

PARTING THE WATERS: America in the King Years 1954-63 by Taylor Branch. Simon & Schuster. 1988. 1064 pp. \$24.95.

FREEDOM SUMMER by Doug McAdam. Oxford, 1988. 333 pp. \$24.95

Although an artfully shaped biography of Martin Luther King, Jr., would in itself be a signal accomplishment—and enough to distinguish it from David Garrow's earlier, prize-winning chronicle of King's career (*Bearing the Cross*, 1986)—Branch has done much more: He has given us the first history of the American civil rights movement worthy of its subject. Right from the opening chapter, a survey of black church politics in Reconstruction Montgomery and a brief account of the life of the great black Baptist leader, Vernon Johns (1892-1965), Branch pulls back history's veil, revealing the thousands of individuals whose actions, sometimes heroic, sometimes selfish, sometimes inadvertently helpful, make up what seem to be the inevitable march of events. What the Whig historians called Progress is arrested in specific places and moments of time—a bus-station melee in Birmingham, Alabama, an explosive con-



frontation on the campus of Ole Miss, a phone conversation between President John Kennedy and one of his federal agents in the field—in which outcomes were anything but certain. King emerges as no saint; we see, instead, a man who made himself strong and galvanized a movement despite his weaknesses. The brothers Kennedy come across as ambivalent allies of the civil rights struggle, and J. Edgar Hoover

plays what was surely his worst hour on the American political stage.

If the first volume of Branch's history takes on the big story, McAdam focusses on one small but significant chapter. "It was the longest nightmare I ever had: three months—June, July, and August of 1964," recalls one of the thousand volunteers (mostly white college students from the North) who headed to Mississippi that "Freedom Summer." Registering black voters and working in "Freedom Schools," these idealistic men and women encountered the same discrimination and violence that Mississippi blacks had long endured. The experience profoundly disturbed their faith in freedom, opportunity, and protection under American law. More important, notes McAdam, a University of Arizona sociologist, their involvement that summer determined many of the volunteers' lifelong commitment to reform. In the late 1960s, as militant blacks took over the civil rights movement, white volunteers found themselves without standing in the struggle that had changed their lives; but most found the idea of reentering mainstream society unpalatable. Many shifted their zeal to new causes—peace, feminism, and the environment. In doing so, McAdam concludes, "they remained faithful to the political vision that drew them to Mississippi nearly a quarter of a century ago."

A HISTORY OF ISLAMIC SOCIETIES by Ira M. Lapidus. Cambridge, 1988. 1002 pp. \$42.50

If *A History of Islamic Societies* were to appear in, say, Cairo, lumping together Christ's Middle East, Loyola's Spain, Russia of the Old Believers, and Jimmy Swaggart's fundamentalist South, it would be described as superficial. It would also mirror the way Islam is routinely treated in the West. No one should know this better than Lapidus, a University of California historian and author of *Muslim Cities in the Later Middle Ages* (1967). Yet he himself has taken on the whole of Islamic history, carving it up, like Caesar's Gaul, into three parts: the origins from the seventh to 13th centuries; the spread of the Islamic order from the 10th to 19th centuries; the 19th- and 20th-century

transformation of the Muslim peoples under the influence of nationalism, secularism, the industrial revolution, and European imperialism. Hubristic as it is, Lapidus's approach illuminates continuities. One learns how Islamic societies redefined "pre-Islamic institutional forms in Muslim cultural terms" and how religious and state institutions cooperated right up until the European intervention. Errors in a book of this scope are inevitable: The Crimean War broke out in 1853, not 1854. Ottoman rule did not "perpetuate" the social structures of the Balkan population; it radically altered them. Such flaws apart, this is a sound introduction—particularly to the Islamic society Lapidus knows best, the Arab Middle East.

Contemporary Affairs

REASON, IDEOLOGY, AND POLITICS by Shawn Rosenberg. Princeton, 1988. 255 pp. \$37.50

Traditional liberal political theory since Francis Bacon's day (1561–1626) rests upon a clear distinction between ideology and reason. The former is shaped by the individual's beliefs, irrational commitments which themselves are products of cultural conditioning or internal drives ("passions," the Enlightenment philosophers called them). Arrayed against ideology is reason—a neutral process of logical deduction based on clear, unbiased observation. The mature political thinker, according to this tradition, is one who subjects his beliefs to the cool light of reason. Rosenberg, a political scientist at the University of California, Irvine, is not the first to challenge the simplistic dichotomy of reason and ideology. But he has cleverly enlisted the ideas of psychologist Jean Piaget to show that ideology is "not a set of attitudes" but itself "a way of thinking," indeed of reasoning. Rosenberg, although a graceless writer, sets forth a useful typology. He defines three sorts of political reasoners—the sequential, the linear, the systematic—and explains how each constructs his understanding of the political arena. Then, in three different studies, he shows the various types in action. The reader is not surprised to find that Rosenberg judges systematic reasoners (who resemble political scientists in

their ability to think abstractly about political matters) the most evolved. But he leaves one wondering how well a nation comprised only of such individuals would fare.

THE OTHER PATH: The Invisible Revolution in the Third World by Hernando de Soto. Harper & Row, 1989. 256 pp. \$22.95

In 1985, 69 percent of the new houses in Lima, Peru, were built in defiance of strict regulations and codes. The strategies involved in this underground entrepreneurial effort are, according to economist de Soto, typical of a large "informal" movement underway in Peru and other parts of the Third World. De Soto not only describes the practices of the "informals" but also argues that they offer the most hopeful alternative to over-regulated, state-directed economies that exist throughout the underdeveloped world. Such regimes benefit only the powerful few who can influence the system. In the aggregate, however, the economies of such nations stagnate, as abundant evidence shows. But while lauding the successes of "informals" (in 1984, 91 percent of the buses in Lima were run by this renegade sector), de Soto finds that tremendous energy and money is wasted in their struggle against officialdom. Thus de Soto makes an eloquent plea for jettisoning bad laws and red tape, and making sure that laws are promulgated democratically and serve the interests of the majority. His proposals will almost certainly be an issue in Peru's 1990 presidential election: Novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, a likely presidential candidate, is one of their more vigorous proponents.

HEARTS AND MINDS: A Personal Chronicle of Race in America by Harry S. Ashmore. Seven Locks Press, 1988. 513pp. \$14.95.

White liberals were rare birds, especially on newspaper staffs, in the racially-segregated South during the 1950s. Notable among them was the *Arkansas Gazette's* Ashmore, born in Greenville, S.C. Ashmore won the Pulitzer Prize for his editorials on the stormy integration (by U.S. paratroopers) of Little Rock's Central High in 1957. Revised since its first appearance in