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## The Truth, After 26 Years

"The truth never dies," old wisdom consoles us. But it leads a miserable life. Where truth clashes with the needs of politics, it has a particularly wretched existence. So it is with the truth about Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, executed by the US government as atom spies for the Soviet Union 26 years ago this week. Neither the Rosenbergs' antagonists, nor their leading defenders, nor even the martyrs themselves had much use for the truth. But the truth never dies, and as a result the Rosenberg case still haunts the American conscience, especially the American liberal conscience.

Even without the deliberate injuries to the truth perpetrated by all sides, the Rosenberg story would be haunting. How could it not be? The execution of two young parents, going to their deaths protesting their innocence, stirs the emotions even of those without a political investment in their innocence. It was an ugly time, and an ugly case, reason enough for doubts to have survived the defendants. But honest doubts notwithstanding, the ensuing bitter controversy around the Rosenberg case had less to do with the pursuit of truth than it did with the defense of entrenched positions and attitudes. The executions guaranteed this. That the Rosenbergs were dead made it all the more important to their supporters that they be innocent of all wrongdoing. On the other side, that of the government and its supporters, the executions of the Rosenbergs made it crucial to insist on the justice of the verdict against them, the propriety of the procedures by which they were convicted and the magnitude of their crime.

But the political role of the Rosenberg case also left little room for the pursuit of the truth. Your view of the Rosenbergs depended on your view of the cold war. To some, the Rosenbergs were innocent lambs, convicted with manufactured evidence because of their progressive opinions and their religious background; any other view was an acceptance of McCarthyism. To others, the Rosenbergs were single-handedly responsible for the Soviet bomb and the Korean war; any other view was sympathetic to communism.

In this issue, *The New Republic* publishes a meticulous report by historian Ronald Radosh and journalist Sol Stern based on their research into the Rosenberg case. They have been through the entire government Rosenberg file available so far, including almost 200,000 pages of recently released FBI documents. They have interviewed scores of people including former government officials involved in the case, and also men and women who knew the Rosenbergs and the New York Communist and pro-Communist world in which the Rosenbergs lived. The conclusions Radosh and Stern reach are fresh and even stunning. In some particulars, they are especially awful to contemplate. But they should not surprise those who are willing to live in a complex world. In any case, their evidence is so compelling that it will not allow the standard versions of total innocence or guilt to continue to obscure the truth of a case whose ambiguities may amount to a metaphor for the post-war era.

Stern and Radosh conclude that Julius Rosenberg was an espionage agent for the Soviet Union. They add

significantly to the evidence offered by the prosecution at the trial and by writers subsequently. The new evidence confirms Julius's role in a spy network composed of ostensibly ordinary people whose prime political conviction happened to be a belief in the special world mission of communist Russia.

Our authors also find that the government had no hard evidence of Ethel's involvement in her husband's spy ring, the existence of which is otherwise amply documented. The article demonstrates, in fact, that Ethel was indicted and brought to trial—ultimately executed—solely as part of the failed attempt to get her husband to talk: not about the wartime nuclear spying for which they were convicted, but about espionage that had occurred after the war.

A split decision: thus are the great simplifiers on both sides confounded. Real historical truth will not play facile partisan games.

What is the significance of all this? Why do we believe it wreaks such havoc with the received opinions? Why will the careful and disinterested work done by Radosh and Stern upset the warring camps in this generation-long struggle for a final judgment on that episode which some see as innocent martyrdom and others as the crime of the century?

Evidence of Julius Rosenberg's involvement in a spy network operating in the US as late as 1950 for the interests of the Soviet Union attacks the very heart of the Rosenberg defense. It does this not just for the obvious reason that it lends weight to the specific charges against him. Historically more important, it undermines two articles of faith that led so many people on the left, then and now, to adopt the Rosenberg case as a symbol. One, the Rosenbergs were arrested, tried, convicted, punished for their opinions—as exemplary and cautionary victims of the cold war brought home by the American government. Two, such crimes as the Rosenbergs were charged with are inadmissible even as a possibility. These things did not happen; they couldn't happen; American "progressives" did not behave that way; (and for some) the Soviet Union did not behave that way. For the more fervent Rosenberg partisans, the inevitable corollary to these fundamental assertions is that American justice was nothing better than the justice of a police state. Jean-Paul Sartre called it "fascist"—authoritative enough to be quoted to angry crowds everywhere. The Rosenberg execution was in some perverse way satisfying to these people: it vindicated their estimate of American society.

