Killer of the Innocents -- Commentary

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Lethal dynamite has made Sunday, September 15, 1963, a Day of Sorrow and Shame in Birmingham, Alabama, the world's chief city of unsolved racial bombings.

Four or more who were attending Sunday School at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church on the day of Sorrow and Shame were killed. Their bodies were stacked up on top of each other like bales of hay from the crumbling ruins left by the dynamiting. They were girls. They were children. They were members of the Negro group. They were victims of cruel madness, the vile bigotry and the deadly hate of unknown persons.

Society in a free country has a solemn responsibility to itself and those who make it up. Free men are bound by an irrevocable civic contract to safeguard the rights, safety, and security of all of its members. This is the basic issue in what is happening in Birmingham. The continued unsolved racial bombings tend to suggest the deterioration of society in this city.

Our neighborhood and church leaders has also the challenge of seeking some lofty, but real self-defense strategy and technique. Patience is a human element and subject to no less frailties. The unsolved bombings have taxed patience and aroused unquenchable fears - fears of police, of the sincerity of public leaders, and of the quality of Negro leadership in this City of Sorrow and Shame.

To the families of the bombed victims, the Birmingham World offers its sympathy. To the pastor and the members of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church we offer a friendly hand. We are angered by the murderous bombing ad shocked by the lack of solution. The Birmingham World has been in the struggle against this kind of insanity, intolerance, disrespect of the House of God, defiance of established law, and disregard of human values since its beginning which the bombings substantiate. We shall try to carry on in the struggle, believing in the divine goodness. We have that overcoming faith in a Higher Being to guide us.

Those who died in the September 15 bombing also died serving the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified. This will be an unforgettable day in our nation, in world history; in the new rebellion of which the Confederate flags seem to symbolize. Yet, if members of the Negro group pour into the churches on Sunday, stream to the voter-registration offices, make their dollars talk freedom, and build up a better leadership, those children might not have died in vain.

The Negro group in Birmingham is unhappy. The Negro group is dissatisfied with the kind of protection they are getting. The Negro group is disturbed when law enforcement remains all-white in Birmingham and in Jefferson County. The Negro group is disappointed with the lack of more help from the Federal Government. This makes Birmingham a city of uneasiness for the Negro group.

Where does Birmingham go from here? The huge bomb reward fund grows bigger, but the bombings solution does not seem to be near. Governor George Wallace says he stands for law
and order but he seems to attract the support of the negative forces whose credo inspires less. From the lips of the Governor come assertions which seem to imply defiance of the Supreme Court decision on schools.

Is Birmingham a sick city? We cannot answer for sure. There are tensions because there is fear...there is a feeling of diminishing faith in City Hall to measure up to the responsibility of the kind of municipal leadership needed in his City of Sorrow and Shame. The killers of the innocents have challenged the conscience of decent person everywhere.

Neither the living who were bombed nor those who have not been bombed should give ground to the bombers. The United States government and other law enforcement agents must leave no stone unturned until the perpetrators of this heinous crime are brought to justice