Citadel of the Citizens Council

While other Southern states move toward at least token desegregation, in Mississippi the diehard 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 was significantly lengthened this fall with the peaceful desegregation of scenes in Dallas, Memphis and Atlanta.

In the last two cities, massive resistance on the second day of school in the Deep South was shattered for the moment, but nonetheless the psychological effect on the rest of the state is Mississippi. After seven years of mounting pressure, it is virtually impossible to find any public manifestations of the falsity many whites are privately expressing.

As the pressure has intensified, in fact, the 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 ignored in every city and county, and school segregation in the local waiting rooms and terminal restaurants was not affected.

The Justice Department promptly asked Federal courts for a restraining order, which was little more than lip service will be maintained until the last legal maneuver is exhausted.

The observer would be hard pressed to find a major civic group supporting an integrationist solution. There is a handful of white dissidents, and there is a growing number of blacks who at least publicly support integration, but neither is formed into a strength that can influence greatly. Support for the continuation of segregation in Mississippi is pervasive, sometimes subtle and immensely strong.

It is difficult to explain to an outsider just how powerful a force this white-supremacy group has become. Perhaps the hardest point to grasp is that the Citizens Council in Mississippi can do what it wants, merely because of its undisguised methods or delusional philosophy—it is not made up of hooded Hate Mobs or meeting furtively in back alleys.

Its leadership is drawn not from the pool but from the country clubs. Its membership generally reflects the attitudes of the middle and upper classes rather than of the poor white. And its aims are stated in violent language but in the careful embroidery of states rights and constitutionalism.

In fact, when the first Council was formed seven years ago by a group of community leaders in the Delta town of Indiana, one central purpose was to retain control of resistance to desegregation in the hands of the "better people." Then, it was a semi-secret society. Today, membership in the Citizens Council has come to be a symbol of membership in the Rotary or Lions Club. It is such an accepted mark of distinction, in fact, that many candidates for public or organizational office carefully add their participation in the Council to their listings of civic enterprises in which they have engaged.

The Council's control of the state was formalized in August, 1959. In that month, Ross Barnett—a former Governor of Mississippi—召开 the state's first Citizens Council.

Others of its dramatic accomplishments were the marathon victory over integration November, by a state of Presidential "free electors" who eventually cast the state's eight Electoral votes for Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia.

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Far more important to the Council's longer-term view, however, and better illustrative of its grasp on the state government, was the decision by the State Sovereignty Commission in late 1960 to donate $50,000 a month from state tax money to support its Council's radio and television programs.

The Council, Forum. The members of the commission, formed by the Legislature in 1956, to protect the sovereignty of the state of Mississippi, include the Governor, and are nearly to a man Council members.

The grant, combined with a lump sum donation of $20,000, has brought the Council nearly $100,000 from the public treasury.

Mississippi, thereby, is the only state in the nation whose residents are paying taxes specifically to perpetuate the Jim Crow system.

Mississippi's "state of the Union" is a mirror of the nation's—aristocratic and immensely strong.

Perhaps the most significant is the fact that William Simmons, editor of the Council's newspaper and state board of directors.

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

One gave local Negro councils the right to secede from their parent churches, taking church property with them, if lights. The featured attraction productive and far easier to do.

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