What lurks behind the reflexive defense of the Rosenbergs is the preposterous but implicit claim that the USSR did not recruit and use Americans—and particularly its faithful followers among left-wing Americans—as spies against their own country. Of course, the American Communist party was not only or primarily a reservoir of spies. Most party militants

probably were unaware of its espionage function. But clearly some were spies (just as there are Russians who spy for us, some possibly out of idealistic motives). Yet any suggestion of this obvious fact even today can bring forth outraged protests.

How many of those who believed then or believe now that the case against the Rosenbergs was totally fabricated reached this conclusion after scrutinizing the evidence offered by the prosecution? Not many. To most, the innocence of all those accused of spying has been a matter of faith, of predisposition—in fact, a matter of politics. There are exceptions, of course: the agnostic and the confused, not sure what to believe, and the rarer few who tried to make up their own minds in each case. But for the most part, those who believed that the Rosenbergs had done nothing also believed that Hiss had done nothing and William Remington and even some who had confessed. Their belief that all accused spies were falsely accused was just a corollary of their view that the American Communist party's goals were nothing more alarming than civil rights for blacks and unionizing underpaid workers. (Of course some savvy Communists assumed that the Rosenbergs and others had done espionage work for the Soviet Union, but felt that the spying was justified—and so was the outraged denial—in the interest of peace and humanity. By their strange moral rationalizations, even spies could be innocent victims of a frame-up.)

On the other side, it was also sheer faith and politics that caused people to accept without question that the Rosenbergs were guilty, and Hiss and Remington and even Owen Lattimore and that, in fact, all leftists were Communists and all Communists were spies for the Soviet Union.

One passion dominated the lives of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg; one fire flamed for them: it was devotion to the Soviet Union and to the Communist cause. In their Sing Sing letters—aimed at a wider sympathetic audience and, in any case, read by prison officials—they were constrained not to express that devotion clearly. So they wrote instead in a distorted shorthand about American democracy, the Jewish heritage, the Declaration of Independence, the "unconquerable spirit" of the Brooklyn Dodgers (who'd hired Jackie Robinson, the first black in the major leagues), Laura Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement*, momentous things and trivia. They did not mind appropriating and distorting these ideals. But did they find it painful to have to hide their true beliefs? Did they mind writing "Roosevelt" when they were thinking "Stalin"? Probably not. The moral universe of American communism already had habituated them to the transparent lies and shallow pretense. Even in the Sing Sing death house, the ritual guile and ruses of the Rosenbergs demonstrated their fidelity to the ruling passion.

We are right to remember the McCarthy era as a horrid time. It made men and women fearful and cowardly; it valued conformity over independence and

rewarded some ill-defined patriotic loyalty over loyalty to the truth. It produced victims whose sufferings were unwarranted and beyond calculation. It foreclosed the liberal agenda at home; and it put the conduct of foreign affairs under the spell of apocalyptic and hysterics. The Vietnam war was only the most egregious foreign-policy dividend of the McCarthy era.

But one other legacy from those dark years is the difficulty that inhibited liberals, especially, have in seeing the leftist political landscape clearly. Today still, many find it hard to criticize leftist positions and individuals lest they be accused of McCarthyite tactics. One consequence of this astigmatism is that all the targets of the McCarthy era are sometimes unjustifiably viewed as victims and heroes.

The facts were more complicated. To have gotten into trouble is not the same as having been virtuous. Hostile witnesses before the various "un-American" committees were often craven backers of Stalinism. They practiced a most asymmetrical style of political bookkeeping. No enormity committed by the Soviet Union would fail to find some elaborate and cocky rationalization, and plenty of eminent Americans eager to assert it. People stirred by the plight of American blacks or miners had stone hearts for those who were swept under by Stalin's world designs. What was in the interests of the new Mother Russia defined what was good.

