

the irony of historians' tendency to idealize pre-industrial communities they would hate to inhabit. Without question, the "culture of abundance" has brought us many comforts and pleasures we ought not to take for granted.

But it is difficult to avoid asking some questions—in the spirit of Susman himself. How can one discuss abundance under advanced capitalism without at least a nod to the cruel ironies inherent in the word? How does American abundance look to the colonized peoples of the world who have been forced to sacrifice their raw materials and indigenous traditions so the fattest nation on earth can have steaks, scuba gear? How can one ignore the profoundly antidemocratic tendencies that underwrote this new culture, even within the United States: the growing concentration of wealth, power and knowledge in the hands of a few managers, technicians and administrators? How could a socialist forget who rides whom? And how could he claim that "virtually every critic of consumer or therapeutic society brings with him or her an ideological position and values representative of the older order"? Lewis Mumford, Robinson Jeffers, David Riesman, Paul Goodman and Allen Ginsberg, to mention just a few, can hardly be lumped together, let alone placed alongside unctuous fundamentalists and puritanical producer-capitalists. In fact, one could argue that a secularized puritanism is more evident in consumer culture than in its ablest critics, that the frantic imperatives of self-improvement and productivity have undermined the possibility for a genuine leisure ethic in twentieth-century America. The most powerful critiques of consumer culture have been rooted in longings for a realm of pleasure and freedom beyond the performance principle of advanced capitalism.

The best criticism realizes that consumer culture is more than the sum of individual purchases. It would be a dour and ridiculously superficial criticism that only saw the individual consumer, buying a new dress or enjoying a good meal. Criticism ought to target the systemic features of consumer culture—the pressures organized to promote a way of life characterized by relentless getting and spending, at the expense of human and natural resources, for the primary benefit of the elite.

The fundamental problem with Sus-

man's introductory essay is that it fails to do justice to the complexity of his own vision, which at its best broke free of binary categories like scarcity and abundance, oppression and emancipation. He was never content with formulas. In a profession wedded to the safe and solid he preserved a spirit of in-

tellectual daring. And he carried on the contentious conversation that is the heart of historical discourse. He was sui generis. I shall remember his independent voice rising above the busy hum of professionalism. I learned a lot from Warren Susman, and I shall miss him very much. □

Freedom's Rider

DAVID J. GARROW

LAY BARE THE HEART: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement. By James Farmer. Arbor House. 370 pp. \$16.95.

Civil rights anniversaries occur frequently now: twenty years since Selma and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, twenty-five since the student lunch-counter sit-ins, thirty since the start of the Montgomery bus boycott. Such occasions, including the annual celebration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday, enable us to commemorate the courage and achievements of the movement, but they also raise an important question: Is the movement's significance for the future being obscured by celebrations that dwell on the least revolutionary aspects of its past?

That danger can be seen not only in Ronald Reagan's belated embrace of the bill designating King's birthday a Federal holiday but also in speeches by Reagan appointees describing the movement as if it sought simply the elimination of racial discrimination, trumpeted a "colorblind" approach to American society and was concerned only with "opportunity" and not with substantive results. According to this view, civil rights activists had won everything on their agenda by 1968. Such a version of history not only mutes the movement's radicalism, it also aids the regressive policies of the current Administration.

James Farmer's beautifully written autobiography is an excellent antidote to this rewriting of history. Consistently frank about his own shortcomings as well as those of others, Farmer, who

served as national director of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) from 1961 to 1966, offers a view from the movement's upper reaches. His years of public prominence are described along with the story of his more private and personal disappointments in a way that makes his book both a valuable memoir of a movement and a classic autobiography.

