Sunday, Bloody Sunday in N.O.

By JACK WARDLAW

Little clouds of white dust, like puffs of smoke, rose from the side of the Downtown Howard Johnson's building as police rifle bullets ripped into it.

One didn't walk down such commonplace, everyday streets as Loyola, Gravier or Rampart. One scurried from doorway to doorway, ducking behind pillars and utility poles, ready to literally hit the concrete belly first with the next eruption of gunfire.

It couldn't happen here.

It wasn't New Orleans. It was a Latin American capital during a coup d'etat. It was Hanoi under an air raid. It was Paris under Nazi occupation.

SOME CITIZENS just couldn't accept it. An ambulance driver told of a scene on the neutral ground of Loyola right after one policeman was shot to death inside the hotel. "Gunfire was still coming from the hotel. We (the ambulance crew) were dodging, crawling any way we could ot get across the street. But there on the neutral ground a man was standing with his arms folded and his wife and two little kids were right beside him. They acted like they didn't know what was going on."

A few bystanders paid for their carelessness with bullet wounds. Many policemen, needed elsewhere, spent the day chasing spectators back a safe distance from the action.

At dusk, the crowd of spectators at Tulane and Loyola became unruly, throwing bottles and trash at police and had to be dispersed.

It was just too unreal.

THE FIRST sight on arriving at the scene was not unexpected, but shocking enough on its own. It was the pillar of smoke once again billowing skyward from a business district skyscraper, only a few weeks after the Rault Center fire which took five lives and just a year and a half since a fire at this very hotel killed six.

Just across Gravier street stood the Rault Center, its upper floors still a hulk from the previous fire, not only a grim reminder of that tragedy but for this occasion a vantage point for police exchanging fire with the sniper in the upper floors of the Howard Johnson's.

And that was the second shock. Everywhere you looked, atop the Bank of New Orleans Building, the State Office Building, Warwick Hotel and others, were helmeted officers, firearms in hand.

It looked like a city under siege.

AND THEN there was the sound of gunfire. Except for the grim reality of the tragedy, it could have been the fireworks on New Year's Eve. But you knew better. It was the sound of danger and death.

Sometimes it was intermittent, like a car backfiring now and again. But too often it was a general fusillade, like in Civil War movies when a cavalry charge is broken against an entrenched defense. Either way, it was a chilling sound, a sound that didn't belong in downtown New Orleans.

Nor did the sight of people — police officers and spectators alike—huddling in doorways, crouching behind brick walls, scuttling for any kind of cover as the shooting resumed.

There was the smell of tear gas in the air, if you got that close to the hotel; therew as a drenching flood of water pouring off the sides of the building, which dwindled to a gentle

Turn to Page 12, Column 1

Sunday, Bloody Sunday

Continued from Front Page

mist in the wind as you got further away from the scene.

MOSTLY, THERE was the black gloomy feeling of tragedy as the city lost a respected leader in Louis Sirgo and more of its brave policemen.

Said an officer who saw one of his comrades shot to death:

"I don't know about you guys, I'm going to start going to church again."