

TITLE: Grenada, Mississippi

DATE OF INVESTIGATION: August 31 and September 1 - 12, 1966

DATE OF REPORT: September 12, 1966

INVESTIGATED BY: Tom Scarbrough, Investigator

TYPED BY: Elizabeth Arnold

On the above date I went to Grenada, Mississippi, to confer with officials and to see if there was any possibility of trying to make contacts with the Negro leadership who is responsible for bringing about the chaos which has been going on in Grenada for almost three months.

The first person I talked with was City Councilman Henry Ray. Mr. Ray advised me that conditions in Grenada had not improved since my last visit. While standing in front of his bank, I observed seven pickets; all but one I guessed to be under age. They were carrying placards which read: "What color is the white man's God?" "Our God is a just God," "White man jails us for going to church," "Black and white together," "Freedom now," and "Blackout in Grenada." Mr. Ray stated that Negroes numbering from 100 to 250 have been marching around the square at various hours at night for three weeks. He stated, however, nothing of consequence has happened in the way of violence.

In checking with other officials in Grenada, I have found that a new organization which is a subsidiary of SCLC, Martin Luther King's outfit, out of Atlanta, Georgia, has recently arrived in Grenada and at least 20 paid workers are busy working throughout the Negro community encouraging Negroes to send their children to the Grenada white schools. This new organization goes by the name of "Crusade for Citizenship, Inc." and their checks are drawn on the First National Bank in Atlanta, Georgia, and are signed by Rev. Ralph Abernethy and M. L. King. It is estimated that close to 400 Negroes showed up at the Grenada white schools for enrollment.

I found the situation in Grenada to be very fluid at present, and it is doubtful if any one by making contacts with both sides can bring any relief to the situation.

I came back through Grenada on my way to Jackson this morning and learned that a number of Negro children came on their own to the white schools and entered without any trouble; however, about 100 Negroes marched from the Bell Flower Baptist Church in the direction of the Grenada school but were stopped by white parents and dispersed. Officers

were not able to cope with the situation and none of this group were permitted to enter the school grounds. At the time this group made their march, school was already in process of beginning classes since it was around 9:30 A. M.

So many Negroes showed up in Grenada at the regular opening of school, which was on August 30, that school officials suspended the opening until this morning, September 12.

White people of Grenada have organized and begun to march also. The situation up there is very tense at this time. A small incident of some kind could ignite a full scale riot whereby many people could get hurt.

Friday night around 100 Negroes marched around the square as usual, followed by about 50 whites marching and carrying placards. Saturday night, the white marchers outnumbered the Negro marchers; however, last night the Negro marchers outnumbered the whites about 3 to 1, so I was told.

I was told this morning that when the Negroes marched from the square last night someone hit Cottonreader, who is a Negro leader working for Martin Luther King's organization. Officers stated, however, they could not find any one who saw any one hit Cottonreader; however, one officer told me that he had a knot on his head which most likely he did not inflict himself.

The situation in Grenada is very critical and extremely explosive at this time. Conditions must get better there at once or else something bad is likely to happen.

I have observed the strategy used by King's gang from the beginning of the trouble in Grenada. I have seen it at one time deteriorate to almost zero. I give credit to the federal registrars coming into Grenada for the purpose of appeasing King in order to save his face from a total failure there for accelerating and bringing on the bad racial situation which now exists in Grenada. It gave Hosea Williams and others of his caliber something to point to and to assure the Negroes that the federal government was behind them and to make other promises which they cannot deliver but which were believed by the Negroes, who are following King's group's leadership. I was told this morning that federal marshals are already in Grenada observing what is going on.

No one seems to know just what is best to do at this time. More reporting will be made on Grenada if there is any change.

In checking in other counties, I find the racial situation not too good also. White people are very resentful of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare forcing the Negroes into white schools even against the Negroes' wishes. Calhoun and Chickasaw Counties sent out applications for enrollment in school to all parents of school children, which gave them a choice of either going to white or Negro schools.

No Negroes in Calhoun County made application to enter white schools, although they had a choice of doing so if they desired. The Justice Department moved in and filed

a suit against the school board in federal court. Judge Claude Clayton ruled that the school board should again give the Negroes of Calhoun County an opportunity of attending white schools by having them to re-register.

** I am attaching to this report a threat which the KKK allegedly made against parents of Negro children in Calhoun and Chickasaw Counties and some school teachers of Chickasaw County and at least one school board member. Although I do not consider the racial situation in these counties as being dangerous, knowing some of the people in these two counties as I do, most anything could happen as some of the people whom I have in mind would carry out the threats set forth by the KKK in the attached sheet.