

CHARGE OF LAXITY IS DENIED BY F.B.I.

Inquiry on Carolina Deaths
Called Thorough by Hoover

WASHINGTON, Oct. 9 (AP)—J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has denied that the agency carried out a superficial investigation of the killing of three Negroes and the wounding of 27 others near the South Carolina State College campus at Orangeburg in 1968.

"Investigation was both intensive and extensive," Mr. Hoover said. "Numerous special agents worked day and night gathering information, extensive laboratory examinations were conducted, and 1,500 pieces of investigative results were submitted to the U.S. Attorney as well as the Civil Rights Division [of the Justice Department]."

Mr. Hoover made the defense in a letter to Jack Bass, co-author of "The Orangeburg Massacre," a new book about the shootings.

Mr. Bass, a newsman with The Charlotte Observer, and Jack Nelson of The Los Angeles Times, alleged in this book that the F.B.I. had failed to meet its standard of thoroughness in some aspects of the investigation.

The book says that Justice Department lawyers offer two theories about the bureau's handling of the investigation.

Termed Reluctant

One theory, according to the book, is that bureau agents were reluctant witnesses against nine South Carolina highway patrolmen accused in the case because of a close working relationship with the patrol.

The second theory holds that agents "felt they were in no position to acknowledge their presence on the scene because they were there on their own initiative, without specific authorization of F.B.I. headquarters in Washington."

The nine patrolmen were acquitted of civil rights violations in connection with the shootings.

In his letter, Mr. Hoover said the bureau's close relation with all responsible law enforcement agencies "does not affect the objectivity or thoroughness of our investigations."

Mr. Bass and Mr. Nelson wrote that the bureau had never been fully committed to civil rights investigations, an assertion that Mr. Hoover characterized as "a shopworn canard that disintegrates in the light of the facts."

Mr. Bass and Mr. Nelson say that their allegations hold despite Mr. Hoover's denial.

Bass Cites Letter

In replying, Mr. Bass cited excerpts from a letter sent last Monday to Mr. Hoover, in which he wrote:

"In summary I am certain my co-author agrees with me that the book in our judgment represents a carefully researched documentary that is both fair and objective and certainly is not an attempt to 'smear anyone. Although your disagreements on certain conclusions and premises are understandable, I find no substantive error of fact in the book as it pertains to the F.B.I. or any other group or individual. The facts in this episode are unkind to many."

Mr. Bass said that the letter also pointed out that "the book reports that the Justice Department lawyer who prosecuted the case considered it a 'significant accomplishment' that F.B.I. agents secured signed statements from all of the 66 highway patrolmen who were present. The statements revealed who did the shooting."

In a statement, Mr. Bass said, "Mr. Hoover points out that 1,500 pages of investigative results were submitted by the F.B.I. during the Orangeburg investigation. At Jackson State College, where there were fewer deaths and fewer injuries, more than 4,000 pages of investigative reports were submitted, and at Kent State, the F.B.I. reports totaled more than 8,000 pages."

Mr. Bass also said, "The facts on the F.B.I.'s performance, as reported in the book, were based on interviews with former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, former Deputy Assistant Attorney General D. Robert Owen of the Civil Rights Division, other lawyers in the Justice Department, and the agents themselves."