

# A Minority's New Militant Spirit

**"The Negro Revolt," by Louis E. Lomax** (Harper, 250 pp. \$4.50), *blasts the complacency of those who believe that the colored man is content to accept gradual integration. Arna Bontemps's latest book is "One Hundred Years of Negro Freedom."*

By ARNA BONTEMPS

THE SECOND book by the author of "The Reluctant African," which won last year's Anisfield-Wolf Award, is bright, topical, and provocative. Louis E. Lomax gets his literary spark from a grandmother who wrote religious plays. It shows, and it is a major asset. He can create drama. Only in this sense, in fact, is it possible to see the events growing out of the Montgomery bus boycott and the militant spirit it awakened (nonviolent, of course) as "a drastic change in our methods and ideas concerning segregation and established Negro leadership organizations."

Nonviolent resistance as a means of opposing segregation was tried repeatedly by Frederick Douglass more than a decade before the Civil War. He employed the sit-in when he made a practice of keeping his seat in "white" waiting rooms and sections of trains until removed bodily by authorities. Teachers from Tuskegee Institute, traveling out of Montgomery in the 1880s, were the original freedom riders, and they were supported strongly by Booker T. Washington! The NAACP picketed and used other public demonstrations before the First World War. A. Philip Randolph's March-on-Washington preceded Montgomery by a decade. The present crusade is moving not because of any new philosophy or any break in the lines of protest. It is moving because other factors have come into play, and efforts that formerly produced only limited results suddenly began to show spectacular returns. The enemy has grown weaker.

Lomax mentions in passing that "few white people have more than a headline acquaintance with the Negro, and even white liberals share the general white population's total ignorance of Negro history." He might have added that this, fully as much as the cardinal issue of segregation vs. integration, is at the heart of the problem. Those who

might otherwise be concerned simply don't know what "bugs" Negroes.

The first section of "The Negro Revolt" presents the author's own contribution toward the enlightenment. His background sketch is lively, personal, and readable. Then, without sufficiently crediting the NAACP for its long, patient (I would say, heroic) assault on the "separate but equal" doctrine that had held the Negro in quasi-slavery for the better part of a century, he nevertheless recreates the mood of the Fifties, where Negroes were concerned, and swings into a documentary of events that began December 1, 1955, when Mrs. Rosa Parks, colored, boarded the Cleveland Avenue bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and refused to give up her seat when the driver demanded it. What happened there and after has never been reported better, perhaps never so well.

Lomax's vignettes of the persons in the drama feature Martin Luther King most prominently, but they do not overlook Roy Wilkins of the NAACP, Malcolm X of the Black Muslims, or the leading figures in the activities of CORE, SNICK, SCLC, etc. Taking a

hard look at the personalities as well as the programs of each, Lomax notes a certain "magic" about King's articulation of the Negro's "tiredness," but suggests that students are growing impatient with him and that some older folks are critical—off the record. He shows Roy Wilkins and Henry Lee Moon of the NAACP reflecting sadly on problems raised by increasing competition for the leadership role in the Negro's struggle. "Let's face it," he has Wilkins say, "I am not a dramatic personality."

Moon adds, "You have to give it to CORE and Martin King; they know how to dramatize their wares."

THE conclusion Lomax reaches is "that Roy Wilkins went to jail twenty years too soon. In the mid-Forties, Roy was among those who were arrested while picketing Constitution Hall in Washington, D.C., because the Daughters of the American Revolution, managers of the hall, refused to allow Negro artists to perform there. The students who are now demanding militant action weren't born then, and they will be surprised to read here that Roy Wilkins was ever in jail for a civil rights cause."

One wonders about the future of any "revolt" that does not have a perspective of at least twenty years; Lomax holds no brief for the short view, but his sympathies seem to be with the youngsters and the oldsters who are leaving the old leadership behind.

## Walter Rosenstein: First Amy Loveman Award Winner

IT ALL happened at once to young Walter Rosenstein of Forest Hills, New York. He got married, graduated from Dickinson College, and captured the \$1,000 Amy Loveman Award (SR, Jan. 13, 1962) in a new national contest sponsored by the Book-of-the-Month Club, the Women's National Book Association, and the *Saturday Review* for the most outstanding personal library; and all within a period of three months.

Fifty-two colleges and universities across the land conducted preliminary contests among seniors, who, to compete, had to submit twenty-five-word annotations on each of the books in their respective libraries. Out of these emerged profiles of the individual libraries and their owners; and from them the profile most to the liking of Judges Rosemary Benét, John Winterich, Eleanor Smith, Ben Grauer, and Harry Hart was the Rosenstein. They agreed that his annotations showed an independence of (though not a rebellion against) faculty opinion that was

both refreshing and original. Their decision was based also on the growth factors inherent in Rosenstein's collection.

