

LETTER FROM SELMA APRIL 10, 1965 ISSUE

# THE SELMA MARCH

*On the trail to Montgomery.*

By Renata Adler

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Photograph by Stephen Somerstein / Getty

## MARCH 27

The thirty thousand people who at one point or another took part in this week's march from the Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Selma, Alabama, to the statehouse in Montgomery were giving highly dramatic expression to a principle that could be articulated only in the vaguest terms. They were a varied lot: local Negroes, Northern clergymen, members of labor unions, delegates from state and city governments, entertainers, mothers pushing baby carriages, members of civil-rights groups more or less at odds with one another, isolated, shaggy marchers with an air

of simple vagrancy, doctors, lawyers, teachers, children, college students, and a preponderance of what one marcher described as “ordinary, garden- variety civilians from just about everywhere.” They were insulated in front by soldiers and television camera crews, overhead and underfoot by helicopters and Army demolition teams, at the sides and rear by more members of the press and military, and over all by agents of the F.B.I. Most of them were aware that protection along a route of more than fifty miles of hostile country could not be absolute (on the night before the march, a student who had come here from Boston University was slashed across the cheek with a razor blade), yet few of the thirty-two hundred marchers who set out on Sunday morning seemed to have a strong consciousness of risk. They did not have a sharply defined sense of purpose, either. President Johnson’s speech about voting rights and Judge Johnson’s granting of permission for the march to take place had made the march itself ceremonial—almost redundant. The immediate aims of the abortive earlier marches had been realized: the national conscience had been aroused and federal intervention had been secured. In a sense, the government of Alabama was now in rebellion, and the marchers, with the sanction and protection of the federal government, were demonstrating against a rebellious state. It was unclear what such a demonstration could hope to achieve. Few segregationists could be converted by it, the national commitment to civil rights would hardly be increased by it, there was certainly an element of danger in it, and for the local citizenry it might have a long and ugly aftermath. The marchers, who had five days and four nights in which to talk, tended for the most part to avoid discussions of principle, apparently in the hope that their good will, their sense of solidarity, and the sheer pageantry of the occasion would resolve matters at some symbolic level and yield a clear statement of practical purpose before the march came to an end.

From this point of view, the first few hours of Sunday morning in Selma were far from satisfying. Broad Street, the town’s main thoroughfare, was deserted and indifferent. At the Negro First Baptist Church, on the corner of Sylvan Street and Jefferson Davis Avenue, denim-clad veterans of earlier marches stood wearily aloof from recruits, who ate watery scrambled eggs, drank watery coffee, and simply milled about. On Sylvan Street itself, an unpaved red sand road dividing identical rows of brick houses known as the George Washington Carver Development, crowds were gathering, some facing the entrance to the Brown Chapel Church, others on the steps of the church facing out. Inside the church, more people were milling, while a few tried to sleep on benches or on the floor. For several hours, nothing happened. The church service that was to begin the march was scheduled to take place at ten o’clock, but veterans advised newcomers—in the first of several bitter, self-mocking jokes that became current on the Selma-Montgomery road—that this was C.P.T., Colored People Time, and the service actually began more than an hour behind schedule. In a field behind the housing development, the Reverend Andrew Young, executive director of Dr. Martin Luther King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (S.C.L.C., referred to by some of the marchers as Slick), which sponsored the march, was giving marshals and night security guards last-minute instructions in the tactics of non-violence. “Keep women and children in the middle,” he said. “If there’s a shot, stand up and make the others kneel down. Don’t be lagging around, or you’re going to get hurt. Don’t rely on the troopers, either. If you’re beaten on, crouch and put your hands over the back of your head. Don’t put up your arm to ward off a blow. If you fall, fall right down and look dead. Get to know the people in your unit, so you can tell if somebody’s missing or if there’s somebody there who shouldn’t be there. And listen! If you can’t be non-violent, let me know now.” A young man in the standard denim overalls of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (S.N.C.C., otherwise

known as Snick) murmured, “Man, you’ve got it all so *structured*. There seems to be a certain anxiety here about *structure*.” Everyone laughed, a bit nervously, and the marshals went to the front of the church.

The crowd there was growing, still arrayed in two lines, one facing in, the other facing out. There were National Guardsmen and local policemen, on foot and in jeeps and cars, along the sides of Sylvan Street and around its corners, at Jefferson Davis and Alabama Avenues. The marchers themselves appeared to have dressed for all kinds of weather and occasions—in denims, cassocks, tweed coats, ponchos, boots, sneakers, Shetland sweaters, silk dresses, college sweatshirts, sports shirts, khaki slacks, fur-collared coats, pea jackets, and trenchcoats. As they waited, they sang innumerable, increasingly dispirited choruses of “We Shall Overcome,” “Ain’t Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me ’Round,” and other songs of the movement. There was a moment of excitement when Dr. King and other speakers assembled on the steps, but a succession of long, rhetorical, and, to a certain extent (when press helicopters buzzed too low or when the microphone went dead), inaudible speeches put a damper on that. An enthusiastic lady, of a sort that often afflicts banquets and church suppers, sang several hymns of many stanzas, with little melody and much vibrato. Exhaust fumes from a television truck parked to the right of the steps began to choke some of the marchers, and they walked away, coughing. Speakers praised one another extravagantly in monotonous political-convention cadences (“the man who . . .”). An irreverent, irritated voice with a Bronx accent shouted, “Would you mind please talking a little louder!” Several members of the crowd sat down in the street, and the march assumed the first of its many moods—that of tedium.

Then Dr. King began to speak, and suddenly, for no apparent reason, several Army jeeps drove straight through the center of the crowd. (“Didn’t realize we were interrupting,” said one of the drivers, smiling. He had a D.D., for Dixie Division, emblem on his uniform.) The startled crowd, divided in half for a moment, became aware of its size. Dr. King’s speech came to an end, and there was last, unified, and loud rendition of “We Shall Overcome.” Then the marshals quickly arranged the crowd in columns, six abreast—women and children in the middle—and the procession set out down Sylvan Street. It was about one o’clock. On Alabama Avenue, the marchers turned right, passing lines of silent white citizens on the sidewalks. On Broad Street, which is also U.S. Route 80 to Montgomery, they turned left, and as segregationist loudspeakers along the way blared “Bye, Bye, Blackbird” and the white onlookers began to jeer, the marchers approached and crossed the Edmund Pettus Bridge. And the march entered another mood—jubilation.