The Rosenbergs were extreme examples of the kind of people who inhabited this moral universe. The public ordeal of Julius and Ethel evoked from their defenders comparably unbalanced perceptions of events. Some of the imbalance can be attributed to sheer duplicity. In Ethel's clemency letter to President Eisenhower, she recalled his role as the liberator of Europe from the Nazis. To Julius earlier, however, she referred to Eisenhower as a *gauleiter*. But was she being hypocritical when she alluded to her husband and herself as an "unoffending Jewish couple," victims of anti-semitism? Certainly she thought this was at least a partial explanation of the trap they found themselves in. Their supporters too were satisfied by such a ready analysis of the case. In the public clamor for the Rosenbergs, much was made of their Jewishness. That they were prosecuted and tried by Jews lent weight to the anti-semitic explanation. Much also was made of the fact that they were executed on the Jewish Sabbath—a holy day which they never had been known to observe. All of this agitation about the Rosenbergs as victims in the direct line of the Jews who died at Auschwitz took place during a time of explicit anti-semitic purges in the Soviet camp, particularly in Czechoslovakia where defendants were identified as "Jewish bourgeois" and "Jewish cosmopolitans" charged with the crime of Zionism. But in the world of American communism, calling attention to the endemic anti-semitism in the Communist orbit was an act of libel. It was likewise libel to suggest that the treatment of those accused of

disloyalty in the regimes under Soviet control offered an unattractive alternative for those dissatisfied with the American system of justice, during the low points of the McCarthy period.

Nevertheless, that American system of justice failed Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. It failed them in three ways. First, on the merits of the case itself, it appears to have convicted Ethel Rosenberg of committing espionage on the flimsiest and least reliable evidence. Second, the conduct of their prosecution and trial departed far from the American ideal of neutral justice. As Stern and Radosh demonstrate in this issue, Ethel was indicted for reasons having nothing to do with the crime she allegedly had committed; and Julius, while in jail awaiting trial, was tricked into confiding secrets to an FBI stoolie, who was relaying everything he said to the government. Furthermore, as Harvard Law Professor Vern Countryman has shown ("Out, Damned Spot," *TNR*, October 8, 1977), the judge in the Rosenberg trial, Irving Kaufman, was in regular contact with the Justice Department prosecution staff during the trial.

**T**he third and greatest way American justice failed the Rosenbergs was the death sentence. Judge Kaufman apparently told the prosecution staff he planned to impose it, even before the jury had returned a verdict. President Eisenhower refused to grant clemency. Yet the government knew then, and we all know now, that even if the Rosenbergs had done everything they stood accused of—acting as conduits for David Greenglass's information about the Manhattan project—the offense was trivial in the annals of espionage for which they were killed.

Of one of them, Julius, one cannot really doubt his role in the Soviet spy network operating in the US during and after World War II. Of his wife, Ethel, nothing conclusive can be said. Historians and psychologists have argued from the evidence that she was more ideologically committed than her husband; they may be right. But that says nothing about conspiracy or espionage. In this country, we don't execute people for misguided fervor. From what we know of the Rosenbergs' life together, it is hard to imagine that Ethel was unaware of her husband's activities on behalf of the Soviet Union. Her affections for him may well have been predicated and deepened by these activities. But here we are in the realm of speculation and amateur psychology. None of this, in any case, would add an iota of credibility to the government's case against Ethel Rosenberg. The case against her was not proven. On the contrary, as Radosh and Stern show, all that linked Ethel to espionage was the inconsistent testimony of her brother and sister-in-law, the Greenglasses. Yet the government put Ethel in the dock as an equal with her husband. Now we know why: she was to be a hostage for his confession and all the information he had about Soviet espionage in the US. But Julius would

not confess. Having brought Ethel all the way to death row, the government had no way of relenting. Her life was its card with Julius; the US played it to the end. Julius did not play. Ethel had to die.

The government's strategy was brutish and cool. In this very coolness, it reflects the cruelty of the period. Yes, there was a cold war hysteria. Its impact can still be felt in Judge Kaufman's hyperbolic speech sentencing the Rosenbergs to the electric chair. It is of a piece with the ugly sentiments in the streets: "Death to the commie rats." But this hysteria was not just a spontaneous rising out of American hearts. It was succored by the political and opinion elites, which consciously fanned the flames of popular hysteria.

Under pressure from the fringe right, it is now protested. In the context of Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe and Korea, it is said in justification. Provoked by the venality of our former Russian allies. A response to the totalitarian menace. Reacting to the presence of a fifth column at home. There is some truth in all of these explanations. But they justify nothing. In its moment of crisis, American democracy apparently could not defend itself without violating precisely those demanding principles and values that distinguish it from its tyrannical enemies.

The age of innocence is over—or it should be. Surely we are no longer inclined to assume the best about our government. It has proven itself too callous with the people's liberties, and too casual with the truth for the nexus of trust between government and citizen to be secure. The moral authority of government will not be restored by incantation or public breast-beating over its absence. It needs to be earned and, at best, in an atmosphere of skepticism.

