

Mayor Looked Good in Atlanta Racial Crisis

By BRUCE BOSSAT

ATLANTA, Sept. 20—Despite sudden attack upon him by some white liberals, Mayor Ivan Allen of Atlanta seems sure to emerge from his city's post-Labor Day racial disturbances a stronger figure than ever.

Responsible Negro leaders and sympathetic white spokesmen here simply do not buy any argument that the incidents demonstrate that the Mayor's internationally celebrated assault upon Negro conditions is fundamentally insincere.

Influential Negroes and whites do criticize Mr. Allen on important specifics of his performance, but they do not seriously question his motives, his attitudes or his courage.

Most impressive to these people was his risky mingling with young hotheads stirred up in the Sept. 6 outbreak in Summerhill.

For an hour and a half, Mr. Allen plunged from one angry knot of rock-throwing Negroes to another, trying to calm them down and avert stern police action. He told this reporter in an interview:

"Sometimes when I'd be talking to one group, another would be jumping a policeman just behind my back."

Most of the aroused Negroes did not know who he was. Some, he found, did not know WHAT a mayor was. While he milled around, some policemen helplessly muttered fears for his safety.

An experienced Negro civil rights leader in Atlanta says privately:

"It was very significant that Mayor Allen saw the trouble first-hand, that he experienced the anger and didn't just read about it in police reports. He went out there when his very

presence could have been provocative.

"It is good to know we have a man who cares enough to go in and see."

A white liberal, looking at the mayor from a longer view, says his determination to rid Atlanta of slums is "almost an obsession" with him. This source thinks, in fact, that others in the city's white power structure are sometimes annoyed at the mayor's preoccupation with this and other Negro problems.

Some of the very same Negro and white spokesmen who speak feelingly of Mayor Allen's dedication and courage believe he has not really grasped the depths of slum despair and frustration, that he moves too slowly and too narrowly to eradicate festering conditions which could be growing worse.

Not all the blame for this is

laid at his door. Negro leaders often criticize themselves and their middle class colleagues for not showing more forceful and imaginative leadership.

There was criticism of the mayor, however, for arresting SNCC leader Stokely Carmichael and other "SNICK" workers on charges of "inciting a riot." It was argued that responsible Negroes in the disturbance areas were effectively casting out Carmichael and his limited followers on their own.

The experienced Negro leaders vehemently disapproved of Carmichael's tactics, a prominent lawyer among them said privately that one group he sat in with suggested quietly that the stir "might do us a whole lot of good."

The argument is the obvious one: there has been too much attention to Atlanta's shining surface, too little to its seamy underside.