The day was sunny and cool. The flat road, an amalgam of asphalt and the local sand, looked pink. The people in the line linked arms, and the procession was long enough to permit the marchers to sing five different civil-rights songs simultaneously without confusion; the vanguard could not hear what the rear guard was singing. Occasionally, various leaders of the movement broke out of the line to join interviewers from the television networks, which took turns using a camera truck that preceded the line of march. For the first few miles, the highway was flanked by billboards (“Keep Selma Beautiful, Cover It with Dodge”), smaller signs (Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, Citizens Council), diners, and gas stations. Little clusters of white onlookers appeared at various points along the road, some shouting threats and insults, others silently waving Confederate flags, and still others taking pictures of the marchers, presumably as a warning that their faces would not be forgotten when the march was over. The procession filled the two left lanes of the four-lane highway, but in the two

right lanes traffic was proceeding almost normally. A black Volkswagen passed the marchers several times; on its doors and fenders were signs, lettered in whitewash: “MARTIN LUTHER KING,” “WALK, COON,” “COONESVILLE, U.S.A.,” and “RENT YOUR PRIEST SUIT HERE.” Several small children at the roadside waved toy rifles and popguns and chanted “Nigger lover!,” “White nigger!,” “Half-breed!,” and other epithets. A man in front of a roadside diner thumbed his nose for the entire twenty minutes it took the procession to pass him, and a well-dressed matron briefly stopped her Chrysler, got out, stuck out her tongue, climbed in again, slammed the door, and drove off.

Several times, the march came to an abrupt halt, and in the middle ranks and the rear guard there were murmurs of alarm. Then it became clear that these were only rest stops, and the marchers relaxed and resumed their singing. Rented trucks, driven by ministers of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, carried portable toilets up and down the line. When press photographers attempted to take pictures of civil-right leaders entering the men’s rooms, the Reverend Mr. Young shouted, “Can’t a man even go to the john in peace?” The photographers moved away. Three tired marchers rode a short distance on the water truck, and James Forman, the executive secretary of S.N.C.C., who was being interviewed in French for Canadian television, broke off his interview to mutter as the truck passed, “Hey, man, you cats could walk.” The marchers got down from the truck at once. Forman resumed his interview. “I think he’s having trouble with his French,” said one of the marchers. “He just said that no Negro in America is allowed to vote.” “His French is all right,” said another. “But he may be less concerned with the immediate truth than with stirring up the kind of chaos that makes things change.”

By sunset of the first day, the caravan was more than seven miles from Selma, and most of the marchers returned by a special train to town, where some of them left for their home communities and others were put up for the night in the Negro development on Sylvan Street. Two hundred and eighty Negroes, representing Alabama counties (a hundred and forty-eight from Dallas County, eighty-nine from Perry, twenty-three from Marengo, and twenty from Wilcox), and twenty whites, from all over the country, who had been chosen to make the entire journey to Montgomery (the court permitted no more than three hundred marchers on the twenty-mile stretch of Route 80 midway between Selma and Montgomery, where it is only a two-lane highway) turned off Route 80 onto a tarred road leading to the David Hall farm—their campsite for the night. Four large tents had already been pitched in a field. As the marchers lined up for supper (three tons of spaghetti), which was served to them on paper plates, from brand-new garbage pails, night fell. Groups of National Guardsmen who surrounded the farm lighted campfires. “It looks like Camelot,” said one of the younger whites.

Camelot soon became very cold and damp. By nine o’clock, most of the marchers had retired to the tents, but within an hour they had to be roused and sorted out. One tent was for men, another for women, the third for the marchers’ own night security patrol, and the fourth for the press. When everyone had been assigned to his or her proper tent, it developed that there was a shortage of blankets, winter clothes, and sleeping bags. A shivering group huddled around an incinerator, the campsite’s only source of heat. A few marchers made their way to the loft of a barn beside the Hall farmhouse, to profit from the heat given off by the animals in the stalls below. Five guinea hens perched in a tree outside the barn. The march’s security patrol wandered about with walkie-talkies; they had labelled their outposts Abel, Baker, Charlie,

and Dog, using the Army's old system, to set them apart from Alpha, Bravo, Charlie, and Delta, the outposts of the National Guard along the perimeter of the field. The night grew colder, damper, and darker, and the group around the incinerator fire grew uneasy.

There was talk of the march ahead through Lowndes County, where swamps and the woods behind them might easily shelter a sniper in a tree or a canoe. Several marchers claimed to have spotted members of the American Nazi Party along the line of march. Someone mentioned the Ku Klux Klan "counter-demonstration" that had taken place in Montgomery that afternoon.

"And the snakes," a man said.

"What snakes?" said a Northern voice.

"Copperheads and cottonmouth. It takes the heat to bring them out, but a trooper told me somebody's caught five baskets full and is letting them go where we camp tomorrow night."

"How'd the trooper hear about it?"

"Spies."

"Well, I suppose there might be spies right here in camp."

"There might. And bombs and mines. They cleared a few this afternoon. Man, this isn't any Boy Scout jamboree. It's something else."

**B**y the time dawn came, the campers were a thoroughly chilled and bleary-eyed group. The oatmeal served at breakfast gave rise to a certain amount of mirth ("Tastes like fermented library paste," said one of the clergymen), and the news that the National Guardsmen had burned thirteen fence posts, two shovel handles, and an outhouse belonging to a neighboring church in order to keep warm during the night cheered everyone considerably. At a press conference held by Jack Rosenthal, the young Director of Public Information of the Justice Department, the rumors about snakes, bombs, and mines were checked out, and it was learned that none of them were true. A reporter waved several racist leaflets that had been dropped from an airplane and asked whether anything was being done to prevent such planes from dropping bombs. "What do you want us to do?" Rosenthal replied. "Use anti-aircraft guns?"

