

# The Whole Thing Seemed Foolish To an Observer on the Scene

By HAROLD MARTIN

Jackson, Miss.  
THE REPORTERS who cover the race troubles in the South are gradually evolving into a breed of specialists with the kind of camaraderie that grows up between correspondents who cover a war. The difference is that in the social troubles, they have to work all the time in no-man's-land, so to speak, between the rioters on the one side and the cops on the other.

Being interested only in the

facts and the news, they must know the police chiefs, the sheriffs and the highway patrol captains in charge of putting down uprisings, as well as the Negro leaders who plot

*Harold Martin's column appears regularly in the daily Atlanta Constitution.*

and plan the demonstrations. This, of course, makes them suspect to both sides.

The uproar here the other night wasn't much of a riot, according to the veterans of Birmingham and Oxford. But to an amateur in these matters, it seemed like a fairly uproarious little get-together.

The Negro students were yelling and throwing rocks and bottles and the cops were blazing away with shotguns and carbines and squirting tear gas from a huge, silvery vehicle, built like an armored car and for awhile it looked as if a lot of people were going to get hurt.

## CALMED

Pretty soon, though, Charies Evers, the NAACP leader who took the place of his brother, Medgar, murdered from ambush last June, showed up and got the cops to stop shooting long enough for him to move about among the students and get them calmed down.

The row had started in the afternoon, when a white motorist, driving fast on the wide street that divides the campus of Jackson State College, hit a Negro girl student and broke her leg. This roused the students, who had been petitioning the city to put a light and a cross-walk there, and when the cops came to investigate, the row started. Evers got things calmed down before anybody got hurt, but the word got around that the students might demonstrate again after a basketball game that night.

I've seen a Marine outfit storm a fortified hill in Korea

with fewer men and less fire power than the mayor sent out to prevent this anticipated riot. Some 300 policemen blocked off roads leading to the campus and took up stations along the campus fence.

## SET OFF

The basketball game broke up and the crowd was orderly enough as the students started toward their dormitories. But the sight of the cops, with shotguns, carbines, tear gas and searchlights at the ready, seemed to enrage them. They started yelling "hey, boy," and other insulting things at the cops and a few rocks began to fly and the cops, who were tense and jumpy, started shooting into the air. And this set off another barrage of bricks, rocks and bottles and the cops started shooting in earnest, at running figures on the campus, into the shadows and toward the rooftops of the buildings.

They said there were snipers up there, but I didn't hear the "zing" of any incoming rifle fire, nor did any police get shot. The only casualties the cops suffered, in fact, so far as I know, was a little choking and wheezing caused when one of them set off a tear gas shell inside the armored truck they were firing from. But three Negroes did get shot, in the legs and thereabouts.

The hollering and the bottle throwing and the shooting went on for about an hour, and when it was all over, the cops couldn't find anybody to arrest.

And to me it seemed a pretty foolish performance all around. Two or three of Jackson's six Negro policemen, it seems to me, could have handled any disturbances that came up. And it was the sight of the hundreds of white cops, armed and grim and glowering, that set the whole thing off.