

The result was an emphasis on winning that showed no sense of restraint. Audiences chanted, "U.S.A., U.S.A.," like students at a high-school rally; television announcers openly rooted for American teams; American athletes seemed to feel naked unless they were waving or wearing an American flag.

To the smaller countries we defeated, especially in such previously weak American sports as gymnastics, the vaunting of our athletic programs was clear. But to the TV audiences that had watched the American army defeated by pajama-clad Vietnamese and American diplomats held hostage by Iranian students, the Olympic victories carried a second and more important message. "Man for man" we are still "better" than the rest of the world, they said. In open competition they remain our inferiors.

Acceptable Imperialism • In the post-Vietnam world, the lessons of Vietnam cannot be totally ignored. We have had to accept limits. Invade Angola and risk getting bogged down in Africa. Invade Iran and risk the lives of hostages. Do much more than mine the harbors of Nicaragua and risk the Vietnamizing of Central America. But Grenada offered none of these problems. Grenada was a safe bet. An island with a population equal to Albany's, it had no significant army. And at a time when the terrorist bombing of the Marine base in Beirut had revived memories of America as a helpless giant, it presented itself as the perfect target for invasion. The overthrow of its pro-Cuban government by a second government we opposed was a dubious excuse for such an undertaking, but in the context of the New Grandeur such considerations were beside the point.

John Lewis

Mississippi Freedom Summer — 20 Years Later

John Lewis was one of the early leaders of the civil rights movement, and especially active in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). He is today a member of the City Council of Atlanta, Georgia.

The America of 20 years ago experienced one of the most moving and exciting times in our nation's history. It was a period of hope but also of pain and suffering, of crisis and confrontation.

The sit-ins, freedom rides, and the civil rights movement in Birmingham where Police Commissioner Bull Connor met peaceful demonstrations with fire hoses and snarling police dogs, and the murder of three civil rights workers in Mississippi had created a moral and political climate demanding meaningful legislative action.

In the fall of 1963, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) conducted a mock election in Mississippi to dramatize the fact that there were only about 22,000 black people registered out of a black voting-age population of more than 450,000. Over a two-day period, almost 200,000 black citizens throughout the state gathered in

churches, community centers, barber and beauty shops to cast their votes for Aaron Henry, a leader of the NAACP in the state, "for governor," and the Reverend Edwin King, a white chaplain at Tougaloo, a predominantly black college, "for lieutenant-governor." This mock election did point out the fact that if black people could vote, they would. Some whites had argued that blacks in Mississippi didn't want to participate in the democratic process. At times, all conceivable means were used to keep blacks from registering to vote.

After the mock election, we began to recruit students, teachers, lawyers, doctors, ministers and others to come to Mississippi and spend the summer working in the Freedom Schools. People were taught how to pass the so-called literacy tests, how to read and write, in order to register to vote.

THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER was an attempt to bring the nation to Mississippi, to open up the state and the South and bring the dirt of racism and violence from under the rug so all of America could see and deal with it. By June 1, 1964, we had more than 1,000 brave people spending the summer in Mississippi to work toward the building of an interracial democracy in the South.

Before the summer project was in full force, three of the civil rights workers—Michael Schwerner, a 24-year-old social worker from New York, James Chaney, a 21-year-old Mississippi black, both members of the Congress of Racial Equality, and Andrew Goodman, a 21-year-old student volunteer from New York—were missing. They had been

What Grenada provided was a chance to show that if we didn't have to worry about political complications, we could be decisive. Grenada could not undo the political complexities of Lebanon, but it could repair the frustration of Beirut. And in awarding (as if this, too, were an Olympic event) no less than 8,612 medals to those involved in the Grenada campaign, the Pentagon showed it knew what the invasion was truly about. In an age of constraints, it had found an acceptable imperialism.

The Unrepentant Vet • In the crippled vet John Voight plays in *Coming Home*, we had the new hero of the first post-Vietnam period. His wisdom consisted in the belief that he was seduced into fighting a war that should never have been fought, and in his crippledness he reminded us that his

wisdom had come at terrible cost. He made us feel bad about the war, but in the 1980s he has also become the kind of veteran we wish would have the grace to spend the rest of his days in a VA hospital.

The unrepentant vet of the New Grandeur has no such doubts about Vietnam and, as a stock character on prime-time television, he lets us know that we shouldn't either. For those who want to forget Vietnam, there is the beach-bum detective of *Magnum, P.I.* (Tom Selleck), who makes it clear that post-Vietnam America is so filled with opportunities to lead the easy life that any vet with initiative can make a place for himself. And for those who want to remember Vietnam positively, there is *The A Team*. A commando unit that served a brief term in prison on trumped-up charges, the integrated A Team shows how powerful a handful of Americans can be when the wraps

assigned to work out of Meridian. They left Meridian to drive about 50 miles to a place near Philadelphia in Neshoba County to inspect the ruins of a church that had been used as a Freedom School, and was burned down a few days earlier. Stopped for speeding by the deputy sheriff, they were arrested, jailed, fined, and released.

The news of the three missing civil rights workers created a sense of outrage.

In early August, the missing young men were found. Andy Goodman and Mickey Schwerner had been shot in the head. James Chaney had been brutally beaten to death. Near the end of 1964, the FBI arrested the same deputy sheriff and 20 other white men for participating in the crime, but the charges were dropped. Three years later, with additional information and a change in the political climate in the state, the deputy sheriff was convicted for engaging in a conspiracy to murder them. He served about four years in prison.

I met and knew these three young men briefly. All of us experienced a great deal of pain as a result of something like this happening in our own country. I often think of these three who gave their lives in Mississippi so black people could register to vote.

To win the right to vote meant passing literacy tests and facing lynch mobs. For black people, the right to vote cost a great price. Someone had to face hostile local officials and go to jail. Winning meant standing in unmoving lines outside county courthouses, facing abuse and hostility, losing jobs and homes just for the right to participate in the democratic system.

After the murders, we lived in Mississippi with the constant possibility that something could happen to any of us. During the summer many churches were bombed and burned, particularly black churches in small towns and rural communities that had been headquarters for Freedom Schools and for voter registration rallies. There was shooting at homes; we lived with constant fear. We felt that we were part of a nonviolent army, and in the group you had a sense of solidarity, and you knew you had to move on in spite of your fear.

I think for many of us, that summer in Mississippi was like guerrilla warfare. You knew that you had to prepare yourself, condition yourself, if you were going to be there. You knew that you were going to stay for a period of time, and there were going to be disappointments and setbacks. What we tried to instill, particularly among the young people coming down, was that even as they came there, we weren't going to change Mississippi in a summer or a year, that it was a much longer effort. In a sense we went down to help the people there, but no doubt they helped all of us a great deal; no question about that. Some of us literally grew up overnight because of being in positions of responsibility where we had to make decisions, we had to act.

I have often been asked what it felt like to participate in such a movement. I can remember many emotions—fear, anger, and sadness, but also hope, love, and compassion. Most of all, there was an all-pervading sense that one was involved in a movement larger than oneself, almost like a Holy Crusade, an idea whose time had come. □