But this skepticism—Jeffersonian vigilance, one may call it—toward officialdom and its penchant for jingoism ought not make us credulous about those in the world who have taken up the anti-American vocation. Unaccountably *they* sometimes still have moral authority among Americans who deny the moral authority of the American government. These present-day and self-styled American idealists, in a search for roots, link themselves with the old fellow-traveling left. Let us, for the sake of both past and future, recall that left: its soft spot for dictators, its contempt for scruples, its abuse of language and people, its dogmatism and intolerance, its instrumental notion of ethics. These people could not be trusted; their word was their dishonor. Those who see them as heroes can't be trusted either.



drawing of Menachem Begin by András Goldinger

## Arafat's Unexpected Ally

In the past few weeks, Israel and Egypt have taken major steps toward a full peace. These include the early return of El Arish by the Israelis; the meetings in that city and then in Beersheba; the extraordinary reception of President Sadat by the inhabitants of Beersheba, repeating the deep emotions of Jerusalem in 1977; the passage of Israeli naval vessels through the Suez Canal; Moshe Dayan's visit to Cairo; the opening of air and sea links between the two countries. All this is cause for rejoicing. Despite the deep disagreements that remain, and against a background of unrelenting hostility throughout the Arab world, a pattern of cooperation

has begun to emerge that encourages genuine hope.

But at the same time, another pattern of cooperation has become apparent. This one is not a cause for hope, and sometimes it is very ugly indeed. Hardliners in the Israeli government (and nationalist fanatics outside it) have joined with PLO terrorists—though the two groups would never talk to each other—and they are now in effect working together to stop any further progress toward political autonomy or territorial compromise on the West Bank. The position of the PLO is clear; we have discussed it before in these pages. Terrorist attacks on Israelis and the assassination of

necessary to keep up with the experienced subtleties of Christian democracy. Rather than allow the uneven alliance to continue, with the inevitable alienation of the Communist rank and file, to say nothing of an embarrassing confrontation with this very rank and file at the national congress, Berlinguer withdrew his support. He may have drawn the curtain on a whole era, this time a much shorter one than the previous

two. Or the situation may simply be described by an Italian newspaper's telephone operator: "A good result, sir: just the same as before, but a little bit worse."

Peter Nichols

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How the FBI framed Ethel to break Julius.

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# The Hidden Rosenberg Case

by Sol Stern and Ronald Radosh

During the early morning hours of June 18, 1953, a car full of FBI agents slipped through the gates of Sing Sing prison in Ossining, New York, and then headed straight for the warden's garage. As unobtrusively as possible the men moved their belongings up to an apartment on the garage's second floor and settled in for an indefinite stay. From the makeshift command post it was only a short walk to the object of the agents' vigil: the death house cells of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

The men at the garage were all veterans of the Rosenberg case. They were on this last-ditch, secret mission in pursuit of a prize that had eluded them for three years. In this, its biggest, most heavily publicized espionage investigation ever, the FBI had been after something more than the conviction of the Rosenbergs for stealing atomic secrets during World War II. Right from the start the Bureau had marked Julius Rosenberg as the key figure in a wider Soviet espionage network after the war. What the FBI wanted were the full details of that post-war network's operations. They were there to offer Julius Rosenberg and his wife one last chance to live in exchange for this information.

Standing by at the garage, along with the agents, were two stenographers. In the event the Rosenbergs

broke, the agents were to stay on for interrogation sessions at the death house, as one FBI memo put it, "as long as they desire, extending into months if necessary." The procedures for stopping the executions if there was any sign from the Rosenbergs had been thoroughly rehearsed with the warden and the US marshal. There was even an exchange of memos on what to do "if the Rosenbergs desire to talk after they go into the execution chamber and even after they are strapped into the chair."

The mission was a failure. The evening of the day after the agents arrived, first Julius Rosenberg, then his wife, were executed without saying a word. The FBI agents packed up and left the prison empty-handed. The most notorious capital case in the history of the federal courts was officially closed.

