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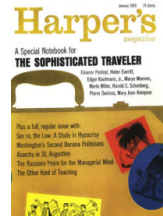
Anarchy in St. Augustine

By [Larry Goodwyn](#)

St. Augustine was born of the sea, cursed by the sea, caressed and plundered, made, destroyed, and reborn on the bosom of great waters . . .

These florid phrases of the St. Augustine Historical Society, designed to lure tourists to the nation's oldest city, have a curious pertinence this winter. Words like "cursed" and "plundered" and "destroyed" have come to apply not to what the sea has done to the Ancient City, but to what its inhabitants have done to themselves. After months of racial disorder, St. Augustine today is an exhausted little town, with worn-out people and a crippled economy; moreover, it is perhaps the most bitterly divided community on the North American continent. Massive hostility exists not only between the races, but also within the white population.

The city's institutions of law and order have cracked under the strain, its leading citizens are in despair, its terrorists have adopted new tactics after an orgy of early summer violence, and its Negro community — 4,000 in a city of 15,000 — is both wounded and determined.

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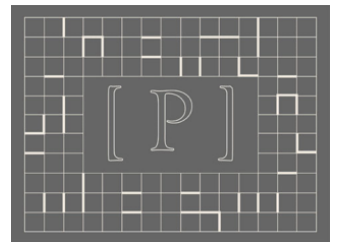
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But worst of all is the silent fear of ordinary men who know their lives depend on avoiding the threatened night ambushes, the Molotov cocktails, and the sniper attacks. St. Augustine's Negro leaders have lived with this fear for over a year, and, in the "quiet" days that followed the nationally publicized demonstrations, the same fear stalked those of the town's merchants and restaurant owners whose offense was in complying with the Civil Rights Act.

In the rapid evolution of the summer-long crisis, the manager of Monson's Motor Lodge, Jimmy Brock, became the victim of this irrationality. In June, Brock was the segregationists' hero after the nation's front pages carried photographs of him pouring a water purifier into the motel's pool while it was being "integrated" by Negro and white demonstrators. Yet one July night, after Brock served Negroes testing the Civil Rights Act, Molotov cocktails ignited the Negro community – 4,000 in a city of 15,000 – is both wounded and determined. Monson restaurant in a \$3,000 blaze; and in August, the chastened manager testified in the federal district court in Jacksonville that he was "a little frightened" and asked Judge Bryan Simpson to halt a line of questioning calculated to make him tell publicly who his tormentors were. It is a revealing commentary on lawlessness in North Florida that the judge, who had kept close tabs on the growth of organized violence over the months, granted his request.

By autumn, federal court orders against vigilante action had brought new hope but only a bare minimum of order. Weekly acts of violence against integrationists continued and so did the underground war of nerves against merchants. One white St. Augustinian confided, "We have absolutely no security against these people throwing a fire bomb at us sometime, someplace. Circumstances we used



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to take for granted just don't exist anymore. It is fashionable to talk about peace now — we've taken a \$7-million loss in the tourist trade, you know — but underneath there is this uneasiness you feel every time some nigger gets beaten up. You can't help thinking you might be next. But don't quote me."

Amid such anxiety, the inhabitants of St. Augustine grope for an explanation of their disaster and find it in outrage, buttressed by righteousness. Everyone has his scapegoat, but everyone wonders: How did it happen to us?

Implicit in this puzzle is a larger one: In the rural, old cotton South, reaching through Georgia and Alabama to the Mississippi delta and up the eastern shores of the Carolinas, there are a thousand towns and hamlets like St. Augustine, sharing the same attitudes, the same social structures, the same ferment among Negroes, the same relatively small area of maneuver in times of racial showdown. Will the tragedy of St. Augustine be repeated endlessly during the next few years across this rural heartland? Will most of these places also surrender to anarchy? Or can there be hope for a pattern of peaceful transition such as has taken place already in Gainesville and Daytona, both within sixty miles of St. Augustine? And are there lessons for the rest of the nation in what happened to America's oldest city?