The procession set out promptly at 8 A.M. The distance to the next campsite—Rosa Steele's farm—was seventeen miles. Again the day was sunny, and as the air grew warmer some of the more sunburned members of the group donned berets or Stetsons or tied scarves or handkerchiefs around their heads. To the white onlookers who clustered beside the road, the three hundred marchers must have seemed a faintly piratical band. At the head of the line were Dr. and Mrs. King, wearing green caps with earmuffs and reading newspapers as they walked. Not far behind them was a pale-green wagon (known to the marchers as the Green Dragon) with Mississippi license plates, in which rode doctors wearing armbands of the

M.C.H.R. (the Medical Committee for Human Rights). Farther back were some of the younger civil-rights leaders: Hosea Williams, S.C.L.C. director of the march and veteran of the bitter struggle for public accommodations in Savannah, Georgia; the Reverend James Bevel, formerly of S.N.C.C., now S.C.L.C. project director for Alabama (Mr. Bevel was wearing the many-colored yarmulke that has become almost his trademark—"a link," he says, "to our Old Testament heritage"); John Lewis, chairman of S.N.C.C.; and the Reverend Andrew Young. Behind the leaders, some of the main personae of the march had begun to emerge, among them Joe Young, a blind greenhouse worker from Atlanta, Georgia, and Jim Letherer, a one-legged settlement-house worker from Saginaw, Michigan. ("Left! Left! Left!" the segregationist onlookers chanted as Mr. Letherer moved along on crutches.) Chuck Fager, a young worker for S.C.L.C., wearing denims and a black yarmulke, was waving and shouting, "Come march with us! Why don't you come along and march with us?" ("It sets up a dialogue," he explained. "The last time I was in jail, a sheriff pulled me aside and asked me where the hell I was from. Any sort of talk like that sets up a dialogue.") Sister Mary Leoline, a nun from Christ the King parish in Kansas City, Kansas, was talking to John Bart Gerald, a young novelist from New York. "This is a great time to be alive," she said. A few members of the night security guard had somehow acquired cameras, and they were now photographing bystanders who were photographing marchers; it appeared that a sort of reciprocal Most Wanted list was being compiled. From time to time, the marchers were still singing ("Oh-h-h, Wallace, segregation's bound to fall"), and the chief of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, Assistant Attorney General John Doar, tall, tanned, and coatless, was striding back and forth along the line of march to see that all was going well.

Around two o'clock, as the middle ranks of marchers passed an intersection just outside Lowndes County, a female bystander apparently could stand it no longer. "They're carrying the flag upside down!" she screamed to the nearest trooper. "Isn't there a law against that? Can't you arrest them? Look at them so-called white men with church collars that they bought for fifty cents! And them devirginated nuns! I'm a Catholic myself, but it turns my stomach to see them. They said there was thousands yesterday, but there wasn't near a thousand. Them niggers and them girls! I've watched the whole thing three times, and there isn't a intelligent-looking one in the bunch. I feel sorry for the black folks. If they want to vote, why don't they just go out and register? Oh, honey, look! There goes a big one. Go home, scum! Go home, scum!" The procession began to sing a not very hearty version of "A Great Camp Meeting in the Promised Land."

Not all the bystanders along the road were white. At the boundary of Lowndes County (with a population of fifteen thousand, eighty per cent of them Negroes, not one of whom had been registered to vote by March 1, 1965), John Maxwell, a Negro worker in a Lowndes County cotton-gin mill (at a salary of six dollars for a twelve-hour day), appeared at an intersection.

"Why don't you register to vote?" a reporter from the *Harvard Crimson* asked Mr. Maxwell.

"They'd put us off the place if I tried," Mr. Maxwell said.

In the town of Trickem, at the Nolan Elementary School—a small white shack on brick stilts, which had asbestos shingles, a corrugated-iron roof, six broken windows, and a broken wood floor patched with automobile license plates—a group of

old people and barefoot children rushed out to embrace Dr. King. They had been waiting four hours.

“Will you march with us?” Dr. King asked an old man with a cane.

“I’ll walk one step, anyway,” said the man. “Because I know for every one step I’ll take you’ll take two.”

The marchers broke into a chant. “*What do you want?*” they shouted encouragingly to the Negroes at the roadside. The Negroes smiled, but they did not give the expected response—“*Freedom!*” The marchers had to supply that themselves.

Late in the afternoon, as Route 80 passed through the swamps of Lowndes County, the marchers looked anxiously at the woods, covered with Spanish moss, which began a few yards back from the road. They reached Rosa Steele’s farm at sunset. Many of them seemed dismayed to find that the campsite lay right beside the highway. Fresh rumors began to circulate: a man had been seen putting a bomb under a roadside bridge; twenty white men, with pistols and shotguns, had been seen prowling through a neighboring field; testing security, a representative of the Pentagon had managed to penetrate the security lines without being asked to show his pass. Mr. Rosenthal again put these fears to rest. “The field has been combed by Army demolition teams,” he said. “If anyone from the Pentagon had made it through unchecked, you can bet there would have been one hell of a fuss. And as for the man under the bridge, it was a little boy who got off his bicycle to relieve himself. The troopers found out these things. It’s nice to know that they are this aware.”

As darkness fell, Dr. King held a press conference. A Negro woman lifted up her three-year-old son so that he might catch a glimpse of Dr. King. She soon grew tired and had to put him down. “I’ll take him,” said a white man standing beside her, and he lifted the boy onto his shoulders. The boy did not glance at Dr. King; he was too busy gazing down at the white man’s blond hair.

**A**gain the night was cold and damp. At the entrance to the field, there was so much mud that boards and reeds had been scattered to provide traction for cars. Most of the marchers went to sleep in their four tents soon after supper, but at Steele’s Service Station, across the highway, a crowd of Negroes from the neighborhood had gathered. Some of them were dancing to music from a jukebox, and a few of the more energetic marchers, white and black, joined them.

“This is getting to be too much like a holiday,” said a veteran of one of the earlier marches. “It doesn’t tell the truth of what happened.”

At about ten o’clock, the last of the marchers crossed the highway back to camp. Shortly afterward, a fleet of cars drove up to the service station and a group of white boys got out. Two of the boys were from Georgia, two were from Texas, one was from Tennessee, one was from Oklahoma, one was from Monroeville, Alabama, and one was from Selma. The Reverend Arthur E. Matott, a white minister from Perth Amboy, New Jersey, who was a member of the night patrol, saw them and walked across the highway to where they were standing. “Can I help you fellows?” Mr. Matott asked.

“We’re just curious,” the boy from Monroeville said. “Came out to see what it was like.”

“How long are you planning to stay?” said Mr. Matott.

“Until we get ready to leave,” the boy said.

A Negro member of the night patrol quietly joined Mr. Matott.

“I cut classes,” said the boy from Tennessee. “Sort of impulsive. You hear all these stories. I wondered why you were marching.”

“Well, you might say we’re marching to get to know each other and to ease a little of the hate around here,” Mr. Matott said.

“You don’t need to march for that,” said one of the boys from Texas. “You’re making it worse. The hate was being lessened and lessened by itself throughout the years.”

“Was it?” asked the Negro member of the guard.