A quarter of a century later the case still haunts us. Many Americans have now come to believe the Rosenbergs' final *crie de coeur* that they were the innocent victims of a cold war political frame-up. This view received its most dramatic boost with the emergence of the Rosenbergs' sons, Michael and Robert Meeropol, as leaders of the new campaign to reopen the case. Their Freedom of Information Act lawsuit has forced the FBI to release about 200,000 pages of documents from its Rosenberg files. The new Rosenberg committee has selectively released documents that support their martyrs' claims of total innocence. The FBI files contain startling revelations about the case, many of which would have been devastating to the government's prosecution of the Rosenbergs. But other documents in the FBI files—documents which the new Rosenberg committee has not released—badly undermine the argument of total

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innocence. The full picture, as it turns out, confounds all the partisan versions to date.

We have obtained independently and read all of the FBI files released so far. We also interviewed several dozen witnesses, many of whom were willing to discuss their involvement in the case for the first time. David and Ruth Greenglass, Ethel Rosenberg's brother and sister-in-law whose testimony against the Rosenbergs was the keystone of the government's case, broke 28 years of silence and anonymity to answer our questions about their role in the episode.

All this new evidence has led us to the inescapable conclusion that Julius Rosenberg was indeed at the hub of an espionage network that continued to operate until his arrest in 1950.

But not Ethel. One of the most shocking documents in the FBI files is a 13-page memorandum, dated June 17, 1953, listing the questions the FBI agents at the death house were to put to Julius Rosenberg if he and his wife broke. There is only one question in the entire memorandum concerning Ethel. It reads: "Was your wife cognizant of your activities?"

That single question stands out in the FBI files today like a red flag. When it was composed by a top FBI official, Ethel Rosenberg was about to be executed as a "full-fledged partner" (trial judge Irving Kaufman's words) in what J. Edgar Hoover called "the crime of the century." Could the US government have so blithely let her die when they weren't even sure she was *aware* of Julius's espionage activities?

Sadly, the answer is yes. The June 17 memorandum, revealed here for the first time, is only one of several FBI documents demonstrating that Ethel Rosenberg was included in the indictment only as a hostage against her husband; that she was ultimately convicted on tainted evidence obtained at the 11th hour. The purpose was to pressure her husband into revealing the details of his post-war espionage network.

The battle between the Rosenbergs and the government over exposure of that "other" spy ring was a drama that took place almost entirely offstage, and yet it determined parts of the script heard at the public proceedings. It is a story never before told.

## [I. The Post-War Spy Ring]

The Rosenberg case erupted in the summer of 1950 at the outbreak of the Korean War, just 10 months after the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. All during the first half of the year newspaper headlines blazoned the capture of one member after another of an espionage network that allegedly delivered the secret of the A-bomb to the Russians during World War II. The highest US officials claimed that this exploit had radically altered the global balance of power and encouraged communist aggression.

The chain of confessions leading to Julius Rosenberg began with German-born atomic physicist Klaus Fuchs

in Britain. Fuchs admitted that he had spied for the Russians during his World War II assignment with the Manhattan Project, the US government's crash program to build the atomic bomb. In Philadelphia, in late May, an obscure chemist named Harry Gold then admitted to having been Fuchs's American courier. Gold, in turn, fingered David Greenglass, a 28-year-old New Yorker, as the soldier from whom he had picked up additional atomic bomb information in June 1945, in Albuquerque, New Mexico. During his first interrogation by the FBI, the recently released papers show, Greenglass confessed that as a machinist stationed at the Los Alamos atomic bomb facility during the war, he passed information to Gold. Greenglass also implicated his 26-year-old wife, Ruth, and his brother-in-law, Julius Rosenberg.

Within days of Greenglass's arrest on June 16, 1950, his lawyer, O. John Rogge, was plea bargaining in Washington, DC. Now in his 80s and still practicing law in New York City, Rogge told us that as soon as he learned how deeply David and Ruth Greenglass had been involved in espionage, he went to see James McNerny, head of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, about a deal. "I told McNerny: 'I'll give you a couple of witnesses. However, I want Ruth left out of the indictment.'" After some haggling, Rogge said, McNerny agreed not to indict Ruth and to recommend a sentence of three to five years for David.

In effect Rogge then turned his clients over to the government for a series of interrogations, lasting until the middle of August. The story the Greenglasses told the FBI and the US attorney was that they had been lured into an espionage conspiracy by Julius Rosenberg in 1944. Rosenberg, they said, sent Ruth Greenglass out to New Mexico to ask David to get information from Los Alamos; Rosenberg set up the contact with Harry Gold; and twice in 1945, while on furlough in New York, David passed sketches and notes on the atomic bomb to Rosenberg.