Farmer begins by recounting the Freedom Ride of 1961 which brought CORE to national attention and forced the Kennedy Administration to act when the Freedom Riders were attacked by white mobs in Alabama. He then returns to his beginnings, describing his pleasant and relatively privileged childhood as the eldest son of a peripatetic religion professor whose Ph.D. gave him special status in the black community. Farmer learned early that such rank counted for little in segregated Southern towns like Holly Springs, Mississippi, and Austin, Texas, where he spent his boyhood watching his father quietly accommodate himself to the indignities of racism.

Such experiences increased Farmer's appetite for change. He participated in national Methodist youth conferences, attended the tumultuous National Negro Congress convention at which A. Philip Randolph quit as president, and served as national chair of the Youth Committee Against War. After graduating from Wiley College in Marshall, Texas, and obtaining another degree from Howard University's School of Religion, Farmer moved to Chicago in 1941 as race relations secretary for the Fellowship of Reconciliation (F.O.R.). He was 21.

A few months later Farmer and a white pacifist friend, Jimmy Robinson, discovered that the Jack Spratt Coffee House, a nearby restaurant, refused to serve blacks. Farmer was already drafting a memo to F.O.R.'s executive secretary, the Rev. A.J. Muste, recommend-

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ing the use of nonviolence against American racial injustice. With some friends, Farmer launched a peaceful occupation of the Jack Spratt—the movement's first sit-in—and succeeded in winning service for black patrons. When F.O.R. hesitated to endorse Farmer's proposal for mobilizing mass opposition to racial discrimination, the Chicago activists established CORE as a supplementary group dedicated to combating racism with nonviolence.

Farmer left F.O.R.'s staff in 1945, following further differences with Muste. He had a brief and unhappy marriage, worked as an organizer for the A.F.L. Upholsterers' International Union for a short while and endured recurring bouts of unemployment until he remarried in 1949 and took a job as student secretary of the League for Industrial Democracy in New York City. Six years later he shifted to the payroll of Jerry Wurf's District Council 37. All the while, Farmer and his small band of colleagues—Bernice Fisher, Robinson, George Houser, Jim Peck, Farmer's second wife, Lula—kept CORE quietly alive as a pacifist voice on the racial front. But with no full-time staff and little coordination between its small, scattered local chapters, CORE was not pursuing the direct action program Farmer had envisioned.

In 1959 Farmer joined the national staff of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, just as the civil rights movement was about to blossom and competitive tensions were emerging between the N.A.A.C.P. hierarchy and the indigenous, non-bureaucratic, protest-oriented Southern activists inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. Though the tensions were rooted in profound differences of strategy—whether black freedom should be pursued principally through court litigation managed by a lawyerly elite or through grass-roots activism initiated by thousands of people—Farmer saw that many of the disputes were petty and personal or motivated by competition for funds. His account sheds valuable light on how narrow organizational interests can create rifts in a social protest movement. It also highlights the inevitable tensions between urgent activism and organization building.

Early in 1961, with the Southern movement in full gear, Farmer's closest friends in CORE realized that the organization needed a forceful spokesman and a new image if it were to play a

major role in the black freedom struggle, and they named him national director. Almost immediately Farmer and his small staff mapped out what Farmer christened the Freedom Ride, an interstate bus trip through the South by a small, integrated group of nonviolent activists intent on testing whether bus station facilities had complied with Supreme Court orders to eliminate segregation. Patterned after F.O.R.'s 1947 Journey of Reconciliation, the Freedom Ride made it from Washington to Alabama before meeting violent resistance from segregationist mobs. One bus was firebombed near Anniston, and Riders on a second were badly beaten when it arrived in Birmingham. Student activists from Nashville, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), came to CORE's aid by dispatching a new band of Riders to Birmingham and Montgomery, where another mob assaulted them and then trapped them in a church. Only the arrival of Federal marshals and National Guardsmen halted the attacks, and the Riders received intensive police protection on their journey from Montgomery to Jackson, Mississippi, where they were arrested and jailed.

