

Last month we felt that there might be evidence of a break in the boycott against Koinonia, which began about a year ago. The president of a large feed mill wrote us a letter saying that he was sorry that his local store had boycotted us, and that he wanted to assure us of courteous treatment in either his Americus or Albany stores. We then began purchasing some of our feed supplies from the Americus store.

Suddenly, the reign of violence and terror, which heretofore had been largely confined to Koinonia property and lives, exploded full-force in the very heart of the city itself. The Americus TIMES-RECORDER had these headlines on May 20:

MYSTERIOUS BLAST BREAKS THREE STORE FRONTS HERE

"A mysterious blast in downtown Americus about 1 a.m. Sunday (May 19) tore out plate-glass windows of three local establishments and broke panes in four other adjacent stores, the Citizens Bank Building and the Sumter County Courthouse.

"The brunt of the blow, believed caused by several sticks of dynamite, according to local authorities, occurred on the sidewalk at a doorway midway the Birdsey Flour & Feed Store and Jim Nasser's Grocery on Forsyth Street. Glass fronts of these two stores as well as the Famous Clothing Store, were most heavily damaged.

"Officers theorized that the blast was directed at the Birdsey establishment which has sold feed and other commodities to nearby controversial, bi-racial Koinonia Farm. A voluntary and unorganized boycott of the communal farm has existed for some time among some Americus and Sumter merchants.

"In addition to the main damages at Birdsey's, Nasser's, and the Famous, some 14 glass windows were blown out by the deafening blast in the four-story Citizens Bank office building, including one in the Chamber of Commerce, and the County Courthouse which is located diagonally across the street from Birdsey's. A small portion of the glass face of the town clock was also chipped out between the two and three o'clock numerals.

"Sheriff Chappell said he believes that a car probably was driving south on N. Lee Street and stopped at the northwest corner of the intersection while the explosive was tossed onto the sidewalk, probably with a long fuse attached, then sped away. The blast ripped a three inch deep hole in the sidewalk. It measures about 10 inches long and 7 inches wide. The terrific concussion bounced off the nearby buildings resulting in broken panes in other buildings across the street, several being broken on the opposite side of the Citizens Bank Building from the actual blast site. Other stores reporting broken windows were Bragg's Market, Stapleton's Studio, George Nasser's and Elias Attyah.

"Throughout Sunday streams of local people passed by the blasted area in cars to see the results of the explosion."

The same issue of the TIMES-RECORDER carried a front-page editorial headed, "A Shocking Episode." It said in part: "Shocked, stunned and intensely aroused was the best description of Americus citizens following the explosion in downtown Americus early Sunday morning, which damaged several buildings.

"No one, with the possible exception of those guilty of the crime, could believe that such a thing could happen in Americus, a city of peace-loving, church-going, cultured people. Sunday morning, parking lots were filled and streets lined on both sides for many blocks with cars as our citizens, most of them unmindful of the explosion which had occurred a few hours earlier, attended Sunday school and church. Violence is foreign to our way of life and thinking.

"Regardless of how we feel toward Koinonia, this violence, from whatever source it comes, must be stopped. So far, no one has been injured, but there has been great danger to life. Had a pedestrian or people passed by in a car at the time the explosion occurred early Sunday morning, there could easily have been a death. Must we wait until this occurs before we bring the violence to a stop? It is the duty and obligation of every right thinking citizen to assist the law enforcement officers in any way possible in uncovering and investigating clues.

"In the meantime, may we remind Koinonia of a statement made recently in an Atlanta Journal editorial, which pointed out "the awful responsibility the

Koinonians assume in continuing their practice in the face of such overwhelming popular disapproval."

Mr. Herbert Birdsey, president of the Birdsey Flour Mills, Macon, Georgia, came to Americus Sunday following the explosion to view the damages to his store. He was reported as saying that his first reaction was to close the store here, but later decided to continue it. No doubt he will be subjected to much pressure. Letters of encouragement to him might help. He is also qualified to answer questions about how "voluntary" the boycott is. (Note: Word just came that Mr. Birdsey is closing his Americus store.)

Prominent Citizens Hold Conference with Koinonia

A few days after the bombing, the president of the local Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Frank Meyers, contacted Koinonia about meeting with some influential citizens "to talk over the problem." We gladly agreed, and the meeting was set for Sunday afternoon, May 26, at Koinonia Farm.

When it convened, there were present the full members of Koinonia and ten leading men of Americus and Surter County. They included the mayor of Americus, the chairman of the county Board of Commissioners, the editor of the TIMES-RECORDER, the secretary and the president of the Chamber of Commerce, the president of a local bank, a lawyer, a doctor and several business men. There were no ministers.

The group began by stating that they represented the thought of the community and were very much interested in the welfare of the 25,000 people of Surter County. They were aware that they had a problem and must face up to it. Koinonia had provoked the sensibilities of many people, and stirred up a lot of trouble. "We came out here," they said, "on the basis that you are serving what you believe to be Christian principles and are dedicated Christians. Now our philosophy is that the first duty of a Christian would be 'peace on earth, good will to men,' to make brotherly love in the community."

