



Mississippi

James W. Silver

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Mississippi: The Closed Society is a book about an insurrection in modern America, more particularly, about the social and historical background of that insurrection. It is written by a Mississippian who is a historian, and who, on September 30, 1962, witnessed the long night of riot that exploded on the campus of the University of Mississippi at Oxford, when students, and, later, adults with no connection with the University, attacked United States marshals sent to the campus to protect James H. Meredith, the first African American to attend Ole Miss.

In the first part of *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, Silver describes how the state's commitment to the doctrine of white supremacy led to a situation in which the Mississippian found that continued intransigence (and possibly violence) was the only course offered to him. In these chapters the author speaks in the more formal measures of the historian. In the second part of the book, "Some Letters from the Closed Society," he reproduces (among other correspondence and memoranda) a series of his letters to friends and family--and critics--in the days and weeks after the insurrection. Here he reveals himself more personally and forcefully. In both parts of the book are disclosed the mind and heart of the Mississippian who is as haunted as William Faulkner was by the moral chaos of his native land.

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