very clear and modest presentation of the problem of America's national minority, the Negro people. James Ford sums up the question very pointedly: "America's most bitter heritage is its Negro problem. Perhaps no other question has aroused such hatreds, such slanders, such suffering in our country. For more than three centuries, ever since 1619, when the first slave ship touched our shores, the presence of this darker race in America has constituted an unsolved problem, reflected on the one hand, in the bestial cruelty of lynching and,

on the other, in the noble sacrifice of a John Brown. One of the major wars in American history was lit by the fire of this conflict; and the failure of the Civil War to free the Negro people economically and socially has brought the problem down to our own day in very nearly as aggravating a form as it presented in 1861."

This is the question confronting us. It can not be overlooked. It cannot be ignored. It confronts the American people today as never before. Will they succumb to the fascist poison being spread by the Pelleys, the Ellenders, Bilbos and "Cotton Ed" Smiths (all representatives of Hitler's philosophy in America) or will they view this problem in its proper setting? James Ford, a spokesman of the Communist Party, has complete confidence in the American people. He is certain that they will follow the only true path out of this difficulty: the unity of Negro

and white in the labor movement, in politics, in every endeavor of the people really to improve their lot.

The Negro and the Democratic Front sets forth, primarily, the theoretical aspects of the Negro problem. But at the same time, it attempts to draw lessons from the everyday practical experiences of contemporary American life, invaluable in constructing of a firmly consolidated democratic front of negro and white progressive. But even more enlightenment is sorely needed on the Negro question. If America is to play the role that it must on a world scale, it can do so only with greater participation of Negroes in domestic as well as international affairs.

James Ford indicates the only way in which this can be achieved: by the uprooting of a vicious slave system in the South; the abolition of legal and extra-legal lynchings; full social, political and economic equality of the Negro people with complete right to self-determination. In short, *The Negro and the Democratic Front* sums up the experiences and results achieved in a profoundly significant period of American life. Showing how the national question has been solved in the land of Socialism, Ford shows also how it must inevitably be solved in the United States.

For the first time, Americans will have a chance to read in book form, a collection of speeches and discussions on the Negro question by America's outstanding Negro communist leader. It is a book that takes a prominent place alongside of the growing body of Marxist literature on the Negro question and the reconstruction period. It is a book that can well serve to guide us all to a fuller and deeper understanding of America's "most bitter heritage."



JAMES FORD