News coverage of the attacks put CORE and Farmer in the national spotlight. Having missed the Ride into Alabama because of his father's death, Farmer confesses that he was very reluctant to join the Jackson trip; he boarded the bus only at the last moment after another participant shamed him into riding. Nevertheless, the Ride's dramatic success placed CORE, and SNCC, at the movement's cutting edge and cast Farmer as one of the "big six" leaders, along with Randolph, King, Roy Wilkins of the N.A.A.C.P., Whitney Young of the National Urban League and SNCC's John Lewis. "The greatest tactical oversight of my life," Farmer says, "was that I did not at that time move for a merger between CORE and SNCC." That step "would have unified the action wing of the movement" and given those activists a stronger foundation against efforts to undercut them.

Farmer's account of the period from 1961 to 1965 details the "internal snipings and power plays" that plagued the movement, but it also offers sensitive and compelling portraits of people such as King and Wilkins, and valuable accounts of a diffident John Kennedy

and an unpredictable Lyndon Johnson. (Some readers will want to supplement Farmer's account of the internal divisions that CORE's sudden growth created by examining August Meier and Elliott Rudwick's encyclopedic *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968*.) Farmer also offers an important portrait of Malcolm X, with whom only Farmer among the main-line leadership developed a significant personal relationship.

Although Farmer's habit of self-criticism sets this book apart from most others of its genre, there are instances where he ought to have said more. He makes only a passing reference to his friend Jay Richard Kennedy, who secretly channeled significant information on the movement to the Central Intelligence Agency, and he notes, but does not reflect on, how he allowed CORE to develop a relationship with F.B.I. executive Cartha (Deke) DeLoach, who warned Farmer of communist infiltration of CORE. Although CORE was not alone among liberal organizations in having such a relationship and Farmer's firm anticommunism went back as far as 1944, when he had argued successfully for an exclusionary provision in CORE's constitution, he nevertheless offers no reflections on this association beyond noting that he fired at least one staffer about whom DeLoach briefed him.

Farmer left CORE early in 1966, expecting to head up a major adult literacy drive, only to be embarrassed when Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and President Johnson joined forces to block Federal funding at the last moment. Two years later Farmer endured an ill-fated Brooklyn Congressional race against Shirley Chisholm before serving as an assistant secretary of Health, Education and Welfare during the first two years of the Nixon Presidency. Farmer emphasizes that movement friends wanted at least one ally inside the Republican Administration, but the job also gave him a prominence he had not had since leaving CORE. Increasingly uncomfortable in an Administration which had very few black officeholders but sought his endorsement of the nomination of segregationist G. Harold Carswell to the Supreme Court, Farmer resigned in late 1970. A man in his early 50s with no regular employment and with his wife gradually losing her battle against Hodgkin's disease, Farmer experienced

a combination of economic insecurity and emotional torment. In 1975, thanks to his old friend Jerry Wurf, Farmer became executive director of the Coalition of American Public Employees, a post he held until Wurf's death in 1981.

The most impressive aspect of Farmer's autobiography is the frankness with which he discusses his errors and regrets. The movement's best activists, especially King, were resolutely self-critical. Farmer was one of them: he painfully catalogues his mistakes and vulnerabilities, focusing more on his personal life than on his political choices. That honesty gives the book an emotional intensity that few volumes possess. Nowhere is that force more powerful than in the concluding pages, in which Farmer describes the emotional turmoil he experienced after his wife's death in 1976 and during his own battle with an eye ailment that has left him almost completely blind. So compelling are those passages that, for me, they excuse the fact that Farmer has not been as harsh on his public self as on his private one.

