

Hoover rated Carmichael as 'black messiah'

By Rob Warden

J. Edgar Hoover wrote in a 1968 internal FBI memo just made public that black militant Stokely Carmichael had the "necessary charisma to be a real threat" to the internal security of the United States.

The memo singled out Carmichael as the most likely "messiah" among black leaders at the time to "unify and electrify the black nationalist movement" — more likely than the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Elijah Muhammad or H. Rap Brown.

Hoover said in the memo dated March 4, 1968, that it was important for the FBI to try to prevent the rise of a "messiah" who could put together a coalition of militant black groups.

Such a coalition, Hoover wrote, "might be the first step toward a real 'Mau Mau' in America — the beginning of a true black revolution."

PARTS OF THE six-page memo, including the reference to Carmichael, were admitted as evidence here Monday in the trial of a \$47.7 million damage suit filed on behalf of survivors of a 1969 raid in which Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark were killed.

Defendants in the case are 28 local officials and FBI agents who allegedly conspired to deprive Hampton and Clark of their civil rights. Former State's Atty. Edward V. Hanrahan and 13 other local officials who are defendants in this case were tried and acquitted in 1972 of criminal charges stemming from the raid.

At the time of the Hoover



Carmichael



Hoover

them. It was learned from other public records that Brown was mentioned.

The memo also noted that an unnamed leader, almost certainly Malcolm X, might have been a "messiah" had he not been slain three years before.

Hoover's memo ordered various FBI field offices around the country to submit to him a "very succinct summary of the black nationalist movement" in their areas that might be targeted for counterintelligence activity by the FBI.

The Chicago field office's reply to that directive was five single-spaced pages long. It was admitted in evidence at the trial, but everything not specifically referring to the Panthers was blanked out. And since the Chicago Panther chapter had not been formed at the time, the trial exhibit consisted primarily of blank pages.

THE PORTION of the reply made public stated that the Chicago office "agrees with the bureau completely in the necessity of developing such a (counterintelligence) program to attempt to combat the potential effectiveness" of black nationalist groups.

Such groups, according to the Chicago office's reply dated April 22, 1968, include "some of the most dangerous and violence-prone individuals in this country, who pose the most grave threat to this nation's internal security within recent years."

The Panther lawsuit, being tried by a six-member jury before U.S. District Court Judge Joseph Sam Perry, contends the Hoover memo set in motion an illegal counterintelligence program that resulted in the fatal Panther raid here.

memo, Carmichael was a member of the 2-year-old Black Panther Party, but was best known for his earlier leadership role in the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee. Later, Carmichael moved to Africa and disavowed the Panthers as "dishonest and vicious."

NAMES OF other leaders whom Hoover saw as potential "messiahs" weren't made public, but it was clear from the context that King and Elijah Muhammad were among