

Racists Bomb Birmingham Church, 6 Kids Die
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SIX KILLED IN BIRMINGHAM

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Racists Bomb Birmingham Church, 6 Kids Die

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.—Race hatred—fanned by the personal intervention of bigoted Gov. George Wallace—exploded into tragic death here Sunday.

At least four persons were dead and at least 12 others injured when a Negro church was bombed during Sunday school classes.

One child's head was completely blown off, according to Rev. John Cross, pastor of the bombed 16th Street Baptist Church.

"The four children who died must have been killed instantly. They were in the direct path of the explosion," the minister said.

drive by and then speed away just before the bomb hit," City Police Inspector W. J. Hailey said.

Hailey said a preliminary investigation of the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church, scene of Negro civil rights activities for months in this racially-troubled city, indicated at least 10 sticks of dynamite were used.

Meanwhile, both President Kennedy and Governor Wallace learned of the bombing.

Governor Wallace posted a \$5000 reward and ordered state troopers to investigate the bombing.

Wallace directed state troopers to "look for a car seen near the church at the time of the bombing."

"From the description of the men in the car they're looking for they could be white, black or Mexican," said Wallace.

President Kennedy received preliminary information from the Justice Department on the bombing.

Shortly after the President learned of the bombing, the White House yacht Honey Fitz appeared to pick up speed and head at a faster than usual clip to its pier.

But there was no immediate Presidential comment.

A church spokesman said the inside of the church was "complete chaos."

It was the 21st bombing in the Deep South steel city since the end of World War II and the fourth in four weeks.

Police said "at least 15 sticks of dynamite" were thrown or planted in the basement of the church.

An estimated 2,000 Negroes gathered around the church as word of the bombing spread. Some of them threw rocks at



OUTSIDE, DAMAGE: INSIDE, DEATH.

A Birmingham police officer points to damaged auto outside of the 16th Street Baptist Church, where four died and at least 12 were injured when a dynamite

bomb exploded while Sunday school was in progress. Blown out windows indicate force of blast.

"Today was Youth Day at the church. We had about 80 youngsters gathered in our youth department. They were just beginning to reassemble for their closing exercise when the blast went off about 10:22 a. m. CST."

The bombing enraged Negroes and resulted in rock-throwing skirmishes with police. One Negro fired shotgun blasts at officers who returned the fire.

"We have talked to witnesses who say they saw a car

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Bomb

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officers and police fired over the heads of the crowd several times, and pleaded with the Negroes to return to their homes.

Windows were shattered for blocks around the church. Several cars outside were crumpled like toys.

Eye witnesses saw four shrouded bodies being carried away from the ruins.

One man screamed "this is my sister. My God, she's dead."

Police had to push through the crowd of Negroes, most of them shouting, to get the ambulances and hearses to the church.

Police said there were 400 persons in the church when the bomb went off.

As word of the bombing spread throughout the city, enraged Negroes far from the scene of the church site, began throwing rocks at cars. Police fanned out into the Negro communities.

Hard-pressed police were barely able to hold back the

surging screaming crowd.

At one frantic point, the Rev. John Cross, pastor of the church, grabbed a police megaphone and walked back and forth urging the Negroes to leave the area.

"The police are doing everything they can. Please go home," he pleaded.

Tears streaming down his face, Cross shouted:

"The Lord is our shepherd. We shall not want."

Rev. Cross said he thought the bomb that left his church in shambles was planted before dawn, several hours prior to the blast. But police disagreed.

The windows were blown out of a laundry across the street from the church.

A woman kept running to

the door of the laundry, screaming and sobbing: "I'll kill the b———. Just let me at them. I'll kill them."

Then she fainted.

Only one stained glass window in the church remained unbroken. It was a replica of Christ leading a group of little children.

The 16th Street Baptist Church is adjacent to the Kelly-Ingram Park, a Negro city park where Negroes were doused by high pressure fire hoses during last May's massive racial demonstrations. The church is three blocks from city hall in the downtown area.

Inside the three-story stone church, the stairways leading to the main floor were a mass of splintered wood.