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Rosenberg Case

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FBI Tried to Keep 2 Writers Off TV

Washington

The FBI took steps in the mid-1960s to prevent the authors of a book about convicted atomic spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg from discussing their work on television interview programs, according to newly released bureau documents.

In a memorandum written on Oct. 16, 1965, William C. Sullivan, then an assistant FBI director, reported to his superiors that Walter and Miriam Schneir, the authors, had approached "a leading television man in Chicago" with a request to discuss on his program their book, "Invitation to an Inquest."

Sullivan said he believed that the Schneirs intended not only to "exonerate the Rosenbergs," who were executed in June, 1953, while continuing to maintain their innocence, but also "to attack and undermine the FBI in its investigations."

"In view of this," Sullivan wrote, he had told an intermediary "to instruct" the unnamed television personality "not to permit the Schneirs to go on his television program, for no good would accrue from it."

Sullivan recommended that the FBI "take careful steps to secure the cooperation of friendly television stations and prevent this subversive effort from being successful. It would be kept off television programs and smothered and forced out of the public eye," he said in the memorandum.

Sullivan is now retired.

Schneir said in a telephone interview that he recalled having been rebuffed in an attempt to appear on a television program in Chicago conducted by Irv Kupcinet, a columnist for the Chicago Sun-Times, but he could not say whether that was the program to which Sullivan referred.

Kupcinet, reached at his Chicago office, said that the Schneirs had asked for an appearance, but that

he had decided that "there was no way we could use them," and that he had never sought guidance on the matter from the FBI.

The Sullivan memorandum and other documents were released by the FBI in response to a request under the Freedom of Information Act by Michael and Robert Meeropol, the Rosenbergs' sons.

New York Times