

The Riot in Atlanta

An artificially induced riot involving a few hundred susceptible Negroes shattered the calm of an Atlanta afternoon, and it may have shattered much more. There is no way of gauging fully its effect on a Southern community that had been deservedly considered a model in race relations.

Particularly dismaying was the abusive treatment accorded Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. when he rushed to the scene and tried to calm the rioters. They had been whipped to frenzy, reportedly by the so-called Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, espouser of the separatist and inflammatory slogan of "black power."

Such was the mood of the mob, hastily recruited after a Negro suspected of stealing a car had been wounded while fleeing from police, that Mayor Allen was jarred from the top of a police car and subjected to a barrage of bricks, bottles and verbal abuse as he courageously stood his ground and tried vainly to restore sanity.

This was an ironic reward for one of the few Southern officials who supported the Civil Rights Act of 1964. To the degree that S.N.C.C. in its new militancy was responsible for this violence, it has done a gross disservice to the evolution of racial harmony and the progress of the Negro in Atlanta and elsewhere in the South.