I went to St. Augustine after the first hint of violence last May. With the requisite Southern accent and hopes for the special rapport it sometimes establishes for an "outsider," I wanted to find some answers — from the political and commercial leaders, from the integration forces, from the klansmen, from the sheriff, and from the nightly scenes at the slave market in the heart of the city.

But, ironically, the first thing any “outsider” finds in this tourist city is that he is not wanted. Police study his press credentials minutely and volunteer their views on the quality of contemporary reporting (“Why don’t you-all print the truth instead of all these lies that help the niggers?”).

Throughout the events of June, the views of the city’s officials corresponded in tone and substance to those of the patrolmen on the beat. Mayor Joseph Shelley maintained a consistent stance against biracial commissions or other peacemaking machinery, Police Chief Virgil Stuart^[*] and St. Johns County Sheriff L. O. Davis are tough-minded segregationists, judged by even the strictest Deep South criterion.

[*] Stuart later commented on Martin Luther King's being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize: "I consider it one of the biggest jokes of the year. How can you win the peace prize when you stir up all the trouble he did down here?"

Real political power in St. Augustine originates with the town’s leading citizen, H. E. Wolfe, a wealthy general contractor and banker and a key member of St. Augustine’s Quadricentennial Commission. Though the group hopes to get federal money to celebrate the city’s four-hundredth anniversary with a splash this year, it repeatedly has risked losing the funds by asserting an adamant segregationist stand at critical periods.

Another political gradation in the city’s fairly closed ruling elite is that of Dr. Haygood Norris, “our town’s most respected ultraconservative,” as one local leader put it. He heads a group of professional men, many descended from the city’s old families. A second, somewhat less influential group consists mainly of motel and restaurant owners who depend largely on the tourist trade and, hence, are

considerably more flexible in racial matters (though only in off-the-record conversation). Publicly, St. Augustine's business community — led by Mayor Shelley and supported powerfully from the wings by Wolfe — swears by the status quo. Their denunciations of Martin Luther King and also of the local integration leader, a thirty-four-year-old Negro dentist named Dr. Robert Hayling, are emphatic.

The tension of the white community in St. Augustine — as in other racially troubled Southern cities — is difficult to describe. The atmosphere seems so oppressive that conversations are ponderous, guarded, and full of sighs. When Florida's segregationist Governor Farris Bryant banned night demonstrations, he inspired almost desperate hopes — even though he still permitted early evening as well as daytime confrontations. As the business leaders refuse to yield in each new crisis, little groups of merchants gather and talk, but no one comes up with any concrete moves to cope with “the problem.” Everyone tends to retreat to safe ground, such as denouncing Martin Luther King or Dr. Hayling. In this manner a kind of unanimity-by-omission comes to characterize public discussion.

The only person who speaks with conviction about what the city's specific policies should be is fifty-year-old Holstead (Hoss) Manucy, klan-oriented leader of a group which townspeople call “Manucy's Raiders.” His numerous, well-organized tribe roams the beaches by day and the plaza by night, and is officially known as the Ancient City Hunting Club and less officially as the “Gun Club.” Manucy has repeatedly denied that his club is a local branch of the Ku Klux Klan, but carefully retains a folksy diplomacy in his denials. “I'm not a member of the klan — I'm Catholic — but I'm not knocking it either. I think the klan is a very good organization,” Hoss explains.

Manucy is a Hollywood director's dream of what the Southern redneck should look and act like. His local reputation as a moonshiner ("Hoss was a farmer. He ran a forty-barrel farm") helps complete the casting instructions. Manucy's Raiders sport Confederate flags from their car radio aerials and communicate through citizens' band VHF radio equipment in their cars. Local Negroes complain about his friendship with Sheriff Davis, who named him an honorary special deputy. Several of Manucy's men were sworn in as deputies during the racial demonstrations before this arrangement was criticized by a federal judge.

Amidst the vague rhetoric of St. Augustine's business community, Manucy's bluff candor comes through loud and clear. "My boys are here to fight niggers," he explains. Martin Luther King? "He's a nigger. He's an outside nigger and we don't put up with outside niggers in St. Augustine. He's a Communist. That's a proven fact." The final outcome of the St. Augustine situation, says Hoss, will be that "the niggers are going to lose. There is no way they can win." His plan after the Civil Rights Bill passed: "Going to fight niggers.'

