

of leaders of yet another generation of young Ethiopians slowly changing into resolution."

Greenfield's account is an exciting one, surely the most reliable we have of the coup, but it is marred and dulled in several ways. First, as Greenfield himself puts it, "the truth is always hard to discover beneath the network of intrigue, deceit and secrecy which has typified Ethiopia for so long," and it's impossible to check the accuracy of the details in his narrative and conclusions. Moreover, his attempt to present both history and mythology confuses the story; at times it's not clear whether something happened or whether Ethiopians only believe it happened.

The book also is marred by the naïveté that Greenfield displays about Africa and its young elite. He continually throws in asides about the democratic fervor of African nationalists outside Ethiopia and about the anger of educated, young Ethiopians toward the privileges of the ruling class. In this, Greenfield takes on the delusions of his hero, Girmamé. The truth is that most African leaders have about as much fervor for democracy as does Haile Selassie; and most angry young Africans, including Ethiopians, lose their anger as soon as they are permitted to partake of some of the privileges. This does not mean that Greenfield is wrong about coming revolution in Ethiopia. But it does mean that democracy is unlikely to succeed the rule of the Emperor and that most angry young men will join the revolution only if rebellious military commanders lead them by the nose.

Finally, the book is dulled by Greenfield's attempt to relate the coup to 3,000 years of Ethiopian history. He probably was forced to do this because the book was commissioned as a volume in the "Praeger Library of African Affairs" series; to fit, the book had to seem like a comprehensive study of Ethiopia. The first half is a disorganized, surveyish glance at pre-1960 Ethiopia, written without grace. One should start the book on page 269.

Despite these blemishes, the book is important and will figure in the future of Ethiopia. The Ethiopian Government already has shown its distress by trying to persuade the British and American publishers to withdraw the book or at least tone it down. Copies are sure to be smuggled into Ethiopia soon and passed among the young elite, perhaps among frustrated militarists as well. While reporting the mythology of the coup, the book will have a part in perpetuating it.

## HOW IT WAS

### WHO SPEAKS FOR THE NEGRO? By

Robert Penn Warren. Random House. 454 pp. \$5.95.

#### Marvin M. Karpatkin

Robert Penn Warren does not answer the question posed by the title of his book. Nor does he presume to. The question is almost rhetorical, as the content of the book demonstrates. *Who Speaks for the Negro?* is much more accurately a book about various spokesmen for the Negro. At the same time, it adds up to a comprehensive and frequently penetrating study of Negro leadership and the civil rights movement (mostly South but also North).

The dominant motif, sounded early in the book, is that everything which is happening in race relations bears witness to the burial of Sambo:

... the supine, grateful, humble, irresponsible, unmanly, banjo-picking, servile, grinning, slack-jawed, docile, dependent, slow-witted, humorous, child-loving, childlike, watermelon-stealing, spiritual-singing, blamelessly fornicating, happy-go-lucky, hedonistic, faithful black servitor who sometimes might step out of character long enough to utter folk wisdom or bury the family silver to save it from the Yankees.

The format is a lengthy series of tape-recorded interviews, liberally interspersed with Warren's commentary, sometimes tangential, almost always relevant. It would be hard to find any significant omissions. Not unexpectedly, the long chapter, "The Big Brass," consists of interviews with the well-known national leadership: Adam Clayton Powell, Roy Wilkins, Whitney Young, James Forman, James Farmer, Martin Luther King, Wyatt Walker, Bayard Rustin and the late Malcolm X. Warren also interviews, in a chapter called "Leadership from the Periphery," writers James Baldwin and Ralph Ellison, bank president John Henry Wheeler, Carl T. Rowan, then USIA director, U.S. Court of Appeals Judge William H. Hastie, and Dr. Kenneth B. Clark.

Mississippi during the summer of 1964—where he first encounters the burial of Sambo—receives special attention. In addition to interviews with

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SNCC's Bob Moses, and Aaron Henry and Charles Evers of the NAACP, Warren gives his observations of meetings and other confrontations, as well as his evaluation of the 1964 summer project and the effectiveness of the voter-registration campaign.

