

King Alibis For FBI Chief ---'Pressure'

New York Times

Atlanta, Ga.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said yesterday that J. Edgar Hoover "has apparently faltered under the awesome burden, complexities and responsibilities of his office."

Hoover, director of the FBI, Wednesday had called the Negro integration leader "the most notorious liar in the country."

His charge came in an interview with a group of women reporters in Washington. Hoover criticized the Rev. Dr. King for saying the FBI agents in Albany, Ga., had failed to act on Negroes' civil rights complaints because they were Southerners.

Hoover said that four of the five agents working in the Albany area at the time were from the north. He added that when he tried to confer with the Rev. Dr. King on the matter, the Atlanta minister ignored his phone calls.

TELEGRAM

The Rev. Dr. King denied this in a telegram he sent to Hoover and added that he would be available at any time to discuss the FBI's work on civil rights issues.

In addition to the telegram, the Rev. Dr. King made his reply to Hoover in a statement issued in Atlanta that was released by the Southern Leadership Conference, of which the Rev. Dr. King is president.

The Rev. Dr. King is in the Bahamas preparing a speech he will make at Oslo, Norway, next month accepting the Nobel peace prize.

STATEMENT

This is his statement regarding Hoover's charge that he lied:

"I cannot conceive of Mr. Hoover making a statement like this without being under



A. P. Wirephoto

DR. KING IN THE BAHAMAS
He said Hoover had 'faltered'

extreme pressure. He has apparently faltered under the awesome burden, complexities and responsibilities of his office. Therefore, I cannot engage in a public debate with him. I have nothing but sympathy for this man who has served his country so well."

Hoover will be 70 on January 1.

The interview given Wednesday by Hoover, was the subject of avid discussion throughout Washington yesterday. Hoover told a group of women reporters, among other things, that the Rev. Dr. King was "the most notorious liar in the country."

'COMMUNIST'

It was also learned that Hoover had also said during the interview that the Rev. Dr. King had Communist connections. But he put "off the record" his affirmative answer to a question on that subject.

Hoover also implied criticism of General Robert F. Kennedy. He said some of the difficulty in Mississippi in the last few months here in Washington, by the Department of Justice.

In theory Hoover and the FBI are under the Justice Department's supervision. In fact, he has been largely independent of attorneys general for many years.

SURPRISE

Kennedy made a vigorous attempt to reassert Justice Department direction, but his influence over Hoover waned after the assassination of his brother, President Kennedy.

Hoover's views were no great surprise to informed officials here. He is known to have spoken privately, for example, about alleged Communist connections with the Civil Rights movement.

What did surprise official Washington was that he would give expression to his views. Hoover has never made a practice of giving interviews. Most press requests for talks with him get no response.

Just why he decided to talk to this group of women reporters at this time was not explained. An FBI aide, declining all other comment on the interview, said Hoover had "had a few things on his mind for quite some time" and he thought this would be "as good a time as any to talk about them."

DAMAGE

The general feeling was that he had hurt himself by abandoning his usual inscrutability. There was even some talk of his not staying on as director—the job he has held for 40 years—after January 1.

Last May 8, President Johnson signed an executive order suspending compulsory retirement provisions for Hoover "for an indefinite period of time." He called Hoover an old friend and praised him as a "quiet, humble and magnificent public servant."

White House Press Secretary George Reedy said yesterday that he knew of no change in the President's views since then.

The Rev. Dr. King released the text of the telegram to Hoover taking issue with his remarks.

'SURPRISED'

"I was appalled and surprised at your reported statement maligning my integrity," he wired Hoover. "What motivated such an irresponsible accusation is a mystery to me."

"I have sincerely questioned the effectiveness of the FBI in racial incidents, particularly where bombings and brutalities against Negroes are at issue. But I have never attributed this merely to the presence of Southerners in the FBI. This is part of a broader question of Federal involvement in the protection of Negroes in the South and the seeing inability to gain convictions in even the most heinous crimes perpetuated against civil rights workers."

"It remains a fact," the Rev. Dr. King continued, "that not a single arrest was made in Albany, Ga., during the many brutalities against Negroes. Neither has a single arrest been made in connection with the tragic murder of the four children in Birmingham nor in the case of the three murdered civil rights workers in Mississippi."

AGENTS

"Moreover," he continued, "all FBI agents inevitably with local law enforcement officials in car thefts, bank robberies and other interstate violations. This makes it more difficult to function effectively in cases where the rights and safety of Negro citizens are being threatened by these same law enforcement officers."

The Rev. Dr. King said he would "be happy to discuss this question with you at length in the near future. Although your statement said that you had attempted to meet with me, I have sought in vain for any record of such a request."