As violence brought the national television networks to St. Augustine, it was Hoss Manucy who emerged as the city's spokesman. The year-long saga of his rise to power tells the real story of St. Augustine.

THE BREAKDOWN BEGINS

In June 1963, after three months of futile efforts by Negroes to induce city officials at least to discuss their grievances, Negro students marched downtown and sit-in demonstrations began. The next night, whites invaded the Negro neighborhood and rock fights ensued which escalated into gun battles in the following days.

Most “moderates” in St. Augustine are reluctant to talk about this period, but one businessman said, “The breakdown of law enforcement really began right then. It was common talk in town who was leading those armed gangs. They’d go down there and open up on Hayling’s or Goldie Eubank’s house [both NAACP leaders] and the Negroes guarding them would fire back.” No one was ever convicted. The intransigence of the city fathers and the abdication of the moderates had begun to show.

However, the nightly skirmishes did bring about the first and only meeting between Negroes and whites for the official purpose of trying to work something out. The meeting started badly and ended in shambles. One white representative “allowed as how” the Kennedys and the Communists were behind all racial agitation, and another read from a pamphlet in which he substituted the word “nigger” for Negro each time it appeared. Dr. Hayling protested, and when one white person present suggested to the white leader that he might, in the interests of harmony, use the correct form, he did so. When the indecisive session ended, Dr. Hayling wryly remarked that the meeting “at least accomplished one thing – one of us has learned a new word.” That ended St. Augustine’s brief experiment in biracial meetings.

The next day, Hayling received the first phone calls threatening his life. He then made what he now regards as “naive” requests to federal authorities for protection. “I was new to the civil-rights movement then and you can imagine my shock when they referred me to the local police!” As the threats multiplied over the next several days – around the time of Medgar Evers’ death – Hayling called up the United Press bureau in Jacksonville. “It was out of this interview that the quote came in which I was supposed to have said I was going to ‘shoot first and ask questions later,’” the dentist recalls. Though he denies

making the statement, Dr. Hayling now concedes that he is not as nonviolent as Dr. King and his Southern Christian Leadership Conference staff. “When they try to kill you and your family in your own home, what are you going to do?” On July 1, 1963, Dr. Hayling’s home was shot at and four young Negroes standing in front of it were hit by shotgun pellets. Following an FBI investigation, three white teenagers who were implicated named a fourth as the person firing the weapon. The four were arrested; the charges were later dropped.

The Florida Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights thereupon described St. Augustine as a “segregated superbomb aimed at the heart of Florida’s economy and political integrity – the fuse is short.” Mayor Shelley, however, issued a public statement blaming “the failure of the leaders of our nation [who] seek the minority [Negro] vote by calling the [white] majority names. . . . A biracial commission defeats the very purpose for which it was formed. It polarizes the white race and the Negro race and begins with the assumption there is a racial difference.”

Later in the summer, St. Johns County Judge J. Charles Mathis had four juveniles locked in the county jail because their parents refused to sign a statement saying they would prevent them from joining any more demonstrations until they were twenty-one. They were later transferred to the state reformatory. The action inflamed the Negro community.

In this climate, Hoss Manney’s Gun Club began recruiting members and the klan stepped up its organizing drives across North Florida. On September 18, a huge klan rally at St. Augustine took a bizarre turn when Dr. Hayling and three youths were caught near the scene of the cross-burning and were brutally beaten with chains before a

robed assembly. After Sheriff Davis arrested four white men, they in turn swore out charges against Hayling, saying he jumped out of his car and pointed a gun at them. On October 16, 1963, Dr. Hayling was convicted and fined \$100. On November 4, the four whites were acquitted.

