Misc II - KKK

Racial Incidents in Pensacola Prompt Attempts by Klan to Get New Members

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By WAYNE KING
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PENSACOLA, Fla., March 16 —C. E. Carroll, who identified himself as Titan of Provinces 5 and 6 of the United Klans of America, stood in the middle of the little repair shop just west of the Pensacola city line and explained the organizing tenets of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.

"You look around," he said, "and find a good, patriotic, white-skinned American."

"We organize for the same reasons that anybody organizes, for the power of people of kindred thought."

Around Pensacola, he said, that kindred thought was "support of peace officers who are being harassed and run off from their jobs by the blacks and Communists."

The potential for Klan organization around Pensacola, he said, is "good."

"One race or the other," he said, "has to be assigned to be superior and that ought to be the white man."

Several of the 21 men gathered around the Klan organizer in the little garage muttered agreement.

Series of Incidents

The small Klan organizing meeting here over the weekend was the latest occurrence in a racial situation that has all the characteristics of the South in the turbulent days of the early nineteen-sixties.

For two months, blacks have taken to the streets in sporadic demonstrations against the Escambia County Sheriff's Department, demanding the dismissal first of a deputy who shot a young black to death and later of the head of the department's riot squad who was quoted as making a seriously racist remark to a newspaper reporter.

The sheriff's department has refused to meet the black demands.

A circuit court judge has enjoined the blacks from demonstrating on county property, nearly 50 demonstrators were arrested after a mass march, shots have been fired into a state attorney's home and a brick was thrown through the window of a black leader.

Confrontations between the police and demonstrators have for the most part been relatively minor, although some scuffling has occurred. Blacks complain of brutality and several clubs have been confiscated from demonstrators.

Two marches last week were called off without explanation, but black leaders—all ministers —have vowed to continue. Pensacola is about 30 per cent black.

The open animosities began late last year with the drowning deaths of five Atlanta men on a fishing trip off Pensacola and the unrelated slaying of an apparently armed black man by a sheriff's deputy.

The drowning deaths were ruled accidental, but civil rights leaders in Atlanta, notably the Rev. Ralph David Abernathy of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, maintained that the men were murdered. The assumption was based on an allegation that the men had had a quarrel with the white owner of a bait shop and on some peculiarities surrounding the deaths—a cut anchor rope in the men's boat, the fact that they were experienced fishermen but did not wear life jackets, and other contradictions.

Most of these were resolved, however, and inquiries by Federal and other officials as well as newspaper inquiries found no basis for any suggestion of foul play.

Black leaders, however, continue to maintain that there is a widespread conspiracy to cover up racially motivated slayings.

The killing of the young black man, Wendell Sylvester Blackwell, occurred Dec. 20 after a high-speed chase resulting from a traffic violation.

Called Self-Defense

Mr. Blackwell was shot once in the head by Escambia Deputy Douglas Raines. A small pistol was beside the body when it was found later and the deputy said he had fired in self-defense.

A grand jury ruled the killing justifiable, but black leaders, most notably the Rev. H. K. Matthews of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference here, maintained the killing was "cold-blooded murder."

He was joined by other local black leaders and ultimately by the Rev. R. N. Gooden of Tallahassee, a field director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

A number of marches, accompanied by chants, handclapping and the freedom song "We Shall Overcome," have been conducted at intervals ever since, most culminating at the county jail. Up to 500 demonstrators have taken part.

Mr. Matthews has vowed to continue the marches until the deputy is removed.

He, along with 46 other persons, was arrested and jailed briefly three weeks ago for violating an injunction not to demonstrate at the jail. Most were charged with unlawful assembly. Several clubs and two knives were confiscated.

Mr. Brooks, however, was also charged with extortion, resulting from a chant by blacks —"two, four, six, eight, who are we gonna assassinate"— the authorities chose to interpret it as a threat unless Deputy Raines was dismissed. A hearing is set for April 17.

The racial feeling was exacerbated later when a St. Petersburg Times reporter quoted Sgt. James Edson, head of the Escambia riot control squad, as saying deputies planned to play a new game called "Selma" at the jail:

"You grab a club and hit a nigger. Now, I don't want you to think I'm a racist, I like black folks. In fact, I'd like to have two of them in my back yard for the dogs to play with. Niggers are better than milkbones."

Blacks demanded his dismissal.

Sergeant Edson denied making the remark and was corroborated initially by a local radio news director, Randall Hinton, who said that he was with Sergeant Edson and the reporter at the time and that the remark was not made.

Admitted Untruth

On Friday, however, Mr. Hinton, confronted with a tape-recording of undisclosed origin and contents, admitted he had not told the truth and the remark had indeed been made. He offered his resignation to the station.

The sheriff, Royal Intreiner, could not be reached for comment on what he intended to do, if anything, in the matter.

A Deputy Young assigned to look in at the Klan meeting over the weekend said he thought the racial problems were exaggerated.

"Some of my best friends are black," he said. Why, I had lunch with one today."

At the meeting, after greeting some of the would-be initiates he was acquainted with, the deputy diplomatically agreed that "the white people have to stick together" and withdrew before the meeting started.

Black leaders say the demonstrations will continue, probably this week.