CITADEL OF THE CITIZENS COUNCIL

While other Southern states move toward at least token desegregation, in Mississippi the die-hard white-supremacists are firmly in control.

By HODDING CARTER III

GREENVILLE, Miss. —

THE roll-call of Southern communities which have begun at least token public-school integration in response to Federal court orders has significantly lengthened this fall with the peaceful desegregation of schools in Dallas, Memphis, Atlanta, and the Deep South was shattered for the first time since the days of Reconstruction, the overall pattern of the late 1950's involved was not impressive, the psychological effect on the rest of the Black Belt South was immense.

But one state, which shares with Arkansas and South Carolina the distinction of maintaining total segregation at all levels in the public schools, still does not have any signs of yielding. The most vocal Southern States have gradually begun to accept as inevitable. The state is Mississippi. After seven years of mounting pressure, it is virtually impossible to find any public manifestations of the familiar many whites are privately expressing:

As the pressure intensified, in fact, Mississippi resistance has tended to stiffen rather than crumble. It is the one Southern state which showed a completely unified front in defying the recent interstate Commerce Commission ruling on the desegregation of interstate facilities. State laws were invaded in every city and county as segregation in the local waiting rooms and terminal restrooms and in the Justice Department promptly asked Federal courts for a restraining order, there was little doubt that resistance will be maintained until the last legal maneuver is exhausted.

The observer would be hard pressed to find a major change among the segregationist forces. There is a handful of white dissidents, and there is a growing number of blacks who are aware of the injustices but neither is formed into a strength that can influence greatly. Support for the continuation of segregation in Mississippi is pervasive, sometimes subtle and only mentally strong:

For instance, members of the state council's influence in the state government. Perhaps most significant is the fact that William Simmons, editor of the Council's newspaper and administrator of the state council association, has become a constant companion of Governor Barnett, traveling with him when he makes out-of-state talks (many of which Simmsen reputedly writes and sits in as "observer") at most meetings of the Sovereignty Commission.

During the last regular session of the legislature in 1960, that body acted as little more than a rubber stamp for bills which had council endorsement.

One gave local Negro official the right to secede from their parent churches, taking church property with them, if they found themselves in conflict with the national denominations' doctrines.

It was passed despite claims that it violated the constitutional separation of church and state. And that Governor Barnett's major appointments were of men who were on the Council's church groups,

Individual communities vary from town to town, but the general pattern is much the same. One may screen new members more rigorously than another; some are relatively inactive. Most hold annual membership meetings during which they make heavy use of newspaper advertising. One Council advertised that prospective member need merely "walk into the back." In another town, a membership application could be filled out at the local hotel. In countless restaurants across the state, Citizens Council literature can be picked up with the toothpicks at the checker's counter.

The local organization's president is invariably a prominent citizen, and the board of directors is drawn largely from the community's Who's Who. When meetings are held, which isn't often, the same rough form of Robert's Rules of Order followed in most civic clubs is observed. The chairman begins by calling the meeting—most often a Baptist—for a prayer. Committee reports, if any, are heard, and the main business of the evening follows.

A few members of the Council's literature can be picked up at Александр 12, 1961

As often as not, the meeting will be open to the public, and will feature a main speaker and several lesser lights. The featured attraction is a vitality often expressed continued adherence to segregation and state's rights, like the Supreme Court, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, church groups, newspapers and "moderates" and state board of education ends with a call for a united front of dues-paying members to stem the tide of change.

At a typical meeting, the main order of business may be anything from a discussion of the difficulties of collecting dues to the formulation of a plan to deal with a local white or Negro "trouble-maker." One or two hoots will jump up and let lone with impassioned speeches calling for radical and immediate action—usually a midnight call on the offender. The conservatives then will make themselves heard, calm down the fire-brands and sponsor the proposal.

As a result of the perpetuation of conservative control, no act of racial violence in Mississippi has ever been directly connected to the Citizens Council. These incidents that have occurred may be indirectly traceable to the climate engendered by the Council, but it is a theoretical relationship. The Council has found it doesn't need to operate that way to get results. Initially, the most of economic pressure against noncooperating whites and Negroes was the main weapon, and to some extent it is still used, particularly against Negroes. But as the Council has developed it has found that the taxation of moderate and liberal whites from the rest of the white community and the complete destruction of interracial communities is far easier and far easier to accomplish.

To a degree which is hard to convey to someone who does not live in Mississippi, the Citizens Council has managed to divert the mystique of most white Mississippians for integration. A model with which includes the total rejection of any deviation from the status quo. Blind adherence to "our way of life"—to the re-emergence of the Citizens Council's