

Brown Uniforms in Selma, Alabama

Atlanta, Ga.

A voter registration rally in Selma, Alabama, attended by 150 Negroes ended around 9:30 on a Sunday night last month in the AME Zion meeting hall. Five whites in street clothes had also attended the meeting—whites regularly do so, taking notes and also often taking photos. Outside, more than 70 police waited.

When I left the hall with David Prince, a photographer I was working with on assignment from Blackstar agency, I counted a row of 63 special deputies in brown uniforms and white crash helmets, wearing sidearms and clutching two-foot long night sticks, lined up elbow to elbow along the street across from the meeting hall. About ten others stood near several blue-domed police cars that contained additional officers.

I watched Dave as he tried to take photos and the police as they shone flashlights at his camera lens. Suddenly there were screams and yells from the right behind me, and as I turned I saw brown-uniformed deputies swinging their night sticks, charging through a crowd of Negroes who had gathered in front of the house next door.

Three of the deputies passed the crowd and approached the house's porch, night sticks in air. A woman sat on the porch, holding a young girl in her lap. "Quick, get the child inside!" a man's voice rang out from the porch. Before I could see what happened next, a night stick crashed across the top of my head and I fell toward the ground as brown-uniformed deputies swarmed past me.

I PUSHED MYSELF UP, holding the top of my head, and stumbled toward Dave, who was at the other side of the hall. I felt wetness on my hand and saw that my hand was dripping with blood. "I've been hit, I've been hit," I shouted to Dave, who grabbed my arm and led me between the buildings.

But within moments we were again separated, and as I struggled toward the rear of the building, I saw a deputy shine a flashlight on Dave and heard a pistol shot ring out. The bullet whistled past him, going through a clump of bushes. "Don't move or you're dead," a voice shouted. Both of us stopped.

Several deputies grabbed my arms and jabbed me with their night sticks, forcing

Jerry DeMuth, who majored in journalism at Northwestern and Southern Illinois universities, has written for the Nation, New Republic, Commonweal, Frontier, Village Voice, the Realist, Outsider's Newsletter, Independent, and other periodicals. He has related events he here reviews in a 14-page affidavit to the FBI.

Jerry DeMuth

me back to the front of the building. They pushed me to the ground and said, "Sit there and don't move." I sat there, blood running down my face and neck, dripping onto my suit.

"I'm bleeding," I groaned.

"You're lucky that's all," a deputy replied.

Dave was dragged near me and forced to the ground. A deputy ran to my side, his night stick in front of him, and smashed the flood lights I had been carrying. He then turned to Dave, grabbed his camera, and began smashing it. Another deputy struck me across the side of my face, knocking off my glasses.

A man to whom we had been pointed out in a restaurant at dinner ran up claiming Dave had a gun and Dave was brutally searched. His pockets were emptied and a wallet containing over \$70 in cash was taken, and he says he never got it back.

The deputies of course found no gun and someone shouted that it must be in our car.

I had been looking for my glasses without success. "I lost my glasses," I told them. "They're here on the ground some place." A deputy on my left shouted, "Forget your glasses, you son of a bitch."

We were forced over to my car. Three men searched the inside and the trunk, dumping everything all over the place and pulling up the rear seat. As I stood there waiting for them to finish, I became dizzy and almost passed out from the head wound and the tear gas that filled the air. Still I managed to stand there, afraid of what the deputies would do to me if I fell over.

Minutes later we were pushed to a police car and forced to stand there, our arms resting on the roof. Then we were pushed over to another car that was parked across the road. The jabbing with the night sticks continued. Again a deputy grabbed Dave's camera and, holding it in his hand, clubbed at the lens with his night stick. An officer finally took it from the deputy and gave it back to Dave.

More deputies surrounded us and two wearing gas masks and holding rifles stepped in front of me. "I should shoot you," one shouted, his voice muffled by the mask. "I ought to fill you full of lead," the other yelled as he shoved his masked face in front of me. His angry, squinting eyes told me he might well do that.

A minor county official ran up to us, yelling and swearing. "You started this, you sons of bitches."

I REMEMBER when we had arrived in town. After phoning in to the local FBI, we dropped by the sheriff's office. His men had been following us ever since we came to town, and we decided to make our identity known to him. When we asked the chief deputy, L. C. Crocker, and the county solicitor, Blanchard McLeod, questions about what had happened on Saturday, the latter replied, "I won't tell you nothin'." The chief deputy then began to berate newsmen and said that the "niggers" only demonstrated for publicity and if we weren't there nothing would happen.

On the scene near the church the minor official continued his shouting. "You get the hell out of here. Get in your car, get your stuff out of the hotel, and leave this state, and don't you ever come back."

As we approached the car I told Dave to drive, and as we climbed into the car, a deputy shouted after us, "I should have killed you." It was one of the men who had beaten him with night sticks.

We parked in front of the hotel and went inside. The desk clerk, who did not show any surprise at our condition, gave us our key and we went up to our room, grabbed our luggage, and came back down. I tossed two fives on the desk—more than enough to pay our bill—and we left, watched by a police car.

A dark station wagon was parked two cars from ours, the driver standing outside watching us. As we drove off, he got in the car which held three other men, started the engine, then backed up, and pulled in three cars behind us. As we drove out of town he followed us for about ten minutes, then stopped.

We didn't stop till we had gotten to Montgomery, 45 miles away, where we finally received hospital treatment. I ended up with my left arm in a sling and seven stitches in my head. □

August 21, 1964

11

Scholz'

Since 1866

The Place in Austin

**GOOD FOOD
GOOD BEER**

1607 San Jacinto
GR 7-4171