“It was,” the Texas boy said.

“We never had much trouble in Nashville.” said the boy from Tennessee. “Where you have no conflict, it’s hard to conceive . . .”

“Why don’t you—all go and liberate the Indian reservations, or something?” said the boy from Monroeville. “The Negroes around here are happy.”

“I don’t think they are,” said Mr. Matott.

“I’ve lived in the South all my life, and I know that they are,” the boy from Georgia said.

“I’m not happy,” said the Negro guard.

“Well, just wait awhile,” said the boy from Monroeville.

An attractive blond girl in a black turtleneck sweater, denim pants, and boots now crossed the highway from the camp. “Do you know where I can get a ride to Jackson?” she asked the Negro guard.

“This is Casey Hayden, from S.N.C.C. She’s the granddaughter of a Texas sheriff,” said the minister, introducing her to the group.

A battered car drove up, and three more white boys emerged.

“I don’t mean to bug you,” the Negro whispered to the girl, “but did you realize we’re surrounded?”

“You fellows from Selma?” Miss Hayden asked, turning to the three most recent arrivals.



“Yeah,” said one, who was wearing a green zippered jacket, a black shirt, and black pants, and had a crew cut.

“What do you want?” Miss Hayden asked.

“I don’t know,” the boy answered.

“That’s an honest answer,” Miss Hayden said.

“It is,” the boy said.

“What do you do?” Miss Hayden asked.

“Well, Miss, I actually *work* for a living, and I can tell you it’s going to be hard on all of them when this is over,” the boy said. “A lot of people in town are letting their maids go.”

“Well, I don’t suppose I’d want to have a maid anyway,” Miss Hayden said amiably. “I guess I can do most things myself.”

“That’s not all, though,” said another boy. “It’s awfully bad down the road. Nothing’s happened so far, but you can’t ever tell. Selma’s a peace-loving place, but that Lowndes County is something else,”

“I guess some of these people feel they haven’t got that much to lose,” Miss Hayden said.

“I know,” said the boy.

“Do you understand what they’re marching about?” Miss Hayden asked.

“Yeah—fighting for freedom, something like that. That’s the idea, along that line. It don’t mean nothing,” the boy said.

“And to make money,” the third young man said. “The men are getting fifteen dollars a day for marching, and the girls are really making it big.”

“Is that so?” said Miss Hayden.

“Yeah. Girl came into the Selma hospital this morning, fifteen hundred dollars in her wallet. She’d slept with forty-one.”

“Forty-one what?” Miss Hayden asked.

“Niggers,” the young man said.

“And what did she go to the hospital for?” Miss Hayden asked.

“Well, actually, Ma’am, she bled to death,” the young man said.

“Where did you hear that?” Miss Hayden asked.

“In town,” the young man said. “There’s not much you can do, more than keep track of everything. It’s a big mess.”

“Well,” Miss Hayden said, “I think it’s going to get better.”

“Hard to say,” said one of the boys as they drifted back to their cars.

At midnight in the camp, Charles Mauldin, aged seventeen, the head of the Dallas County Student Union and a student at Selma’s Hudson High School, which is Negro, was awakened in the security tent by several guards, who ushered in a rather frightened-looking Negro boy.

“What’s going on?” asked Charles.

The boy replied that he was trying to found a Negro student movement in Lowndes County.

“That’s fine,” said Charles.

“The principal’s dead set against it,” the boy said.

“Then stay underground until you’ve got everybody organized,” Charles said. “Then if he throws one out he’ll have to throw you all out.”

“You with Snick or S.C.L.C., or what?” the boy asked.

“I’m not with anything,” Charles said. “I’m with them all. I used to just go to dances in Selma on Saturday nights and not belong to anything. Then I met John Love, who was Snick project director down here, and I felt how he just sees himself in every Negro. Then I joined the movement.”

“What about your folk?” the boy asked.

“My father’s a truck driver, and at first they were against it, but now they don’t push me and they don’t hold me back,” Charles said.

“Who’ve you had personal run-ins with?” the boy asked.

“I haven’t had personal run-ins with anybody,” Charles said. “I’ve been in jail three times, but never more than a few hours. They needed room to put other people in. Last week, I got let out, so I just had to march and get beaten on. In January, we had a march of little kids—we called it the Tots March—but we were afraid they might get frightened, so we joined them, and some of us got put in jail. Nothing personal about it.”

“Some of us think that for the march we might be better off staying in school,” the boy said.

“Well, I think if you stay in school you’re saying that you’re satisfied,” Charles said. “We had a hundred of our teachers

marching partway with us. At first, I was against the march, but then I realized that although we're probably going to get the voting bill, we still don't have a lot of other things. It's dramatic, and it's an experience, so I came. I thought of a lot of terrible things that could happen, because we're committed to non-violence, and I'm responsible for the kids from the Selma school. But then I thought, If they killed everyone on this march, it would be nothing compared to the number of people they've killed in the last three hundred years."

"You really believe in non-violence?" the boy asked Charles.

"I do," Charles said. "I used to think of it as just a tactic, but now I believe in it all the way. Now I'd just like to be tested."

"Weren't you tested enough when you were beaten on?" the boy asked.

"No, I mean an individual test, by myself," Charles said. "It's easy to talk about non-violence, but in a lot of cases you've got to be tested, and re-inspire yourself."

By 2 A.M., hardly anyone in the camp was awake except the late-shift night security patrol and a group of radio operators in a trader truck, which served as a base for the walkie-talkies around the campsite and in the church back in Selma. The operators kept in constant touch with Selma, where prospective marchers were still arriving by the busload. Inside the trailer were Norman Talbot, a middle-aged Negro from Selma who had borrowed the trailer from his uncle and was serving as its driver ("I used to work in a junk yard, until they fired me for joining the movement. I've got a five-year-old daughter, but after that I made it my business to come out in a big way"); Pete Muilenberg, a nineteen-year-old white student on leave of absence from Dartmouth to work for C.O.F.O., the Congress of Federated Organizations, in Mississippi; and Mike Kenny, a twenty-nine-year-old white student who had quit graduate school at Iowa State to work for S.N.C.C.