"My library is an organic thing," Rosenstein wrote in his presentation. "My ideal would resemble New York's Forty-Second Street Library on a smaller scale. It would contain the finest works in every field of human knowledge. It would have all the works of the great modern novelists from Flaubert to Salinger; the poets, starting with Baudelaire; the dramatists, beginning with Ibsen. These would predominate; but my interests are hardly exclusive, and I would have works on archeology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, history, art, politics, biography, and music.

"I am by no means a Renaissance man. I have little interest in science or architecture and I paint poorly; but I am curious about almost everything. It may be more profitable to know a great deal on one subject, but it is

(Continued on page 55)

## In Japan, Relief from Grief

**"A Bridge for Passing," by Pearl S. Buck** (John Day, 256 pp. \$4.50), tells of the comfort the novelist derived after the death of her husband by concerning herself with others. "George III: The Story of a Complex Man" is the most recent book by biographer J. C. Long.

By J. C. LONG

**P**EARL BUCK's beautifully written book contains in its short compass a triple message, and the three elements are so interwoven that no one theme predominates.

The springboard of Miss Buck's narrative is her experience as a participant in the American-Japanese motion picture production of her book "The Big Wave," and in that connection she notes that movie executives and actors are of the same breed the world over. Nevertheless, Miss Buck found a special charm in the modern Japanese: their customs, kindliness, artistic qualities, and technical skills. She regards the brutal era, when the military dragged Japan into World War II, as a passing and uncharacteristic phase. Also she reports that the American Occupation was carried on in a way to encourage friendship and confidence between the two peoples. Here is a message for international good will.

However, Miss Buck undertook this film to assuage her agony over the death of her husband. Anyone who has suffered the loss of a loved one knows that desperate feeling of finality and rebellion against fate. For them the novelist's experience reveals that time and active, sympathetic interest in the lives of others are the great healers.

Her book is in the tradition of widows who have a compulsion to exorcise the pain of their bereavement by public tribute to the one who has passed beyond. (There does not seem to have been the same compulsion in male writers.) Some may recall "An American Idyll," by Cornelia Parker, or, again, "Death of a Man," by Lael Wertenbaker. Those two women write in the spirit of stoical endurance. In contrast, in "A Man Called Peter" Catherine Marshall testifies to a great strength and benediction coming from the grace of God and assurance of the divine purpose.



—Reginald Davis.

Pearl S. Buck—"a triple message."

Pearl Buck's attitude lies somewhere between resignation and hope of

heaven. She considers herself to be scientific rather than religious; in fact, she seems hardly to have heard of the Christian affirmation of immortality. However, she accepts a belief in eternal life as a reasonable working hypothesis fully as reasonable as a negative insistence.

She writes:

I am trained in science. There are two schools in the approach. One is to believe the impossible an absolute unless and until it is proved the possible. The other is to believe the possible an absolute unless and until it is proved the impossible. I belong to the latter school. Therefore all things are possible until they are proved impossible—and even the impossible may only be so, as of now.

There is a third message in this book, namely, that for the man or woman who has had a disastrous first marriage the future nevertheless may hold romance. Both Pearl Buck and her husband, Richard J. Walsh, who had been president of The John Day Company which publishes Miss Buck, had been married previously and unsatisfactorily, and yet for twenty-five years they had a union of the greatest mutual devotion.

## She Was a Motherly Firebrand

**"Rebel in Paradise: A Biography of Emma Goldman," by Richard Drinnon** (University of Chicago Press, 314 pp. \$5.95), portrays a philosophical anarchist who fought against all restrictions of the human spirit. Earl Schenck Miers has written numerous books about United States history.

By EARL SCHENCK MIERS

**A** YOUNG scholar with a becoming mission—to root out the fear-mongers who fear nothing so much as freedom itself—is the subject of this undertaking; and in presenting her Mr. Drinnon tends upon occasion to use words and thoughts as Cassius Clay once used a bowie knife. Yet any biography of Emma Goldman merits this quality; her lifetime of anarchism was nothing if not explosive. No one ever was going to tell Emma that the God-intended role of women on earth was to "keep their mouths shut and their wombs open"; to the pious Theodore Roosevelt she was, to say the least, "a

mental as well as a moral pervert," and the suspicion that all by herself Emma might destroy the American government haunted the dreams of J. Edgar Hoover.

What Emma's critics never guessed was how deeply she loved America. True, she attempted a bit of prostitution to buy the gun with which her lover tried to put a bullet into Frick's belly during the Homestead Strike, but this was an outburst of girlish violence she later regretted. Indeed, as the years wore on and the innate motherliness in Emma emerged, nonviolence became the core of her credo. She developed increasingly into a philosophical anarchist who fought anything that restricted the human spirit—government, religion, social custom—and she fought so well that no conformist could hear her name without shuddering. A poor soldier in St. Louis, who shook hands with Emma after a lecture because she had made him think, soon got what he deserved for this kind of G.I. nonconformity—a court-martial.

Mr. Drinnon employs Emma both as a person and a symbol. As a person, she has warmth and strength and cour-