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Rioting In Atlanta

The most surprising thing about the riot in Atlanta is that it should have happened there. For Atlanta, by general agreement, has been a model for southern cities in its race relations.

Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. has walked the last mile in search of racial peace. He had almost solid Negro support when elected. He was one of the few southerners to testify in support of the 1964 civil rights bill. He has added Negroes to the police force. Atlanta's schools and city facilities are totally integrated. Many Negroes are employed by business establishments and the city has sent eight Negroes to the state legislature.

All of this counted for nothing, however, when a suspected Negro car thief was wounded while trying to escape from arresting police officers. When some 500 or more Negroes took to the streets the mayor climbed on top of an automobile and tried to reason with them. He was shouted down. Taunts of "white devil" and "black power" greeted him. Finally the mob surged around the car and the mayor was jarred loose from his perch and fell to the street.

No, this didn't happen in a Birm-

ingham or a Selma. It happened in Atlanta. Little wonder that the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., who lives in Atlanta, was heard to ask: "What do they want? The mayor came down. He tried to speak to them and they wouldn't listen. What do they want?"

It was a good question, but hard to answer. For most of the members of the mob may not have known themselves what they wanted—unless it was an excuse to throw rocks and rant about police brutality.

The mayor says the riot was deliberately caused by some of Stokely Carmichael's SNCC henchmen, and he may be right. For the mob began shouting "kill the white cops" after SNCC representatives, according to the police, spread the false word that the suspected car thief "had been shot while handcuffed and that he was murdered."

Whatever may have been the case with the rioters, it seems clear that what the SNCC people want is trouble, trouble, trouble. And that is what they are going to get, though not in the form they want, if this sort of madness keeps up.



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