"Martin left us with a dream unrealized and a promise unfulfilled," Farmer writes in his epilogue. "Our nation

deceives itself with the fiction that the task is complete and racism is dead and all is well." Some will try to convince us that the movement was a fully successful and typically American reform effort, demonstrating the ultimate perfectibility of American society. Those propagandists conveniently ignore King's repeated warnings, during the last years of his life, that his 1963 dream had "turned into a nightmare," and that America required an economic restructuring if the movement's vision of a new society was to succeed. Farmer's magnificent memoir is a stirring recapitulation of what was best about the movement, as well as a frank warning about the obstacles any social movement must confront. "The 'rainbow coalition' has not come together, and it will not be driven into formation by expansive rhetoric," Farmer concludes. "It will require careful and patient nurturing and sophisticated knowledge of how coalitions work." This book offers some excellent guideposts along these lines, while demonstrating an even more central truth: the spiritual fortitude illustrated by a King or a Farmer is the most valuable attribute in the struggle for social justice. □

life in the contemporary Guatemalan bloodbath. Each book is a different strand of the same fabric: one provides an overview of the nation's turbulent present, the other examines the experiences of a single family rent by its terror.

Garrison Guatemala describes how the right-wing military officers who were imposed on Guatemala by the C.I.A. following the 1954 coup have struggled savagely to hold on to their power by eradicating practically all opposition under the guise of "combatting communism." The underlying theme is that these men have been unable to bend reality to their dictates. They have been thwarted by three stubborn facts: a widespread resentment over the inequitable distribution of land in a country where 10 percent of the property owners hold 80 percent of the arable soil; the huge landless Mayan population—more than half Guatemala's 7 million people—which is exploitable but culturally resistant; and the pressure for a return to democracy by local political parties, segments of the guerrilla movement and world opinion.

Thus, according to *Garrison Guatemala*, the postcoup period is a series of increasingly bloody attempts by a succession of Pinochet-style generals to shore up their fortress against change. Through the late 1950s and 1960s, they followed a formula. They built up export crops like coffee, permitted unrestrained foreign investment, fortified the government with U.S. military and economic aid, and repressed dissent. But the cost was high in alienation.

By the 1970s, the authors report, the army was no longer able to contain the dissidents. For one thing, the country experienced a series of reversals: the oil price hikes in 1973; the escalating greed of the military, which led to a break with its business allies; and the collapse of world markets for cash crops like coffee, sugar and cotton. At this point the nascent rebellion grew confident, especially since its guerrilla leaders were more sophisticated than the erratic insurrectionists of yore. These guerrillas now seek, according to *Garrison Guatemala*, a "prolonged popular war, based on the general mobilization of the populace, and the creation of a self-sufficient infrastructure."

Not unexpectedly, the military has reacted with increasing barbarity. A succession of generals in the 1970s—Carlos Arana Osorio, Kjell Laugerud

After the Coup

STEPHEN SCHLESINGER

GARRISON GUATEMALA. By George Black, with Milton Jamail and Norma Stoltz Chinchilla. Monthly Review Press. 198 pp. \$9.

I, RIGOBERTA MENCHU: An Indian Woman in Guatemala. Edited by Elisabeth Burgos-Debray. Translated by Ann Wright. Verso/Schocken. 251 pp. \$25. Paper \$8.95.

Sometimes a single, cataclysmic event can stain the history of a nation forever. For Guatemala, the largest and most populous nation in Central America, U.S. involvement in the coup of 1954 ended ten years of freely elected government and left on that country a mark that suc-

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ceeding generations will have trouble removing.

There have been a number of studies of the American intervention in Guatemala, but little attention has been paid to its lasting impact on the Guatemalan people themselves. In the mid-1970s the North American Congress on Latin America issued a path-breaking report, *Guatemala: "And So Victory Is Born Even in the Bitterest Hours,"* which traced the bloody course that Guatemalan society took from 1954 to 1974. Two Catholic missionaries, Thomas and Marjorie Melville, also studied the aftermath of the coup during the same period in their important book, *Guatemala: The Politics of Land Ownership.*

Now there are two new books which carry the story forward to the present. *Garrison Guatemala* is an intelligent dissection of the warfare that has claimed almost 100,000 Guatemalan lives over the last three decades. *I, Rigoberta Menchu: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* is a personal account of

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