A few provoking quotations by Warren are used to stimulate his interviewees to start talking. They are artfully selected so as to cause moral dilemmas—value conflicts—in those who are questioned. He recalls Myrdal's proposition that the situation today would have been vastly different if the defeated slaveholders after the Civil War had been financially compensated. He quotes the young W.E.B. DuBois (*The Souls of Black Folk*) on the "two-ness" of the American Negro: "two souls, two thoughts, two unrecconciled strivings, two warring ideals in one dark body. . . ." And he frequently returns to Kenneth Clark's critical evaluation of nonviolence. "The natural reaction to injustice, oppression and humiliation are bitterness and resentment. . . . It would seem, then, that any demand that the victims of oppression be required to love those who oppress them places an additional and probably intolerable psychological burden upon those victims."

Although only the Clark quotation is of immediate practical relevance, all three of them produce the calculated effect. Everybody talks into Mr. Warren's tape recorder; and in the course of commenting on Myrdal, DuBois and Kenneth Clark, a great deal is told about the speaker and about the part of the movement with which he is identified.

The other interviewees refused to let Professor Warren limit them to his three arbitrary dilemmas. Thus James Farmer does not brood about the DuBois "psychic split." He sees no problem of hyphenation. He articulates a position of almost classical cultural pluralism, "unity through diversity," when he tells Warren that for him there is no dilemma of duality.

Similarly, Martin Luther King, while recognizing the possible effectiveness of the Myrdal notion of compensation to the slaveholders, sees it within the context of "the tragedy of the whole system of slavery." (One may recall the neglected words of Lincoln's Second Inaugural. School children are taught to memorize, "With malice toward none; with charity for all. . . ." But the same Lincoln, in the same speech, cautioned that dispensation

of charity might have to wait "until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword. . . .")

Curiously enough, though Kenneth Clark's critique of King's nonviolence comes up in many interviews, when he interviews Clark, Warren doesn't even raise it. But Warren does maneuver Clark into an evaluation of John Brown, a very un-King-like figure, perhaps in an attempt to challenge Clark's rejection of nonviolence. Clark does not get caught in Warren's snare. His view of Brown as a madman and a murderer does not compel him to abandon his conviction that it is a delusion to regard love and nonviolence as the panaceas which will produce great social change. Clark sums it up: "I personally recoil from bloodshed, because I think it is just another form of human idiocy [but] the fact still remains that major social changes toward social justice in human history, have almost always come if not always through irrational and questionable methods." It is nevertheless one of the small faults of the book that after playing back to us the many interviews which defend King and criticize Clark (including Ralph Ellison, Aaron Henry, Dr. Felton Clark of Southern University, and King himself), Warren chose either not to question Clark on this topic, or to omit this portion of the tape.

Some of the interviews reveal only the predictable. Adam Clayton Powell emerges as a self-crowned king of the ghetto. (The biographical note provided Warren by Powell's staff recalls as one of the turning points of his life, when the young Crown Prince was forced to vacate a college dormitory which he shared with a white roommate, notwithstanding the fact that "we had drunk out of the same bottle and slept with the same women. . . .") But interviews with others provide hitherto unseen glimpses into character and personality: Whitney Young, executive director of the Urban League, is much given to self-quotations, references to his own writings and speeches, and there is almost an implicit assumption that he and the Urban League are one.

In striking contrast, the sessions with James Farmer, Martin Luther King and Roy Wilkins reflect continuing tension among themselves and their constituencies, tensions of which they are very much aware. James Forman, on the other hand, comes across

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as reflecting with great fidelity the militance and impatience of SNCC. Warren is not very comfortable with Forman and SNCC, but he does try to appraise them fairly, concluding, perhaps with some condescension (of age, not of race) that Forman must be regarded as a "combat officer" in the war, and therefore his "absoluteness" can be excused.

Warren's final series of interviews is with selected young people in the movement. It is not clear if Warren intends this as some kind of juxtaposition of rank and file with leadership, or of fathers with sons, or if he intends to suggest that nobody "speaks" for the Negro, at least the young Negro. But regardless of commentary, the texts of some of these tapes are uncommonly eloquent.

Few in the movement, young or old, have been through as much as SNCC worker Stokeley Carmichael. He was born in Trinidad, reared partly in Harlem, partly in lower-middle-class East Bronx, the only Negro family among Italians, Jews and Irish. He had been involved with street gangs and narcotics; responded to the attractions of the middle-class intellectuals and radicals at Bronx High School of Science; and was graduated from Howard, majoring in philosophy. When he describes how he was lionized by white liberal friends, Carmichael at times sounds like a Negro Holden Caulfield.