The Greenglasses told their interrogators that Rosenberg also appeared to be directing a spy network after the war, with money from and direct contact with the Russians. They claimed he boasted to them about placing his "boys" in key industrial and research facilities in the upstate New York area, and that his network maintained two apartments for photographing of documents—one of them in the Greenwich Village area.

The Greenglasses told the FBI that Rosenberg had tried to get them to leave the country after the arrest of Fuchs and Gold. They said he gave them \$5000 and outlined an escape route through Mexico to Europe. They claimed Julius told them he was trying to get other members of his group out of the country, and that a man named Joel Barr already had left without any trouble.

The FBI papers show the Bureau was convinced that Rosenberg could be convicted for wartime espionage

using the Greenglass testimony. But the Greenglasses' comments about Rosenberg's post-war activities intrigued them. The FBI soon discovered that many of Julius Rosenberg's friends did indeed seem to be disappearing during June and July 1950, leaving a trail that often led through Mexico.

Only one of these trips is generally known of. Morton Sobell, a City College classmate and close friend of Rosenberg's, flew off to Mexico just a few days after Greenglass's arrest, taking his wife and children with him. In Mexico he moved around under several aliases trying to get passage to Europe. In August the FBI kidnapped Sobell with the aid of the Mexican police, and brought him back to stand trial. He was convicted along with the Rosenbergs and sentenced to 30 years imprisonment (of which he served 19). In a recent interview, Sobell insisted, as he has all along, that he never engaged in espionage.

The only name the Greenglasses gave the FBI to back up their claim that Julius Rosenberg led a post-war spy network was Joel Barr, another college classmate of Julius. Barr had been living abroad, mostly in Paris, since 1948. By the time the FBI obtained Barr's Paris address, he was gone. According to his landlady he departed around June 15, leaving behind his motorcycle and other belongings. An American friend of Barr in Paris told FBI investigators that Barr had said on June 2 that he was planning to leave. Asked where he was going, Barr answered "that it would be better if [the friend] did not know his intended destination." In a recent interview that friend, Samuel Perl, confirmed the FBI's report. He said he remembered asking Barr where he was going, and being told, "Don't worry, I just won't be around, something like that." Barr never has reappeared to this day.

The next of Rosenberg's friends to take off was a 32-year-old engineer named Alfred Sarant, then living in Ithaca, New York. Sarant, also a close friend of Joel Barr, was one of the first people the FBI contacted after Rosenberg's arrest on July 17, 1950. He appeared cooperative, allowing the agents to search his house and answering their questions. But on July 27, after several sessions with the FBI, Sarant drove to New York City for a rendezvous with a woman named Carol Dayton. Dayton and her husband were next-door neighbors of Sarant and his wife. From New York City, Sarant and Carol Dayton drove to Tuscon, Arizona, where they obtained false Mexican tourist cards under the names of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Dayton. On August 9 the pair crossed the Mexican border and vanished. Sarant and Dayton, like Joel Barr, never turned up again.

Four days after Julius Rosenberg's arrest an unknown man came to see Joel Barr's former girlfriend, Vivian Glassman. Without identifying himself, but mentioning Barr's name, the man gave her \$2000 in small bills and told her to go to Cleveland, find an aeronautical engineer, give him the cash and tell him to

escape to Mexico. The mystery man did not give her the engineer's name, but Glassman assumed he was referring to William Perl, a classmate of Rosenberg and friend of Sarant and Barr, and brother of Samuel Perl, Barr's Paris friend. Glassman knew Perl was living in Cleveland.

Although frightened, she did as she was told. Buying a ticket under the name of S. Goldberg, she flew to Cleveland the next morning and checked into a hotel under that alias. The following afternoon she went looking for Perl. When Glassman was admitted to Perl's apartment she sat down without speaking, and started writing out her message on paper, mentioning the names of Joel Barr and Rosenberg. Perl, who had already been interrogated by the FBI about his associations with Rosenberg, refused the money and told Glassman to go back to New York—which she promptly did. The day after she returned, the unknown man was at her door again. When Glassman told him what had happened in Cleveland, he took back the \$2000 and left. Perl was convicted of perjury and sentenced to five years for denying to the Rosenberg grand jury that he knew Rosenberg and Sobell. He died several years ago.

