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The Delta Democrat-Times

New Racist Organization Terrorizes Several South Mississippi Counties

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A short fat man with greying crewcut hair thrusts a wrinkled and grimy piece of paper in front of a businessman, "These people must be fired from your firm," he says. "The organization does not approve of them."

The business man looks at the list and notes that two of the names represent employes he has known for 20 years, but he nods sad agreement to the demands just the same.

Germany, 1939? Russia today?

NO, AMITE County, Mississippi 1964.

The business man in question was lucky, he was afforded the courtesy of a personal visit from a representative of a new and mushrooming organization.

He might have received his first notice via a threatening phone call to his wife, or a non-too-subtle hint dropped by a "customer."

He agrees to the demands because he has seen what happens to those who do not.

In the early days of 1963, when the Society for The Preservation of the White Race was coming into its own across southern Mississippi, a few men did resist.

A Liberty merchant who could trace his family back to the earliest settlers of the community, an ardent church worker and a man known for his integrity refused a demand that he fire a longtime negro employe.

Within 24 hours a strangling boycott had been set up against his business.

THE SOCIETY stationed workers near his front door who copied the names of anyone who went into the business. Customers, many who had the highest respect for the besieged businessman, turned away rather than face the intimidation which shopping in the store meant.

As the weeks went by and the merchant found himself not only

on the brink of economic disaster but also effectively locked out of the town's social life, he gave in and fired the negro.

The society was not finished however, they wanted to make sure that such independence was punished to an extent that an example would be set.

The boycott went on a couple more weeks, with a few threatening phone calls thrown in to push the man's wife near nervous exhaustion.

OUTWARDLY, the society grows as any protest group with the American right to free assembly. They hire halls, publish notice of their meetings in the papers and invite speakers.

Visitors to the "open" meetings soon find that they must pass screening to attend the so called public meeting. The society is not interested in the curious. They want converts true, but of their choice.

As for the speakers, in news paper's notices they appear to be church and civic leaders, but often they turn out to be a hard core of hate mongers who all say the same thing as if they all read from the same script.

Once, the society announced that a leading churchman would be a guest speaker in Amite County. A Liberty minister took the opportunity to write to this speaker before the talk and begged him as a fellow man of God to preach love and understanding.

The speaker, with a smirk, read selections from a letter written to him by the pastor.

NEEDLESS to say, the local minister has been looking for a new church, in another city.

To indicate that Amite County or Liberty are the seats of this gestapo type group would be a distortion of facts, but these incidents are a sample of the spread of the movement.

Hitler found it true that decent

people hate to fight against intimidation and they will allow themselves to be pushed around like cattle for an incredibly long time — often until they have no chance left.

"Make them live in a valley of fear," Hitler told his faithful in 1939. "A valley guarded by our own men who will both be their only hope and the source of their fear."

Phone calls threatening in the night are far more effective than most people believe. When a voice mentions the ease with which a child could be hurt on the way to school, the husband finds it easy to knuckle down.

"The problem in this county," a society speaker told a gathering a month ago. "Is the fact we have Negroes living in this county. If they can be made to move away, we will have no further problems," he explained. "Most Negro families rent their homes from white people," he pointed out.

"**ALL WE** have to do is to make white people raise rents until the Negro is forced to move away. Of course we will do it gradually so that their loss will not effect our economy. We can start with the progressive Negroes, since they give us the most trouble," he concluded.

It is no nightmare that the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi and Louisiana could burn more than three hundred crosses in one night in several towns and escape without one single citizen who could testify that he saw even a hooded person.

There must be witnesses, the police tell us. No large scale movement can escape the chance of someone seeing them, but the old standby, intimidation has lowered a veil over citizens eyes.

Mississippians point with horror to the stories coming out

of New York about women being attacked in view of bystanders who would not lift a hand to help the victim, but it is no less a case of fear or apathy that saves the KKK and the Society for The Preservation of The White Race from resistance.

COUNTLESS crimes, ranging from the burning of business establishments in Pike County recently, and the bombing of a Negro barber shop in McComb, to the bombing of a Negro motel in Hinds County have been accomplished with a frightening immunity. No one sees anything, says anything or does anything.

Certainly denied evidence, no one can with justice blame these on any particular organization, regardless of the reputation for such violence.

Since the man who hurls the bomb, or makes the call is seldom exposed, the citizens themselves will have to bear both the blame and the hardships of allowing these things to happen.

One thing is certain, the KKK and the Society for The Preservation of The White Race are strong and are growing stronger. Their growth, like that of any secret or semi-secret society, depends on public apathy and fear.