Gen. Biddle Opens Probe Of Lynching

JACKSON, Miss.—(ANP)—The eyes of the nation were focused, this week, on Mississippi when Federal Bureau of Investigation agents were sent here to conduct a probe of the recent lynchings of two 14-year-old boys and a middle-aged man.

United States Atty. Gen. Francis Biddle upon dispatch of his representation said that "Assuming investigation develops a case, relentless prosecution will follow."

Gov. Paul Johnson welcomed the G-men stating, "If the federal government acting within its constitutional powers can be of assistance to the state I shall welcome any investigation it wishes to make."

The governor added that he had done everything possible to bring the lynchers to justice but that his efforts had failed. He reported that his personal representative, who had been ordered to Quitman, scene of one of the atrocities, said he could not learn the identity of the guilty.

Johnson sent the investigator to Quitman after Charles Lang and Ernest Green had been kidnapped from the jail last Sunday and hanged across a nearby bridge by a mob estimated at 50 people. The youths had been arrested earlier on the unproved charges of a 13-year-old white girl that they attempted to rape her.

The other lynching occurred less than a week later and involved Howard Wash, 45, who was charged with murdering his employer last
May 8. He was taken from the Laurel jailhouse and dragged through city streets before the hanging.

Johnson said his troops had arrested five men believed to have taken part in the Wash lynching, but they were subsequently released. Three others however are reported out on $1,000 bonds. They are Barney Jones, Oscar Johnson and N. Shotts, said to come from wealthy families.

The governor was apparently inclined to allow the federal investigation to take its course but he was careful to point out that, "It remains with the civil officers in the counties in which the lynchings were committed to follow up the cases."

One of two previous investigations ended with a federal grand jury finding "with reluctance" that information revealed "does not constitute any federal offense." The case was a probe into the lynching of Cleo Wright, at Sikesston, Mo., last March. The other case is still pending.

This latter case concerns the lynching of Willie Vinson, at Texarkana, Tex., on July 20. Vinson who was "accused" of raping a white woman, was dragged from a hospital bed and mobbed.