But he is beyond Holden. In addition to sensing and describing the outside world with the same kind of youthful lucidity and anti-hypocrisy, Carmichael is also trying to change it. Here is his personal account of a lunch-counter sit-in:

*I can go on freedom rides, with people around me, and I can say, "Oh, yes, nothing is going to happen to me, it will be the guy next to me." But when you get alone, and you're sitting on that stool by yourself, and somebody's behind you, and you hear the knife clicking, hot coffee being poured down your back, and you're alone, you really begin to feel, "Why am I here, when is it going to end?" But just before that first punch, just before you get hit, that little period there just before, when tensions are building and you can't control your stomach, and it's jumping, you start thinking over and over again, "You know, maybe this is the way it is, when you're really alone."*

There are other very sharp images, particularly the sessions with Bob Moses, Lolis Elie (CORE lawyer in New Orleans), Malcolm X and Judge Hastie. But the principal value of the book is

that it is an authentic collection of primary material. Through the devices and format employed, Warren has in fact produced a representative anthology of the involved Negro leader talking about himself and his people.

Some errors were perhaps unavoidable. Norman Hill's resignation from CORE was not because he favored the 1964 election moratorium on demonstrations and "repudiated" Farmer in favor of the "responsible King-Wilkins-Young line"; it was for much more profound reasons of social and political orientation. Also, CORE is not the Committee but the Congress of Racial Equality. And the American Jewish Congress, notwithstanding its position on the Jewish community's outer perimeter of civil rights involvement, can hardly be called "ultra-liberal" because it filed an amicus brief in

support of the NAACP. Moreover, one can understand Mr. Warren's geniality to a fellow Southerner, but if he were interested in thoughtful Jewish comment on Jewish-Negro relations North and South, he should not have confined himself to Harry Golden's crack-barrel.

There is also a surprising stodginess and lack of felicity where it would not be expected; moreover, Mr. Warren can't resist some occasional pomposness. In his preface he relates a conversation in which he was asked why he thought his interviewees would tell him the truth. He answered: "Even a lie is a kind of truth."

But these are small points. The book's outstanding virtue, for now and in future years, is that it has with eloquent fidelity recorded the Negro voice telling how it was in the revolutionary years 1964-65.

## The Uneasy Silence

Paul Cowan

At the time, the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project seemed likely to provide the same kind of goad to the imagination of the present generation as the Spanish Civil War had to the generation of Hemingway and Malraux. It was an experience that provided all the materials for first-rate literature. A marvelous assortment of people—from Wall Street lawyers to Mississippi sharecroppers—shared unceasing dangers in a physically lovely setting: a state rich in a diversity of clashing traditions.

The people who had chosen to go South that summer were as literate and sensitive a group of Americans as one could hope to find. Most were college educated, and many had majored in the humanities. Their passion for human rights was primarily aesthetic: they were far more at home with words than with direct, brutalizing experience. It was the ideal setting for a novel of self-discovery, but no important long piece of fiction or short story has yet been published about the Mississippi summer.

There have been a handful of non-fiction books about the project. The collection of *Letters From Mississippi*, edited by Elizabeth Sutherland, splices together bits of the letters that a variety

of volunteers sent home. As a montage, it has a powerful effect and it will probably provide important material to future historians interested in the mid-1960s. But it is an instant book—designed for quick propaganda. So is the large, thin paperback volume, *Mississippi Black Paper*, a collection of affidavits which describe some of the atrocities that are part of daily life in the Magnolia State. These books were produced to serve a practical purpose. They set out to make real to readers in the North the ugliness of segregation, and the bravery of the people who try to combat it, with the aim of raising money and attracting support. For that reason they do not unearth the conflicts within the movement, personal and political, that still trouble many of the people who worked in Mississippi. It is just these conflicts that would have to be explored in any piece of serious fiction.

The single, full-length book that has been written by a Northern volunteer, *Freedom Summer* by Sally Belgrave, though well written is also a piece of partisan journalism. Miss Belgrave had gone to Mississippi with the intention of writing a book, and for this purpose she was lucky to be stationed in Greenwood, one of the toughest and most important towns in the state. Its external features she describes very well—the life in the freedom house there, the few frustrating contacts with local white people and the many satisfying friendships with

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