

Negroes Hear a Solemn RFK

By ERANK MAIER

INDIANAPOLIS (CDN)—Sen. Robert F. Kennedy pushed his way through the crowd of Negroes. The cheers swept in under the brilliant lights and then swept out again, into the darkness.

He pushed his way toward the platform—his mouth was closed tightly, his face ashen.

And then he was on the platform. The spotlight stabbed its white light down on him and he squinted out at the several hundred Negroes who had stood in the wind and cold on an outdoor basketball court for two hours waiting for him.

Beyond the lights at the edge of the crowd was darkness.

He Tells Them

He raised his arms and he did not smile. He turned to a man on the platform and he said, "Has anybody told them?"

"No," the man said. "We left it up to you."

So Kennedy stepped up the microphone. The wind whipped against his overcoat, the words came slowly.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I am going to talk to you for only a few moments. I have said news for all of you, and sad news for all our citizens."

And the crowd was quiet.

"Martin Luther King was shot and killed tonight."

There were screams. There were shouts: "Oh, no! Oh, no!" Most of the people had not heard the news.

'Oh God . . .'

When Kennedy's plane landed at Indianapolis, an aide quickly rushed to a telephone. He returned minutes later and told Kennedy that King was dead.

"Oh, God," Kennedy said. That was all.

He sat alone in the rear of the plane, on the arm of a chair, his coat on, staring at the floor. His wife, Ethel, came over and talked to him, quietly. He got up and kissed her on the cheek, and he walked off the plane.

At the Negro rally, Kennedy spoke with a slow eloquence. When the crowd quieted, he said:

"Martin Luther King dedicated his life to love and to justice between his fellow human beings. He died in the cause of that effort.

"For those of you who are black—considering the evidence that white people are responsible for the shooting—you can be filled with bitterness and ha-

tried and a desire for revenge. We can move in that direction or we can make the effort, as Martin Luther King did, to replace that violence, that state of bloodshed that has spread across the land.

"For those of you who are black and tempted to be filled with hatred at the injustice of such an act, I can also feel in my heart the same kind of feeling.

"I had a member of my family killed . . . killed by a white man."

"So I ask you tonight to return home and say a prayer for the family of Martin Luther King. That's true. But more importantly, to say a prayer for our country which all of us love."