Meanwhile, as Florida newspapers reported mounting klan activity and the Florida Civil Rights Committee called for an investigation by the Justice Department, the vigilantes stepped up their forays into St. Augustine's Negro quarter. In October, a white man, William Kinard, was shot and killed while riding in his car a block from the home of Goldie Eubanks of the NAACP. Kinard was cradling in his arms a shotgun which discharged through the floor of the automobile when he was hit. Four Negroes were indicted in the Kinard murder, including Eubanks' son. The NAACP official was indicted for murder himself as an accessory after the fact. Three nights later, two Negro businesses and a residence were blasted by shotgun fire and the following night a white residence in a predominantly Negro neighborhood got the same treatment. Mayor Shelley reentered the fray to complain that newspaper publicity was giving his town a "raw deal":

"We are about as desegregated as we can get. And things are very quiet."

Dr. Hayling responded, "Local officials are bent on getting revenge, not justice."

When the new year came, two Negro families had children enrolled in "white" schools. In January, while the parents in one of these families were attending a PTA meeting, their automobile was burned outside the school. In February, the home of the second family was burned to

the ground. In a second attack on Dr. Hayling's home, his wife and two small children escaped injury but the family's pet dog was killed.

The city stirred slightly. Breaking a long editorial silence on the crisis, the St. Augustine Record announced it was "high time" for some law enforcement. But the call fell on deaf ears; within three days, another car — belonging to a prominent Negro minister — was burned. Amid the subtly changing relationships in the white community, the terrorists were now a power in their own right. At the very least, they had achieved the passive acceptance of the ruling elite.

THE NATION TAKES NOTE

Through all the months of bombings, burnings, and shootings, the crisis had remained primarily a Florida news item and the future of the suppression depended on this relative anonymity. But if insularity is a prerequisite to victory, the South in the era of the Negro revolution can no longer count on winning. Too many Southern Negroes, having come to regard suppression in a neighboring town as suppression in their own, stand ready to help. Thus in the spring of 1964 Hosea Williams, the leader of the Negro community in nearby Savannah, Georgia, came to St. Augustine to confer with Dr. Hayling. An articulate speaker and a talented organizer, Williams headed the Savannah affiliate of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and had the ear of its national chairman, Martin Luther King.

On March 20, the Boston affiliate of the SCLC announced plans for sixty prominent New Englanders to participate in Southern demonstrations. St. Augustine, "one of the most segregated cities in the U. S.," was included. The city responded in the only way its recent history now permitted — with total opposition; the nation

woke up on Easter Sunday to discover that the mother of Endicott Peabody, the Governor of Massachusetts, had spent the night in Sheriff Davis' jail. In rapid succession, SCLC field secretaries arrived to conduct workshops on the techniques of nonviolence and mass demonstrations; Dr. King himself came on May 27; and on May 28, Negroes staged their first mass night-march to the slave market for a public prayer meeting. The white raiders, brandishing clubs and shouting taunts, surrounded them. The seeds of anarchy had begun to sprout.

As evenings passed with increasingly ticklish confrontations downtown, daytime violence flared again and again. Hoodlums staged hit-and-run assaults on demonstrators attempting to wade-in at the heretofore sacrosanct "white" beach. Beatings occurred so often they became merely routine. Reverend Andrew Young of the SCLC staff summed up the dismay of the Negro leadership at the unique group of recently appointed "volunteer special deputies": "It's one thing to oppose the klan. . . . But when you have one man, wearing civilian clothes, beating you while another, wearing a badge, stands waiting to arrest you when the first one gets tired, well, that makes you think. St. Augustine is really worse than Birmingham. It's the worst I've ever seen."

In an effort to open a dialogue, SCLC suggested in a letter to white leaders that "they might come to enough accord to make further street demonstrations unnecessary." However, Mayor Shelley, Wolfe, and others stood pat and refused to discuss Dr. King's proposals.

St. Augustine came to resemble a giant fan, sucking in new people and tossing them about. On June 10, state troopers arrived; on the twelfth, klan organizer J. E. Stoner, Vice

Presidential candidate of the National States' Rights Party, arrived from Atlanta; and daily a growing tide of newsmen poured into the city.

