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Atlanta's Mayor And Police Handled Bad Situation Well

Stokely Carmichael of the now-misnamed Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee apparently got what he wanted in Atlanta Tuesday — a riot by Negroes protesting the shooting of a man pursued by police.

Carmichael has gone to great lengths to explain his idea of "black power" in terms of political strength, insisting that it is not a call to violence. But the real fruits of his call for "black power" fell in Atlanta.

Mayor Ivan Allen Jr., displaying supreme personal courage and great concern for his city, went into the midst of the mob to plead for law and order. It was only after he had been knocked from the top of a car, where he was urging the crowd to disperse, that Mayor Allen gave orders to police to return force with force.

That was the only course left to the mayor and the police in the absence of cooperation from Carmichael and other Negro leaders who had worked the crowd to an emotional pitch. The airing of grievances must be tolerated, but the imposition of a state of anarchy in a city is out of the question.

Atlanta police showed considerable restraint in handling the crowd as they were being pelted by rocks, bottles and bricks. This restraint kept the number of injured to a minimum. The police also reflected the department's effective riot-control training when the mayor gave the orders to move against the mob.

It is regrettable that such an incident took place in progressive Atlanta. It again demonstrates that some elements of the Negro community in most cities are easily aroused against the police by the incitement of extremists. It serves to remind us, too, that police must always act with extreme care in the use of firearms during arrests in racially-tense areas.

All who heard and saw reports of the Atlanta riot at the height of the action were shaken by its savageness. Except for the courage and decisiveness of Mayor Allen and the professional conduct of the police in the face of the mob, the bloodshed and destruction would have been far worse.