

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

6 RAYMOND STREET, NW  
ATLANTA, GEORGIA 30314

At 5:30 PM EST

March 7, 1965

Selma, Ala.--Over 2,500 Negroes were teargassed and beaten as they attempted a mass march to Montgomery to dramatize the fight for the right to vote.

The group, led by SNCC Chairman John Lewis and Hosea Williams, was stopped on a bridge on U.S. 80 by 200 State Troopers, 200 sheriffs' possemen and hundreds of whites.

At about 3:15 Selma time, just after Lewis had led the group in prayer, police fired tear gas bombs and began beating the people.

People were being beaten, many were on the ground. A SNCC worker reported, "People are screaming and hollering. They're beating them and throwing gas on them."

One woman hollered: "They're trying to kill me."

Many people were put into ambulances and taken to the hospital.

At about 3:30 the people retreated to the church.

At the church possemen on horseback were beating people with whips and ropes.

John Lewis has a large bruise on the side of his head. An old lady had a broken arm.

A worker reported that police not only threw the gas but also sprayed it on the peoples' clothes.

Injured SNCC worker Lafayette Surney reported from the Good Samaritan Hospital that many ambulances made more than one trip to the hospital. He said that people had, "fractures, and breaks in arms, hands and legs. Tear gas poisoning is the worst. Some people were trampled by horses."

One SNCC worker explained what happened at the bridge: "I was across the bridge almost in front of the line. The State Troopers started walking toward us. When they started walking toward us, we walked back, we knelt and started to pray. They started to throw gas; a number of people were beaten by troopers. Then we just started to run back."

Lafayette Surney, street, corner, continued:

4:18 p.m. Police are pushing people into alleys. I don't know why. People are screaming, hollering.

They're bringing on more ambulances. People are running, hollering, crying.

4:20 p.m. People are running.

4:22 p.m. Police got somebody else; it's hard to tell who. Looks like they're taking them to the hospital.

Three more ambulances went by. The ambulances are picking them up off the ground. There goes another one. Two more. There go three of them.

4:23 p.m. They're carrying people by.

4:25 p.m. It looks pretty bad. They're carrying people by, putting people in ambulances, private ambulances. People are running.

Here come the white hoodlums. I'm on the corner of one of the main streets.

A lady said they tried to kill her.

People in the streets who were marching look like they're going back to the churches.

4:26 p.m. They're going back to the church. I'm going too. Should be there in about five minutes.

4:32 p.m. Brown's Chapel Church

James Austen

State troopers are outside the church throwing rocks.

John Lewis

People marched, 1500 to 2000 of them, marched down Highway 80, across the bridge. At the other side of the bridge were 200 State Troopers, 200 possemen, about 1000 white people. The Major of the State Troopers made an announcement that they should turn around. The people refused. They knelt to the ground in a prayerful manner. Then the State Troopers fired tear gas at them and began to beat them. I was hit in the head.

People went back to the church. There are about 2000-3000 in the church. The posse is coming down to the church. People on horseback are beating people with whips and ropes. They are shooting tear gas.

I've never seen anything like it in my life. They are shooting gas, acid.

One very odd lady I know has a broken arm.

Billy Bailey

I was across the bridge almost to the front of the line.

A number of people were beat by State Troopers. They started walking toward us. When they started walking toward us, we walked back. We knelt and started to pray. Then they started throwing gas. Then we just started running back.

4:40 p.m. Willie Emma Scott

We have a problem--the guys are not non-violent any more.

They're ready to fight. About two or three busloads of possemen are in front of the church beafing people, throwing tear gas, beating children and adults. They have about twenty people on horseback. I don't know how many's been carried to the hospital.

John Lewis has a small hole in his head. I tried to do something for it, but he wouldn't let me. They say Christopher Wylie is in pretty bad condition. Another lady has her arm broken in two or three places.

4:45 p.m. They didn't only throw tear gas at the people, but also sprayed it on them so their clothes are full of it. The church is full of tear gas.

Atlanta 5:05 p.m. Ralph Featherstone, Ivanhoe Donaldson, Courtland Cox, and RoybShields left here by plane for Selma.

Selma 5:14 p.m. Good Samaritan Hospital

Lafayette Surney

People had their legs, arms broke. Fractures of legs, arms. Tear gas--that's the baddest thing. The ambulance made

Selma, Alabama - March 7, 1955; 3 pm

W.E.Scott calls Atlanta from Brown's Chapel in Selma. John Lewis, Chairman of SNCC and Robert Mants, SNCC staff, and Hosea Williams, SCLC staff, are leading the march. They are in the process of organizing into companies and squads, with company commanders and squad leaders.

Larry Fox:

The people are at the bridge over the Alabama River; they have to walk double file. A group of state troopers, plus white people, plus Cheriff Clark and his posse, plus Al Lingo head of the state highway patrol are on the other side of the bridge.

Leading the march are John Lewis, Robert Mants, and Hosea Williams. behind them are about 50 Selma people, then SNCC staff member, Wilson Brown, then 50 more Selma people then SNCC staff member Jesse Harrison, 50 more Selma people and SCLC staff member, Eugene Fritchett.

Other SNCC staff members -- Willie Emma Schoot, Frank Soracco, John Luitkys, Chris Wylie and Annie Pearl Avery -- haven't arrived yet.

3:45 p.m. Larry Fox

SCLC staff members Addy Young, James Bevel, Hosea Williams, Ben Clark and Harry Boyd are on the scene.

JACKSON, 4 pm Ruth Howard

Four carloads of SNCC staff people are planning to leave Jackson for Selma.

SELMA 4 p.m. Lafayette Surney, street corner

About 2000-3000 people are marching. Mr. Turner of Marion is also leading. They are on the bridge now.

If the police stop the people, they will wait until they are tear-gassed to leave.

This morning, John Lewis read a three-minute statement to the press about why they were marching. SCLC's Andy Young told Dr. King wasn't coming: because after he heard that Wallace had given the State Troopers all power to stop the march, he decided to work on getting as much Northern support as possible. A minister from SCLC in Selma vowed they would bring every minister from all over the country in to town.

JACKSON, 4:05 p.m. Cleveland Sellers

Four carloads of SNCC staff are leaving.

SELMA 4:06 p.m. Surney

Two carloads of possemen just went to the bridge. The police are making local whites get indoors.

SCLC's Fauntleroy is in Washington DC talking to Congressmen. A lot of churches in New York City which were contacted earlier by SCLC are calling in. Radio stations are calling in by direct lines.

SNCC's Annie Pearl Avery was just arrested--don't know what for. She just passed by in a police car. Two local white guys were also arrested.

Three doctors and six-seven nurses from the Medical Committee for Human Rights, also three ambulances are there.

4:15 p.m. State Troopers are throwing tear gas on them. A few are running back. A few are being blinded by tear gas. Somebody got hurt--don't know who.

4:15 p.m. They're beating them and throwing tear gas at them.

4:16 p.m. Police are beating people on the streets. Oh, man, they're just picking them up and putting them in ambulances. People are getting hurt pretty bad.

There were two people on the ground in pretty bad shape. I'm going to leave in a few minutes--people are running back this way.

4:17 p.m. Ambulances are going by with their sirens going. People are running, crying, telling what's happening.

(continued)