The FBI discovered that Barr, Sarant, Perl and Glassman each lived in an apartment at 65 Morton Street, in Greenwich Village, at one time or another after 1945. Was this the Village apartment that Greenglass said Rosenberg told him was used to photograph documents? The FBI believed so, especially after it was discovered that the apartment continued to be rented and maintained by one or another of the four, even during long stretches when no one seemed to be living there. The FBI also had information from several sources that there was photographic equipment in the apartment.

The FBI also discovered that Sarant and Barr had been members of the same Communist party club as Rosenberg—Branch 16B of the Industrial Division—and that shortly after this unit was dissolved in 1944 and the members transferred to new clubs, all three of them apparently dropped their party memberships.

At his trial, Julius Rosenberg denied the Greenglasses' portrayal of him as busily trying to get people out of the country through Mexico, and inquiring about passport pictures and vaccination certificates. Rosenberg testified to the contrary—that it was David Greenglass, deeply in some legal troubles in the spring of 1950, who was inquiring about Mexico.

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Yet Sobel, Sarant, Dayton, Perl and Glassman all were friends of Rosenberg, not of Greenglass. Moreover, Barr disappeared in Paris after Harry Gold's arrest, before the FBI's trail had even reached the Greenglasses.

Joel Barr left behind an aging and sick mother, three brothers and a sister. They have never heard a word from him since his disappearance. Sarant and Carol Dayton each left behind two small children, as well as their respective spouses. From them too, there was never another word. Alfred Sarant's wife, Louise, still lives in upstate New York. Contacted by phone, she said: "I have no intention of discussing it," and then hung up. We got the same response from Sarant's brother William. Carol Dayton's ex-husband, Weldon Bruce Dayton, teaches physics at a college in California. Reached by telephone, all he would

say was: "I have never heard anything from either my former wife or from Alfred Sarant. Never, period. Nobody knows anything about them." Joel Barr's brother, Bernard Barr, agreed to an interview and then changed his mind, saying he thought it would serve no useful purpose. All he would say on the phone was that his brother had been "swallowed up" in Europe, and that the family never heard from him again.

Joel Barr's ex-fiancée, Vivian Glassman, told the FBI about her mysterious trip to Cleveland, but then took the Fifth Amendment when questioned further by a grand jury. Today she lives in New York City under her married name. She refused to discuss any aspect of the case with us, just as she refused every other reporter who ever tried.

There may well be a plausible innocent explanation for all these sudden departures around Julius Rosenberg. But the pro-Rosenberg critics of the case have not come up with any explanations at all. In most of the pro-Rosenberg books the names of Barr and Sarant are not even mentioned. Walter and Miriam Schneir's *Invitation To An Inquest*, widely considered to be the most comprehensive of the critical studies on the case, does attempt to debunk the FBI's search for a wider spy network. But it is not convincing, especially in light of the new information derived from the recently released FBI documents. For example, the Schneirs' last reference to Joel Barr is his trip to Europe in 1948. As far as anyone reading the revised 1973 edition of their book might know, Joel Barr is still in Paris studying music. The Schneirs reason that Alfred Sarant and Carol Dayton fled because they were having an affair. The impression is left for their readers that Sarant and Dayton are still living in Mexico. The



United Press International Photo

Schneirs do not mention that Barr, Dayton and Sarant all have vanished.

These disappearances alone should make one hesitate before writing off the post-war spy ring as an FBI fantasy. But a uniquely placed source, speaking for publication for the first time, has given us independent confirmation of the existence of a spy network. The new witness is James Weinstein, the author of several books on the American left and currently editor-in-chief of *In These Times*, a socialist newspaper published in Chicago. Weinstein took the Fifth Amendment rather than tell this story to a grand jury in 1951, shortly after the Rosenbergs had been sentenced to death.

During the academic year of 1948-49, Weinstein and a friend named Max Finestone were both seniors at Cornell University, and both members of the Communist party. Sometime in the middle of the year, Weinstein says, Finestone told him that he was quitting the party to do "secret work." Weinstein had no idea what Max was up to and he knew enough not to ask for details. About this time Finestone went to work for Alfred Sarant, who then had a small contracting business in Ithaca.

Many times during the school year, Max asked to borrow Weinstein's car, a 1940 Buick convertible. At the time, Weinstein thought Max was using the car to visit his parents at their nearby farm. Later, he came to believe that Max was using it for trips in connection with his "secret work."