"Snick isn't officially involved in this march," Mr. Kenny said to a marcher who visited him in the trailer early that morning. "Although individual Snick workers can take part if they like. They say Martin Luther King and Snick struck a bargain: Snick wouldn't boycott this march if S.C.L.C. would take part in a demonstration in Washington to challenge the Mississippi members of Congress. We didn't want to bring in all these outsiders, and we wanted to keep marching on that Tuesday when King turned back. Man, there are cats in Selma now from up North saying, 'Which demonstration are you going to? Which one is the best? As though it were a college prom, or something. I tell them they ought to have sense enough to be scared. 'What do you think you're down here for? For publicity, to show how many of you there are, and to get a few heads bashed in. Nobody needs you to *lead* them. S.C.L.C. has got plenty of leaders.' People need Snick, though, for the technicians. Some of us took a two-day course in short-wave-radio repair from one of our guys, Marty Schiff, so we could set up their radios for them. Then, a lot of Snick cats have come over here from Mississippi, where the romance has worn off a bit and it's time for our experts to take over—running schools, pairing off communities with communities up North, filing legal depositions against the Mississippi congressmen and against the worst of the police. We're called agitators from out of state. Well, take away the connotations and agitation is what we do, but we're not outsiders. Nobody

who crosses a state line is an outsider. It's the same with racial lines. I don't give a damn about the Negro race, but I don't give a damn about the white race, either. I'm interested in breaking the fetters of thought. What this march is going to do is help the Alabama Negro to break his patterns of thought. It's also going to change the marchers when they go back home. The students who went back from the Mississippi project became dynamos. It's easier to join the movement than to get out. You have this commitment. There will be Snick workers staying behind to keep things going in Selma. We were here, working, a year and a half before S.C.L.C. came in. Man, there's a cartoon in our Jackson office showing the Snick power structure, and it's just one big snarl. Some of us are in favor of more central organization, but most of us believe in the mystique of the local people. We're not running the C.O.F.O. project in Mississippi next summer, because of the black-white tensions in Snick. Some of the white cats feel they're being forced out, because of the racism. But I can understand it. The white invasion put the Negro cats in a predicament. Not even their movement was their own anymore. I'm staying with it, though. Every Snick meeting is a traumatic experience for all of us, but even the turmoil is too real, too important, for me to get out now. It's what you might call the dramatic-results mentality. Some of the leaders may be evolving some pretty far-out political philosophy, but it's the workers who get things done—black-white tensions, left-right tensions, and all.”

Later that morning, Tuesday, it began to rain, and the rain continued through most of the day. When the first drops fell, whites at the roadside cheered (a Southern adage states that “a nigger won't stay out in the rain”), but it soon became apparent that, even over hilly country, the procession was going at a more spirited pace than ever. Jim Letherer, on his crutches, appeared to be flagging. John Doar walked beside him for a while, joking and imperceptibly slowing his pace. Then Mr. Doar said, “Jim, come to the car a minute. I want to show you something back down the road.” Jim disappeared from the march. In twenty minutes, he was walking again.

Back in Selma, thousands of out-of-towners had arrived and had been quietly absorbed into the Negro ghetto. On the outskirts of town, a sign had appeared showing a photograph of Martin Luther King at the Highlander Folk School and captioned “Martin Luther King at Communist School.” Lying soggily upon the sidewalks were leaflets reading “An unemployed agitator ceases to agitate. Operation Ban. Selective hiring, firing, buying, selling.” The Selma Avenue Church of Christ, whose congregation is white, displayed a sign reading “When You Pray, Be Not As Hypocrites Are, Standing in the Street. Matt: 6:5,” and the Brown Chapel Church displayed a sign reading “Forward Ever, Backward Never. Visitors Welcome.” Inside the church and its parsonage, things were bustling. There were notes tacked everywhere: “If you don't have official business here, please leave,” “All those who wish to take hot baths, contact Mrs. Lilly,” “Don't sleep here anymore. This is an office,” “Please, the person who is trying to find me to return my suit coat and trenchcoat, not having left it in my Rambler . . .”

“Everyone here in town is getting antsy,” Melody Heap, a white girl who had come in from Chicago, said to a reporter. “We're not allowed to march until Thursday, and there's nothing to do. On the other hand, we're giving the Selma Negroes a chance to take it easy. They know what they're doing, and we don't, so they can order us around a little.”

“You know what just happened?” said a white clergyman from Ontario. “Some of those white segs splashed mud all over us. It was so funny and childish we just howled.”

A little later, two clergymen picked their luggage and left the church for the home of Mrs. Georgia Roberts, where, they had been told, they were to spend the night.

“I guess I can put you up,” Mrs. Roberts said when they arrived. “Last night, I put up fourteen. I worked as a cook at the Selma Country Club for thirteen years, before they fired me for joining the movement. I’ve been friendly to all the other guests, so I guess you’ll find me friendly, too. I never thought I’d see the day when we’d dare to march against the white government in the Black Belt of Alabama.”

**A**t the Tuesday-night campsite, a farm owned by the A. G. Gastons, a Birmingham Negro family who had become millionaires in various businesses, the ground was so wet that the marchers could walk through the clay-like mud only by moving their feet as though they were skating. A Negro family living in the middle of the property had received several intimidating phone calls during the day, and as a consequence they barred their house to marchers. They held a party in their little front garden to watch the goings on.

The marchers had by then been joined by Mrs. Ann Cheatham, an English housewife from Ealing, who had flown across the Atlantic just to take part in the last two days of marching. “It seems to me an outrage,” she said. “I saw it on the telly—people being battered on the head. I came to show that the English are in sympathy. I can see there are a lot of odd bods on this march, but there were a lot in the marches on Aldermaston and Washington. This appalling business of barring white facilities to Negro children! People say it’s not my business, but I would deny that. It’s everybody’s business.”

In the early evening, a clergyman became violently ill, and doctors blamed the marchers’ water supply. The marchers had all along complained that the water tasted of kerosene, and upon investigation, it turned out that the water was in fact polluted, having come from a truck that was ordinarily used for draining septic tanks. (Fortunately, no other marchers seemed to suffer from the contamination.) Later, the singer Odetta appeared at the campsite, and found all the marchers, including another singer, Pete Seeger, fast asleep.