As St. Augustine rapidly became a national byword, the town's moderates stirred. State Senator Verle Pope – who describes himself as a “law-abiding segregationist opposed to violence” – tried to reassemble a secret committee of twenty-six businessmen whose efforts earlier that spring had been stillborn in the face of indifference by the dominant business group and the Mayor. But the move collapsed. For his efforts, Senator Pope got all the windows of his realty office shattered. That night, police arrested a carload of Negro students and announced they were being held on suspicion of wrecking Pope's office. Since town gossip gave the vigilantes full credit, the move by police was clumsy at best. Thus, the “Pope raid” left everybody mad, including Pope.

WHO LISTENS TO U.S. JUDGES?

At this juncture, the menace of the raiders was acknowledged by the federal judge, Bryan Simpson, in Jacksonville. On June 15, he upheld the Negroes' right to hold demonstrations and admonished state and local police to “engage in real enforcement, arrests, and charges against these hoodlums everybody seems afraid of.”

But nobody in officialdom was listening to federal judges, not even Southern-born ones. Klan organizer Stoner and his anti-Semitic comrade-in-arms, Connie Lynch of California, harangued nightly to growing white crowds at the slave market while blood continued to flow on the beaches. Harassed newsmen gave up their hopes for local police protection, and hired private bodyguards. (One

newsman signed a statement to the effect that he had been beaten and had had his camera stolen by a “special” officer while regular policemen watched.)

But St. Augustine’s leaders still viewed the situation differently. The St. Augustine Record, for example, praised “the brilliant leadership” of Sheriff, Davis, Chief Stuart, and the Florida Highway Patrol, and reserved a paragraph of praise for the “special deputies”: “Agitators who have called our city a place of ‘Bigotry and Hate’ must have overlooked these men who volunteered for the past weeks to protect the lives of the same individuals who have slandered them and our city.”

Two days later, the white terrorists for the first time used weapons on the beach — heavy sticks resembling highway stakes. A Danish TV cameraman was severely beaten — the fifth newsman to be assaulted in the city. The number of Negro victims had to be counted by the dozens. The only ingredient for anarchy still missing was discord among the law-enforcement agencies. Suddenly it materialized.

From the start, the stance of Governor Bryant and the Florida Highway Patrol had been ambivalent. They arrived belatedly in the city — and then only after NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyers complained about the lax law enforcement. The state troopers finally moved in on June 25 to protect the demonstrators on the beaches. In a scuffle that day, when a hit-and-run raider attempted to get at Negro swimmers, a trooper clouted a white youth over the head with a nightstick. Bleeding profusely, he was arrested and hospitalized. Klansmen and sheriff’s deputies were almost speechless with rage, and a curious war seemed to break out among the law-enforcement agencies. That night, St. Augustine exploded; with a weird mixture

of tradition, grandeur, and horror the Ancient City reaped the harvest of fifteen months of intransigence and abdication.

STRANGE FRUIT

At 6:30 Confederate banners flapped gently under giant palms in the slave market as the “White Citizens Rally” got under way. Klan organizer Connie Lynch spoke: “If it takes violence to preserve the Constitution, I say all right. I favor violence to preserve the white race anytime, anyplace, anywhere. Now it may be some niggers are gonna get killed in the process, but when war’s on, that’s what happens.”

Other Southerners, black and white, played out their roles. The Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth — battle-scarred founder of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, which had clashed with Bull Connor’s fire hoses in Birmingham — led his ranks of Negro marchers slowly up the side of the plaza. His thin column of twos marched past motionless police into a narrowing tunnel of five hundred whites rimming both sides of the streets.

Then waves of whites poured into the street and the Negro line collapsed under the pounding of clenched fists. A teen-age Negro, his head bleeding, dashed through the crowd like a half-back, to disappear down the street toward home. A fat woman huddled over a young girl and a trooper ran up, looked around uncertainly, and finally bent down to inspect. The mob emitted an eerie cry as it crossed and recrossed the plaza, attacking the dwindling remnants of Negro marchers. A small pile of black bodies lay in the street.

In thirteen minutes it was all over. The injured numbered forty-five.