They did not feel that Koinonia had created love and unity, but discord, strife and bitterness. "It is our belief," they continued, "that unless this experiment is moved further away tempers are going to reach the point where somebody really is going to get hurt." They then appealed to us to think it over and pray over it and see if we wouldn't be serving the best interests of the community and our Lord to move away and leave them in peace. They offered their assistance in liquidating our assets so as to get the full value out of our investment.

We pointed out that our leaving would be an admission to the nation and the rest of the world that Surter County could not or would not preserve law and order within its bounds and that her people were not free to worship God as they saw fit. "We will have to accept that responsibility," they said. "It doesn't make any particular difference to us in Surter County. We want the good will of the whole nation, but we want peace and love and good will in our own county above everything else." They frankly admitted that they were unable to cope with the violence and went on to say, "It's not only here; it's everywhere. They're having ten times more trouble in Indiana today than we are in Georgia—one race riot after another."

"This being true," we observed, "it would be difficult for us to find another location."

We asked if they had considered a serious and determined effort to enforce the law and they said they just didn't believe they could cope with the situation. "When you get prejudice and ignorance tied together, anything can happen," they said. "It's like enforcing prohibition. You can't enforce some things."

The only possible solution, they said, was for us to move away. There was no other alternative. "There is a certain element, you know, that you can't control. We might be hurt for just coming out here and talking with you. Maybe a stick of dynamite in my car..."

A Koinonian asked, "What element is so powerful in Americus and Surter County that everybody is so frightened of them?" The reply was, "It's not an element—we speak of an element—but it is the mass of the people. When the mass of the people in the U.S.

want something they will get it if they have to resort to armed force to get it." Asked if they thought the state would help them preserve order, they replied, "We do not. An attempt has been made to get qualified help, but it can't be gotten. That would not solve the problem, I don't think, even if we did. Finding out who is behind all this would be good to know, but it wouldn't solve any future problems; in fact it might create more."

Throughout the meeting there was a spirit of mutual respect, calmness, and deep concern. The discussion was not in the form of an ultimatum or even a proposition but "friendly advice." They did not ask for any definite reply from Koinonia. Three months ago, when the Ku Klux Klan made an identical suggestion, we stated that we felt we must continue our witness here, not out of stubbornness but out of concern for basic human freedoms and for the ultimate welfare of both our neighbors and the rest of the nation and world. So far, as we know, our sole offence against the surrounding community is that our way of life, which knows no bounds of color or race, is contrary to the "Southern" way of life. Up to this point, we have not felt that this is sufficient grounds for forsaking our homes.

"Koinonia Communities" Now Incorporated in New Jersey

With the aid of Fred Fuges of the AFSC, and Emerson Darnell prominent New Jersey attorney, we have completed the legal requirements for incorporation of our new venture in New Jersey. It will be known as Koinonia Communities. The address is Neshanic Station, N.J. This move was made with no view of abandoning the Georgia location, but to provide a market outlet for our farm products and also to afford occasional relief for families showing signs of "battle fatigue" here.

The property, which will be transferred some time next month, is a 120-acre farm which for a number of years was the location of another intentional community known as Hidden Springs. When this community decided to liquidate, it offered to sell its holdings to Koinonia for approximately \$37,000, a down payment of \$9,000 being required. There are housing accommodations for three or four families, and about 70 acres of the land are tillable. The Atkinsons, Angrys and John Gabor are already up there, and more families will probably be sent later. They have been warmly received by the former Hidden Springs people and by the surrounding neighborhood. The choice of location seems to be a very fortunate one.

The new community will begin at once to make various kinds of leather goods. The first items will be several styles of hand-made sandals from highest quality industrial leather and individually shaped to fit. These sandals are attractive, comfortable and durable. For an illustrative folder showing styles and prices, write to Koinonia Communities, Neshanic Station, N.J. Mail orders will be given prompt attention.

Despite the "voluntary" boycott, we are somehow managing to get the necessities of life and to carry on our farming activities, though on a reduced scale. We have planted our full quota of peanuts (100 acres) and about 45 acres of corn. We had to drop sweet potatoes, one of our major crops, cotton and truck crops. Our poultry flock, normally 4,000 hens, is now down to 700. We still have our normal herds of hogs and cattle.

Our little band remains unshaken in its faith in Jesus' way of love, non-violence and the brotherly life. As God sees fit to use us in bearing witness to these things, we shall rejoice.

Many of you have been asking about the insurance cards. To date, we have about 1500 pledges, (\$75,000). We are grateful to all of you, as much for the fact that you are behind us in spirit as for your material support. Pledge cards should be sent to Mrs. Harry L. Atkinson, c/o John Thomas, Ringoes, New Jersey.

A Friends of Koinonia Committee has been formed to coordinate efforts in behalf of Koinonia and to relieve the Farm of some office details. Robert Swan, 2845 Sussex, Trevoise, Pa., is coordinator and will be in close contact with Koinonia. Literature requests can be channeled through him; perhaps other responsibilities can be assumed. Those interested in forming Friends of Koinonia groups should contact Bob.

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