**W**ednesday, the fourth and last full day of marching, was sunny again, and the marchers set out in good spirits. In the morning, a minister who had rashly dropped out at a gas station to make a telephone call was punched by the owner, and a freelance newspaper photographer was struck on the ear by a passerby. (Although he required three stitches, he was heartened by the fact that a Montgomery policeman had come, with a flying tackle, to his rescue.) There seemed, however, to be fewer segregationists by the side of the road than usual—perhaps because the *Montgomery Advertiser* had been running a two-page advertisement, prepared by the City Commissioner’s Committee on Community Affairs, imploring citizens to be moderate and ignore the march. The coverage of the march in the Southern press had consistently amused the marchers. “Civil Rights Led by Communists” had been the headline in the Birmingham weekly *Independent*;

the Selma *Times-Journal*, whose coverage of the march was relatively accurate, had editorialized about President Johnson, under the heading “A Modern Mussolini Speaks, ‘We Shall Overcome,’” “No man in any generation . . . has ever held so much power in the palm of his hand, and that includes Caesar, Alexander, Genghis Khan, Napoleon, and Franklin D. Roosevelt”; and the Wednesday *Advertiser’s* sole front-page item concerning the march was a one-column, twenty-one-line account, lower right, of the Alabama legislature’s resolution condemning the demonstrators for being “sexually promiscuous.” (“It is well known that the white Southern segregationist is obsessed with fornication,” said John Lewis, chairman of S.N.C.C. “And that is why there are so many shades of Negro.”) At 9 A.M., Ray Robin announced over radio station WHHY, in Montgomery, that “there is now evidence that women are returning to their homes from the march as expectant unwed mothers.” Several marchers commented, ironically, on the advanced state of medical science in Alabama.

By noon, most of the marchers were sunburned or just plain weatherburned. Two Negroes scrawled the word “Vote” in sunburn cream on their foreheads and were photographed planting an American flag, Iwo Jima fashion, by the side of the road. Flags of all sorts, including state flags and church flags, had materialized in the hands of marchers. One of the few segregationists watching the procession stopped his jeering for a moment when he saw the American flag, and raised his hand in a salute. The singing had abated somewhat, and the marchers had become conversational.

“This area’s a study in social psychopathology,” said Henry Schwarzschild, executive secretary of L.C.D.C. (the Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee). “In a way, they’re asking for a show of force like this, to make them face reality.”

“And there’s the ignorance,” said another civil-rights lawyer. “A relatively friendly sheriff in Sunflower County, Mississippi, warned me, confidentially, that my client was a ‘blue-gum nigger.’ ‘Their mouths are filled with poison,’ he said. ‘Don’t let him bite you.’ ”

“And what did you say?” asked a college student marching beside him.

“What *could* I say?” the lawyer replied. “I said I’d try to be careful.”

“The way I see this march,” said a young man from S.N.C.C., “is as a march from the religious to the secular—from the chapel to the statehouse. For too long now, the Southern Negro’s only refuge has been the church. That’s why he prefers these S.C.L.C. ministers to the Snick cats. But we’re going to change all that.”

“I’m worried, though, about the Maoists,” said the student.

“What do you mean by that, exactly?” asked another marcher,

“A Maoist. You know. From the Mau Mau.”

In the early afternoon, Dr. King and his wife, who had dropped out for a day in order for him to go to Cleveland to receive an award, rejoined the procession. The singing began again. Marching behind Dr. King was his friend the Reverend Morris H. Tynes, of Chicago, who teased Dr. King continuously. “Moses, can you let your people rest for a minute?” Mr. Tynes said.

“Can you just let the homiletic smoke from your cigarette drift out of your mouth and engulf the multitude and let them rest?” Dr. King smiled. Some of the other marchers, who had tended to speak of Dr. King half in joking and half in reverent tones (most of them referred to him conversationally as “De Lawd”) laughed out loud.

A Volkswagen bus full of marchers from Chicago ran out of gas just short of the procession. “Now, we all believe in non-violence,” one of the passengers said to the driver, “but if you don’t get this thing moving pretty soon . . .”

“Are you members of some sort of group?” asked a reporter, looking inside the bus.

“No,” said the driver. “We’re just individuals.”

At last, on the outskirts of Montgomery, the marchers reached their fourth campsite—the Catholic City of St. Jude, consisting of a church, a hospital, and a school built in a style that might be called Contemporary Romanesque. The four tents were pitched by the time they arrived, and they marched onto the grounds singing “We Have Overcome.” They also added two new verses to the song—“All the way from Selma” and “Our feet are soaked.” Inside the gates of St. Jude’s, they were greeted by a crowd of Montgomery Negroes singing the national anthem.

“*What* do you *want*?” the marchers chanted.

This time, the response from the onlookers was immediate and loud: “*Freedom!*”

“*When* do you *want* it?”

“*Now!*”

“How *much* of it?”

“*All* of it!”

On its fourth night, the march began to look first like a football rally, then like a carnival and a hootenanny, and finally like something dangerously close to a hysterical mob. Perhaps because of a new feeling of confidence, the security check at the main gate had been practically abandoned. Thousands of marchers poured in from Selma and Montgomery, some of them carrying luggage, and no one had time to examine its contents. The campsite was cold and almost completely dark, and a bomb or a rifle shot would have left everyone helpless. Word got out that the doctors on the march had treated several cases of strep throat, two of pneumonia, one of advanced pulmonary tuberculosis, and one of epilepsy, and because of the number and variety of sick and handicapped who had made the march a macabre new joke began to go the rounds: “What has five hundred and ninety-nine legs, five hundred and ninety-eight eyes, an indeterminate number of germs, and walks singing? The march from Selma.”

An entertainment had been scheduled for nine o’clock that night, but it was several hours late started, and in the meantime the crowd of thousands churned about in the mud and chanted. A number of people climbed into trees near the platform

where the entertainment was to take place. On the outskirts of St. Jude's, in a section normally set aside as a playground, a few children spun the hand-powered carousel, or climbed over the jungle gym in the dark. In the wires of the telephone poles around the field, the skeletons of old kites were just visible in the dim lights from the windows of St. Jude's Hospital.

A minister, who had been seeking for several hours to clear the platform, wept with chagrin. "Betcha old Sheriff Clark and his troopers could clear it!" someone shouted. In the darkness, there were repeated cries for doctors, and a soldier stood on top of the radio trailer and beamed a flashlight into the crowd, trying to find the sources of the cries. Thousands crowded around the platform, and several of them were pressed against it and fell. Several others, mostly members of the special group of three hundred marchers, fainted from exhaustion. A number of entertainers, each of whom had been given a dime to use for a phone call in case of an emergency, and all of whom had been instructed to stand in groups of not fewer than six, appeared on the platform. Among them were Shelley Winters, Sammy Davis, Jr., Tony Perkins, Tony Bennett, and Nina Simone. A number of girls in the crowd collapsed and, because there was no other lighted space, had to be carried onstage, where Miss Winters did her best to minister to them. Before long, twenty people, none of them seriously ill or seriously injured, were carried off to the hospital on stretchers. A large group started an agitated march within the campsite.