Civil order had collapsed. Some Negroes – not the active demonstrators but those who had had enough of seeing people beaten – also were in a violent mood. As LeRoy Clark, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund lawyer who handled the court cases, said later, “In my judgment, the federal court actions and our success in court averted a small-scale civil war.” To dissuade those Negroes who, at this point, were on the verge of using violence against violence, the civil-rights leadership used two arguments: that the SCLC-sponsored street demonstrations had created a bona fide “crisis of conscience” impelling federal court intervention and, secondly, that once the court’s attention had been attracted, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund’s attorneys could swiftly achieve judicial relief.

Shortly before the Civil Rights Act was enacted in July, the Legal Defense Fund began its legal assault on a broad front. Sheriff Davis was beginning to use harsh treatment against demonstrators who were in jail. He would herd both men and women into a barbed-wire pen in the yard in a 99-degree sun; he kept them there all day. Water was insufficient and there was no latrine. At night the prisoners were crowded in small cells without room to lie down. The Legal Defense Fund filed injunctions in federal court against these practices, as well as against excessive bail (sometimes set as high as \$3,000 per demonstrator). Both injunctions were granted.

A week later, on July 2, the Civil Rights Act was signed. Martin Luther King’s strategy now was to test restaurant compliance on a relatively small scale in order to assess the sincerity of the merchants. Most of the state troopers pulled out of the city. The merchants, with some exceptions, complied with the law, but soon they, in turn, became targets of intimidation. The town was virtually under vigilante mandate. Legal Defense Fund lawyers went back into court against the klan, Manucy, the Ancient

City Hunting Club, Stoner, Lynch, the National States' Rights Party, and against seventeen merchants who, out of fear or desire, had refused to serve Negroes. They also sought to help the more than twenty restaurants which had obeyed the new law. With one exception, restaurant owners who had been threatened or had their property damaged refused to name the individuals who had intimidated them. The federal court, in the second suit filed under the Civil Rights Act, ordered compliance.

After Hoss Manucy took the Fifth Amendment thirty-three times, Judge Simpson ordered him not to interfere with peaceful compliance and held him accountable for notifying all members of his club of the necessity for similar compliance; and fined a restaurant owner and a deputy sheriff for their roles in incidents in which Negroes were denied service.

At summer's end, a St. Augustine grand jury reluctantly named a ten-man biracial commission, but in language which questioned the commission's "legality" and took parting swipes at Martin Luther King. So far, this commission has not accomplished anything. In any case, with the mere presence of the passionate local klansmen, scarcely anyone will venture to predict the return of genuine peace. One resident said, "They've built up a big head of steam and as long as they're not in jail, things in this town will be explosive."

The St. Augustine vigilantes, an old tradition of violence as their heritage, nurture a new feel for power, and an angry despair pervades the rest of the city as a substitute for alternative courses of action. Some merchants would like to rid themselves of the likes of Mayor Shelley, but first must do something about the terrorists. For to oppose Shelley openly now would be to employ language that, in turn, would expose themselves.

Shelley and the business leaders also must weigh any ameliorative move against the predictable response of the violent elements. They have, indeed, created a monster. They have observed during the long summer that terror is more than a convenient tool for an embattled segregationist city government: it is a form of institutionalized anarchy and no one is safe so long as one man, freed from civilized restraints by his own sense of power, has a bomb and a grievance.

One senses that St. Augustine has lost the power to reform itself. Out of a great many causes – surely including the tenacious pride born of insular habits – too many “decent citizens” let things slide too long; the alternatives that existed in June of 1963 have vanished. While law-enforcement officers did little or nothing, the decent citizens of St. Augustine railed against King or Hayling or Communists. In 1963, violence was not a threat to them. They know better now. One or two of St. Augustine’s moderates will tell you (off the record) where the opportunities were that could have changed their city’s destiny: the attempts by Hayling and others to form a biracial commission in March, May, and June of 1963 and in January of 1964. Unfortunately, the same moderates denounced Hayling publicly during those periods of 1963.

