

Essay:

LAST GASP OF THE 1960'S

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Body

Crime buffs up North are thrilled and horrified by the running gun battles of political terrorists, the early investigations of whom caused the decade-long harassment of F.B.I. officials. Times have changed: the lawmen are once again the good guys, and we give as much encouragement to enforcing the law as to upholding the law. It took until the early 1980's to bring the 1960's to an end.

Crime buffs down South have an even gorier story, of a "voodoo death boat," to tell: Two Haitian boat captains, illegally running immigrants into the U.S., have been accused of carving up perhaps 16 of their starving passengers with machetes and throwing the bodies overboard. Because the alleged crimes took place outside the 12-mile limit of the United States, prosecutors have merely been able to charge "smuggling that involved the use of murder and privation," which is not a capital crime.

William Safire op-ed comment contrasts recent acts by Weather Underground and other terrorist groups with immigration "crimes" by Haitian refugees

You don't have to be a crime buff, however, or be caught in a running gun battle or a death ship, to be touched by crime. It is not the televised crime that frightens most people, it is the single, not-very-newsworthy weapon pointed at them that counts. Here in Miami, one person in ten was victimized by criminals last year.

"Miami Beach has gone from being the fun and sun capital of the world," says a local politician, "to the slum and bum capital." Seven out of the ten worst urban crime rates in the nation are in Florida, from Miami to Gainesville to Tallahassee.

Police officials explain that their crime figures are inflated because of visitors, but they cannot deny the alarming increase over past years with the same percentage of tourists. The breakdown in law enforcement was best shown by Gregory Jaynes, a New York Times reporter, in a single figure: gun dealers reported sales up 46 percent from the year before. These are not guns for criminals; in the main, these are guns bought by frightened citizens who feel the need to protect themselves.

Chamber of Commerce types are torn between the desire to downplay the crime wave, lest it damage tourism, and the urge to holler for help to protect small businesses from holdups. Tourists are understandably nervous, even though this season's more conservative swimsuit fashions offer more room to pack a rod.

What is causing the shadow of crime to fall across the Sunshine State? A local narcotics war is drilling some holes in some heads, but that's normal. Some blame the sharp increase in violent crime on the emptying of Fidel Castro's

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jails upon the population of Florida, and suggest this goes hand in hand with Cuban support of Weathermen terrorists in a campaign to harm the United States.

The Senate Intelligence Committee should investigate why that campaign has been so poorly investigated by the F.B.I. and C.I.A. For more than a decade, the emphasis has been on the protection of the privacy rights of the accused; now we should have ways of probing terrorist activities without undermining the Constitution. Using grand juries and search warrants, lawmen should be proceeding to break up terrorist rings and track down any overseas connections without undue fear of being prosecuted or sued themselves.

Another reason given for the crime wave in Florida is the influx of Haitians, fleeing from hunger and overcrowding at home. The Federal Government is now stopping the illegal traffic on the high seas, to the cluck-clucking of far-off media. We should go further and tie aid to Haiti to its cooperation with a voluntary blockade of its coast, thereby curtailing the need for odious detention centers here and stopping terror aboard the "death ships." The peoplesmuggling will stop when it becomes clear that illegal immigrants will be towed home and the boat owners, captains and crews jailed in Haiti.

But immigration cannot be the primary cause of a crime wave; more often, the immigrants are the scapegoats. The Federal Government should pay for policing the nation's borders, and for boarding or detaining those for whom exceptions in immigration policy are made. The citizens of Florida can then look to their state and local officials, who would have no place to pass the buck for inadequate law enforcement. Epidemics require emergency measures; the best quick answer is more local police and tougher juries and jurists, which must come from aroused local citizens and not from Washington.

In the spectacular crimes North and South, there is an interesting contrast in motives. The romanticized revolutionaries, often from well-to-do homes, see themselves as the subject of future Bonnie and Clyde movies, and have pledged their lives, fortunes and sacred dishonor to the hatred of American values; they probably intended to symbolize their defiance by the murder of lawmen. The hungry immigrants who braved the savagery of sadistic captains were breaking our immigration laws to taste the freedom and opportunity that only this country offers.

Why is it that nobody commits the crime of breaking into Cuba or the Soviet Union? Because what the Weather Underground seeks to destroy, the world's underclass pleads for the chance to share.

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