OXFORD, MISSISSIPPI -- For 10 hours, September 27, tension ebbed and flowed here. Shortly before 6 p.m., it eased into the night as word came that Negro James H. Meredith would not make a fourth attempt to register at the University of Mississippi.

Speaking in Memphis, his lawyer, New York attorney for the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, called off the attempt until conditions here abated and federal support for Meredith's bid strengthened. Earlier, Greenberg appeared for Meredith at a New Orleans news conference and called for greater protection to match the escalating power mustered at "Ole Miss" by Governor Ross R. Barnett.

Governor Barnett unbendingly defies a federal court order that young Meredith be registered. And, he September 27, deployed more than 400 Mississippi highway patrolmen, sheriffs, armbanded deputies, and yapping police dogs to fortify his standpoint and his state's 114 year old university.

But the day proved to be a far greater assault on the restraint of states rights or segregation.

At eight o'clock in the morning Governor Barnett's light blue Cadillac, dusty from the trip from Jackson, brought him to his Alumni House campus headquarters. (more)
Between that hour and six o'clock, gas masks were checked out, helmets positioned, dogs stationed a few hundred yards back from the main entranceway on University Avenue, and squad cars parked to line the road. At four other entrances, between 8-10 patrol cars pulled into position. Radios were ready to flash the word that the Meredith caravan of federal marshals was coming.

It never came. The morning sun burned off a generous dew. The noontime sun nagged at the hot helmets. The afternoon sun urged the troopers into the abundance of shade on the attractive campus.

At 1:35 (an officer barked:) "Let's go."

Rolling men dashed to their cars and sped off. "Meredith and the marshalls must be coming," rippled among newsmen and a few student onlookers. But it turned out to be a summons to meetings in downtown Oxford and in short order, the Mississippi law men were back on guard. At one of the five entrances to the campus the troopers accepted a bag of apples from a passing small truck and munching into their vigilance.

Suddenly, at 3:30, a newsman said: "They'll be here at 4." Probably another false alarm, but nobody takes a chance. Students are flowing from classes now and hundreds converge on the police outpost at a streetcorner just down from the main entrance. (more)
At 4 p.m. a shadowy cloud masks the sun. The highway patrol asks students to return to their dormitories. There are 19 helmeted troopers, night sticks ready, at the crossing.

At 4:40, Lt. Governor Paul Johnson speaks over a patrol car public address system: "If you want the Negro in Ole Miss you stay here," he says. "There'll be nothing to see here except him being turned back. Go back to the campus and to your homes in town. You who are from other parts of the country, go back to your homes, you'll only get in trouble here."

A handful move out. Most stay.

A 5, a roar from the students -- probably 1,500 of them by now. Governor Barnett arrives at the scene. He waves his black homburg at the students. They roar a football cheer, "Mama." The traffic signal overhead blinks endlessly for caution.

At 5:55, radio cast declares that Meredith is not coming. Another cheer and the crowd disperses.

The helmets are tipped back, and the crisis gets night off.

But the same forces and the same apprehensions are due Friday. Gov. Barnett has been summoned to a federal court hearing in New Orleans to show cause why he should not be cited for contempt of court for defying the Meredith registration order of last week.
He is not expected to appear. He wants to be here for the next effort to register Ole Miss' first Negro student, probably on Friday, if
...
Justice Department plans for forceful action have taken shape.

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