He was too much for them to stomach, for he challenged the code itself: he acted like a white man; an Air Force lieutenant and a medical school graduate, he threatened the habits and thought processes of generations with his very presence. He sought integration as a right, beyond the dispensation of city fathers. Hayling is credited, or rather blamed, for activating the students, though there is evidence that his role was more to channel existing energy into new pursuits than to stimulate it in the first place. The fact that St. Augustine’s customs might offer

legitimate cause for student discontent, with or without Hayling, was not the sort of analysis the town's elders grasped during the summer of 1963.

After the start of the terror and then Hayling's alleged statement about "shooting first and asking questions later," those who had not already done so condemned him vehemently for his intemperance. Yet intemperate statements had been rather the vogue in St. Augustine for many months and the prevailing sentiment has always managed to find justification for such flashes of temper — except in the case of Dr. Hayling. Because similar ostracism was extended to Dr. King, the symbol of nonviolence in the civil-rights movement, one is driven to seek other motives for the white hostility toward the two leaders.

REWRITING HISTORY

Such hardened racial attitudes, when counterpointed against the manifest self-respect of Negro leaders, presage more St. Augustines to come wherever so-called "decent citizens" opt for the status quo by abdication. This seems true, too of the North, where rigid white attitudes against adjusting police institutions, housing codes, and job traditions might be viewed as little more than the Northern equivalent of Mayor Shelley's rigidity about biracial commissions.

In the South, sheriffs rarely enter into close working covenants with ad hoc groups without the tacit consent of the political and economic powers that be. The St. Augustine leaders who belatedly worried about their city's image as network cameras focused on Hoss Manucy have only to recall the events that allowed him to take over as the town's spokesman.

But they are not constructively rethinking these events; instead, they are busily rewriting recent history — in unwitting confession that everyone has a lot of explaining to do. After all the bloodshed, white St. Augustine still does not grasp the elemental motivations of its Negro citizens and is seriously deluded about what lessons Negro leaders have and have not learned over the past decade of struggle.

As the June crisis neared its climax, there was a one-day period when a wave of utterly inexplicable optimism passed through important segments of white opinion in the city. This came on the eve of a grand-jury recommendation calling for an immediate halt to all demonstrations for thirty days, with negotiations for a biracial commission to begin at the end of that period.

The proposal reflected the divided white opinion in the city at that point. For the hard-core segregationists, it represented a sensible tactical ploy to get the Negroes off the streets and break the rhythm of their momentum and elan built up over the preceding weeks. For moderates, it was regarded as a crucial step toward the biracial commission that would end the violence and bring back the tourists. When Martin Luther King rejected the proposal promptly, he infuriated both the segregationists — because he didn't take the bait — and the moderates — because he seemed to be blindly ungrateful for their efforts.

Yet — as even the most casual study of recent Southern experience reveals — Dr. King's counterproposal for a two-week moratorium contingent on the immediate formation of a biracial commission was wholly predictable. From a hundred cities and, most notably, from Birmingham, Negro leaders have learned that biracial commissions are as often used to prevent integration as to accomplish it. A

commission formed voluntarily without pressure can occasionally produce desegregation without pressure; but one formed only after demonstrations will likely produce little but rhetoric in the absence of the continued threat of demonstrations. So Negroes believe and recent Southern experience tends to support them. But whether true or not, Negroes in St. Augustine believed it true and the whites there hadn't the faintest glimmer of this and still don't know it.

In their endless post-mortems, Dr. King's "hypocrisy" about biracial commissions is used to undergird the one argument that absolves everybody of blame: that King wanted crisis and bloodshed in St. Augustine to gain sympathy across the nation with which to raise money. (No one mentions that they could have foiled him by naming a biracial commission anytime from March of 1963 to May of 1964.)

One is finally driven to conclude that much of what happened in St. Augustine flowed from a simple belief held by a large number of influential people: they could "beat the niggers" if they kept the heat on long enough. In a sense, the "heat" is still on, but now there are new considerations: the dead, the scarred, and the scared — and an awful legacy of bitterness.

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Larry Goodwyn, a contributing editor of the "Texas Observer," concentrated on St. Augustine during an extended tour of the South this summer. His father's family has lived in Georgia for many generations, his mother's in Virginia; he grew up in Texas. This article will be part of a book he is writing on the South.

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