

FBI Spread Gossip About Seberg Baby

Post 9/13/70
Associated Press

The FBI admitted yesterday that in 1970 it spread gossip that actress Jean Seberg, who committed suicide recently, had become pregnant by a member of the Black Panther Party.

The bureau released an internal memo that showed it had sought to discredit Seberg because she supported the black nationalist cause.

"It is felt that the possible publication of Seberg's plight could cause her embarrassment and serve to cheapen her image with the general public," the memo said.

Her husband at the time, Romain Gary, a French diplomat and author, charged this week that the FBI had destroyed Seberg's life by disseminating the rumor about her pregnancy. The child was born dead.

The information about Seberg was distributed by the FBI as part of its counterintelligence program known as Cointelpro.

In acknowledging the bureau's action, FBI Director William H. Webster asserted that "the days when the FBI used derogatory information to com-

Memo Says Bureau Tried to Cheapen Her

bat advocates of unpopular causes have long since passed. We are out that business forever."

He said the FBI conducts investigations now only when there have been charges of criminal conduct.

Government documents show that in the memo, dated April 27, 1970, the Los Angeles office of the FBI asked bureau headquarters in Washington for permission "to publicize the pregnancy of Jean Seberg, well-known movie actress."

The references to a supposed member of the Black Panther Party who fathered the child were deleted, as was the name of the FBI informant who initially provided the tip to the FBI office in San Francisco.

The Los Angeles office of the FBI suggested that the best way to get the story out would be to have a fictitious

person send a note to Hollywood columnists about Seberg. The proposed note would read as follows:

"I was just thinking about you and remembered I still owe you a favor. So I was in Paris last week and ran into Jean Seberg who was heavy with baby. I thought she and Romain had gotten together again but she confided the child belonged to (blank space) of the Black Panthers. The dear girl is getting around."

On May 6, 1970, the FBI, then under the direction of J. Edgar Hoover, responded that the idea was a good one.

"But to protect the sensitive source of information from possible compromise and to insure the success of your plan, Bureau feels it would be better to wait approximately two additional months until Seberg's pregnancy would be obvious to everyone," the memo cautioned.

It noted that "Jean Seberg has been a financial supporter of the BPP (Black Panther Party) and should be neutralized. The current pregnancy by

See SEBERG, A11, Col. 1

SEBERG, From A1

(black space) while still married affords an opportunity for such effort."

On May 19, 1970, the Los Angeles Times published an article by Hollywood gossip columnist Joyce Haber, which referred to an anonymous "miss A," an international movie star who supported the "Black Revolution" and who "is expecting . . . Papa's said to be a rather prominent Black Panther."

The Haber article provided a number of details that matched Seberg's personal and professional life.

(Gary, the actress's former husband, said in 1970 that while they were in the process of getting a divorce, she read a similar account, this time nam-

ing Miss Seberg, in Newsweek magazine's edition of Aug. 24, 1970, and shortly thereafter she was rushed to a hospital for a premature delivery. A French court subsequently awarded her several thousand dollars in a libel suit involving the article).

In an interview earlier this year, Seberg said she was seven months pregnant when she read the article and the shock was so great that it caused her to go into labor immediately and the child was dead at birth.

Gary said that as a result she "became psychotic" and "every year on the anniversary of this stillbirth she has tried to take her own life."

Gary said he always believed the child was his, and he said the child was white.

Seberg's body was found this week in her car near the Paris apartment she had been sharing with an Algerian actor. She had been missing for nine days and had left a suicide note for her 16-year-old son, Diego. The cause of death was diagnosed as an overdose of barbiturates that a doctor had prescribed for psychiatric problems.

Jean Seberg's Paris Burial

Attended by 200 Mourners

PARIS, Sept. 14 (AP)—Actress Jean Seberg was buried in a Paris cemetery today, a suicide whose self-destructive depression the family

blamed on an FBI subterfuge of almost a decade ago.

About 200 persons—friends, relatives, fans and the curious—gathered around the polished-wood casket, wreathed in lilies, daisies and yellow roses, for the service in Montparnasse Cemetery. Among the mourners were her three former husbands, her teenage son, French actor Jean-Paul Belmondo and Algerian actor Ahmed Hasmi, with whom Seberg had been living before her death.

Friday's funeral service began with the reading, in English, of a poem she wrote when she was 18: "I went through the woods for a walk in the rain . . . and as I walked my soul was freed from pain . . ."