"I'm tired," said a white college student. "If only I could walk someplace and get a cab!"

"Man, that's not cool," said a Negro. "There are a lot of hostile people outside that gate."

"Inside it, too, for all I know," said the student. "See any white sheets?"

Finally, the entertainment got under way, and the situation improved. Tony Perkins and a few others spoke with well-considered brevity. The crowd clapped along with the singers as they sang folk songs and songs of the movement, and it laughed at the comedians, including Dick Gregory, Nipsey Russell, Mike Nichols, and Elaine May. ("I can't afford to call up the National Guard," said Mike Nichols, impersonating Governor Wallace. "Why not?" said Elaine May, impersonating a telegraph operator. "It only costs a dime.")

At 2 A.M., the entertainment and speeches were over, and the performers left for a Montgomery hotel, which was surrounded for the remainder of the night by shouting segregationists. Most of the crowd drifted off the field and headed for Montgomery, and the tents were left at last to the marchers. Suddenly security tightened up. At one point, the Reverend Andrew Young himself was asked for his credentials. The hours before dawn passed without incident.

On Thursday morning, the march expanded, pulled itself together, and turned at once serious and gay. It finally seemed that the whole nation was marching to Montgomery. Signs from every conceivable place and representing every conceivable religious denomination, philosophical viewpoint, labor union, and walk of life assembled at St. Jude's and lined up in orderly fashion. A Magic Marker pen passed from hand to hand, and new signs went up: "The Peace Corps Knows Integration Works," "So Does Canada," "American Indians" (carried by Fran Poafpybitty, a Comanche from Indian Territory, Oklahoma), "Freedom" in Greek letters (carried by a Negro girl), "Out of Vietnam into Selma" in Korean



(carried by a white girl), “The Awe and Wonder of Human Dignity We Want to Maintain” (on a sandwich board worn by a succession of people), and, on two sticks tied together, with a blue silk scarf above it, a sign reading simply “Boston.” A young white man in a gray flannel suit hurried back and forth among the platoons of marchers; on his attaché case was written “D. J. Bittner, Night Security.”

Near the tents, Ivanhoe Donaldson and Frank Surocco (the first a Negro project director for S.N.C.C. in Atlanta, the second a white boy, also from S.N.C.C.) were distributing orange plastic jackets to the original three hundred marchers. The jackets, of the sort worn by construction workers, had been bought for eighty-nine cents apiece in Atlanta, and jackets just like them had been worn throughout the march by the marshals, but for the marchers the orange jacket had become a singular status symbol. There was some dispute about who was entitled to wear one. There was also a dispute about the order of march. Some thought that the entertainers should go first, some that the leaders should. Roy Wilkins, of the N.A.A.C.P.; demurred on behalf of the leaders. Odetta said, “Man, don’t let the morale crumble. The original three hundred deserve to be first.” The Reverend Andrew Young was served with a summons in an action by the City of Selma and the Selma Bus Lines protesting the operation of buses in competition with the Selma company. Finally, after another session of virtually inaudible speeches, the parade was ready to go. “Make way for the originals!” the marshals shouted, forming a cordon to hold back the other marchers and the press. Behind the three hundred came Martin Luther King, Ralph Bunche, A. Philip Randolph, the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, the Reverend Fred L. Shuttlesworth, Charles G. Gomillion, the Reverend F. D. Reese, and other civil-rights leaders; behind them came the grandfather of Jimmie Lee Jackson, the Negro boy who had been shot in nearby Perry County, and the Reverend Orloff Miller, a friend of the Reverend James Reeb’s, who had been beaten with Reeb on the night of Reeb’s murder; and behind them came a crowd of what turned out to be more than thirty thousand people. “We’re not just down here for show,” said Mr. Miller. “A lot of our people are staying here to help. But the show itself is important. When civil rights drops out of the headlines, the country forgets.”

Stationed, like an advance man, hundreds of yards out in front of the procession as it made its way through the Negro section of Montgomery and, ultimately, past a hundred and four intersections was Charles Mauldin, dressed in his Hudson High sweatshirt and blue jeans and an orange jacket, and waving a little American flag and a megaphone. One pocket of his denims was split, and the fatigue in his gentle, intelligent face made him seem considerably younger than his seventeen years. “Come and march with us!” he shouted to Negro bystanders. “You can’t make your witness standing on the corner. Come and march with us. We’re going downtown. There’s nothing to be afraid of. Come and march with us!”

“Tell ‘em, baby,” said Frank Surocco, who was a few yards back of Charles.

“Is everything safe up ahead?” asked the voice of Ivanhoe Donaldson through a walkie-talkie.

“We watching ‘em, baby,” said Surocco.

“Come and march with us!” said Charles Mauldin, to black and white bystanders alike.

In midtown Montgomery, at the Jefferson Davis Hotel, colored maids were looking out of the windows and the white clientele was standing on the hotel marquee. Farther along, at the Whitley Hotel, colored porters were looking out of windows on one side of the building and white customers were looking out of windows on the other. Troopers watched from the roof of the Brown Printing Company. The windows of the Montgomery Citizens Council were empty. Outside the Citizens Council building, a man stood waving a Confederate flag.

“What’s your name?” a reporter asked.

“None of your goddam business,” said the man.

At the intersection of Montgomery Street and Dexter Avenue (the avenue leading to the capitol), Charles Mauldin turned and looked around. “They’re still coming out of St. Jude’s,” a reporter told him. And when the vanguard of the march reached the capitol steps, they were *still* coming out of St. Jude’s. “You’re only likely to see three great parades in a lifetime,” said John Doar to a student who walked beside him, “and this is one of them.” A brown dog had joined the crowd for the march up Dexter Avenue. On the sidewalk in front of the capitol, reporters stood on the press tables to look back. Charles and the rest of the orange-jacketed three hundred stood below. Behind them, the procession was gradually drawing together and to a halt. Ahead, a few green-clad, helmeted officers of the Alabama Game and Fish Service and some state officials blocked the capitol steps, at the top of which, covering the bronze star that marks the spot where Jefferson Davis was inaugurated President of the Confederacy, was a plywood shield constructed at the order of Governor Wallace—“to keep that s.o.b. King from desecrating the Cradle of the Confederacy,” according to a spokesman for the Governor. Martin Luther King had managed to draw a larger crowd than the leader of the Confederacy a hundred years before.

Onto a raised platform—erected by the marchers for the occasion—in a plaza between the crowd and the steps climbed a group of entertainers that included, at one point or another, Joan Baez; the Chad Mitchell Trio; Peter, Paul, and Mary; and Harry Belafonte. As Alabamians peered from the statehouse windows, Negro and white performers put their arms around each other’s shoulders and began to sing. Although the songs were familiar and the front rank of the three hundred mouthed a few of the words, none of the crowd really sang along. Everybody simply cheered and applauded at the end of each number. Then Len Chandler, a young Negro folk singer who had marched most of the way, appeared on the platform. He was dressed peculiarly, as he had been on the road—in a yellow helmet, a flaglike blue cape with white stars on it, and denims—and the crowd at once joined him in singing:

“You’ve got to move when the spirit say move,  
Move when the spirit say move.  
When the spirit say move, you’ve got to move, oh, Lord,  
You got to move when the spirit say move.”

In the subsequent verses, Mr. Chandler changed “move” to “walk,” “march,” “vote,” “picket,” “cool it,” and “love,” and the crowd kept singing. Joan Baez, wearing a purple velvet dress and a large bronze crucifix, even broke into a rather reverent

Frug.

After an invocation by a rabbi and speeches by the Reverend Andrew Young and the Reverend Ralph Abernathy, the crowd turned away from the Confederate and Alabama State flags flying from the capitol, faced its own American flags, and sang the national anthem. At its close, the Reverend Theodore Gill, president of the San Francisco Theological Seminary, looked before and behind him and said a simple prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses." One marcher applauded, and was immediately hushed. Then there was the succession of speeches, most of them eloquent, some of them pacific ("Friends of freedom," said Whitney Young, of the Urban League), others militant ("Fellow Freedom Fighters," said John Lewis, of S.N.C.C.), and nearly all of them filled with taunts of Governor Wallace as the list of grievances, intimidations, and brutalities committed by the state piled up.

"This march has become a rescue operation," Charles Mauldin said quietly to a friend as the speeches continued. "Most of those Negroes along the way have joined us, and although this Wallace-baiting sounds like a little boy whose big brother has come home and who is standing outside a bully's window just to jeer, these Negroes are never going to be quite so afraid of the bully again. When the bill goes through, they're going to vote, and the white men down here are going to think twice before they try to stop them. Big brothers have come down from the North and everywhere, and they've shown that they're ready and willing to come down again. I don't think they're going to have to."

"It's good that even a few of the civil-rights *talkers* have joined us," said another marcher. "When those people feel they have to climb on the bandwagon, you know you're on the way to victory."

As one speaker followed another, as Ralph Bunche, who had marched for two full days, and A. Philip Randolph spoke, the civil-rights leaders saluted one another and gave signs of patching up their differences. (Mr. Abernathy, second-in-command of S.C.L.C., slipped once and said, "Now here's James Peck, for James Farmer, to tell us whether CORE is with us." Peck ignored the implications of the "whether" and spoke as eloquently as the rest.) Throughout, the crowd applauded politely but gave no sign of real enthusiasm. S.C.L.C. and S.N.C.C. leaders seemed to be equally popular, but the N.A.A.C.P. and the Urban League, more active in other states than in Alabama, seemed to require a little help from Mr. Abernathy ("Now let's give a big hand to . . .") to get their applause. Some of the marchers crawled forward under the press tables and went to sleep. A Japanese reporter, who had been taking notes in his own language, seized one of the marchers as he crawled under a table. "What do you think of all this?" the reporter asked. "I think it's good," the marcher said. Some fell asleep in their places on Dexter Avenue. (Perhaps remembering the mob scenes of the night before, the crowd left its members ample breathing space in front of the capitol.) A scuffle broke out between marchers and white bystanders in front of Klein's Jewelry Store, but no one was hurt seriously. It rained a little, and Charles Mauldin said, "Wallace is seeding the clouds."

Albert Turner, of Marion, where Jimmie Lee Jackson was murdered, said from the platform, "I look worse than anybody else on this stage. That's because I marched fifty miles." Then he read the Negro voting statistics from Perry County. When he said, "We are not satisfied," the crowd gave him a rousing cheer. He looked down at his orange jacket and smiled. Mrs.

Amelia Boynton spoke; during the previous demonstrations, she had been kicked and beaten, and jailed, for what some members of the press have come to call “resisting assault.” She read the petition, mentioning the “psychotic climate” of the State of Alabama, that a delegation of marchers was seeking to present to Governor Wallace, and she was roundly applauded. Near the end of the ceremony, Rosa Parks, the “Mother of the Movement,” who had set off Dr. King’s first demonstration when she was jailed for refusing to yield her seat to a white man on a bus in Montgomery, received the most enthusiastic cheers of all. “Tell it! Tell! Tell!” some of the marchers shouted. “Speak! Speak!” Finally, after an extravagant introduction by Mr. Abernathy, who referred to Dr. King as “conceived by God” (“This personality cult is getting out of hand,” said a college student, and, to judge by the apathetic reception of Mr. Abernathy’s words, the crowd agreed), Dr. King himself spoke. There were some enthusiastic yells of “Speak! Speak!” and “Yessir! Yessir!” from the older members of the audience when Dr. King’s speech began, but at first the younger members were subdued. Gradually, the whole crowd began to be stirred. By the time he reached his refrains—“Let us march on the ballot boxes. . . . We’re on the move now. . . . How long? Not long”—and the final, ringing “Glory, glory, hallelujah!,” the crowd was with him all the way.

The director of the march, Hosea Williams, of S.C.L.C., said some concluding words, remarking that there should be no lingering in Montgomery that night and exhorting the crowd to leave quietly and with dignity. There was a last rendition of “We Shall Overcome.” Within ten minutes. Dexter Avenue was cleared of all but the press and the troopers.

A few hours later, the delegation and its petition were turned away by Governor Wallace. At the airport, where there had been some difficulty during the preceding days (an uncanny number of suitcases belonging to marchers were mislaid by the airlines), new flights had been scheduled to get the marchers out of Montgomery. Still, many marchers had to wait at the airport all night long. They rested on the floor, and on the lawn outside, and as often as the police cleared them away they reappeared and fell asleep again. Word came that Mrs. Viola Liuzzo had been shot. Some of the marchers went back to Selma at once. Others boarded planes for home. At the Montgomery airport exit was a permanent official sign reading “Glad You Could Come. Hurry Back.” ♦

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