In June 1949, Weinstein graduated, moved back to New York City, and prepared to enter Columbia Law School. In the fall he paid a weekend visit to Cornell, staying at Max Finestone's parents' farm. At the end of the weekend, Weinstein says, Finestone asked him to



drive someone back to New York with him. The "someone" who shortly showed up at the farm—a plain-looking man with spectacles and a mustache—was introduced only as "Julius." During the long trip back to New York City, Weinstein reports, "Julius" sat in the back of the car and never said a word. (Another former Cornell student sat in front. When queried, this man said he could not remember anything about the ride almost 30 years ago.) When they arrived at the George Washington Bridge "Julius" asked to be let off.

In December 1949, Max moved to New York. At first he lived at that apartment at 65 Morton Street in Greenwich Village, which Al Sarant had made available to him. At the end of the month, he phoned Weinstein to say that he had to get out of the apartment and to suggest that they become roommates. Weinstein agreed to share an apartment with Max. Finestone moved from the Morton Street apartment within days of their conversation.

One evening in early July 1950, there was a knock at the door of the apartment Weinstein shared with Finestone. Weinstein opened the door, to find that the person standing there was the "Julius" he had driven back from Ithaca. Julius asked if Max was in. When Jim answered no, he responded: "Tell him Julius was here," and left. Max came home later that evening and Weinstein said that "Julius" had been looking for him. According to Weinstein, Max nervously asked if he was sure it was Julius. Weinstein answered that it was the same person he had driven back from Ithaca. Weinstein said, "Max turned white as a sheet," and blurted out: "He knows he's not supposed to come here."

All the incidents didn't fall into place for Weinstein until two weeks later, when he recognized Julius's picture on the front page of the newspaper, and read that he'd been arrested for spying. Weinstein became enraged at Finestone, not so much for his clandestine activities as for moving in with him when the heat was on. Weinstein says Finestone never tried to explain, but merely said, "I thought it would look better."

Finestone is now in his mid 50s. For most of the time since the Rosenberg case he and his wife owned and managed a small summer resort. Interviewed at his upstate New York home, he said that Weinstein was mistaken on several points. On Weinstein's driving Rosenberg back from Ithaca, Finestone said: "I remember Julius being in Ithaca but I don't remember that incident." As for Rosenberg appearing at their shared apartment in July 1950 and looking for him, Finestone replied: "I think Jim is fantasizing . . . that is pure fantasy. Jim is remembering things I just don't remember."

**Coming:**  
**Hot Air and Gasohol.**

Finestone did confirm that he dropped out of the Communist party at Cornell in the middle of his senior year, but claims it was because of schoolwork. He denies that he told Weinstein it was to engage in "secret work." Finestone said he moved out of the Morton Street apartment because sharing an apartment with Weinstein was simply "a better deal."

Concerning his relationship with Julius Rosenberg, Finestone said: "We were acquainted briefly in the 1940s." When pressed for more details, he replied: "You're asking me to tell you things about his movements and activities. I don't know where this is leading to. I'm disturbed by this line of questioning." Saying that for all he knew, we might be FBI or CIA agents, Finestone stressed that he did not want to say anything that "could be used for purposes contrary to what I would want them used for."

Later in the conversation, Finestone responded to our suggestion that lower-level espionage might have been going on after the war, saying: "If you get me and Joel Barr to say sure, we were really engaged in espionage but it was innocent espionage, industrial . . . and we were doing it for principled reasons . . . then the government gets hold of this and says these guys admit they were engaged in espionage." That, Finestone said, would "help them to improve their case in the eyes of the public." And he was not about to do that. "Even if I knew anything that you don't know," he concluded, "I certainly wouldn't say." Then he denied that any kind of espionage was taking place.

**W**einstein's version of what was going on in Ithaca in 1949 is backed by an even more remarkable source, made available by the FBI's recent release of documents on the case—Julius Rosenberg himself!

While Rosenberg was at the Federal House of Detention in lower Manhattan awaiting trial, he struck up a friendship with a young inmate named Jerome Eugene Tartakow, who was serving a two-year sentence for interstate auto theft. While playing chess with Tartakow, Rosenberg started talking, first about his youth and activities in the Young Communist League in the 1930s, and then about more contemporary matters. In conversations stretching over six months, Julius divulged details about his network during the period before his arrest. Tartakow, in turn, was reporting all of it to the FBI.

Tartakow claimed Rosenberg said he had not fled the country because "he had to take care of some friends"; that he headed one espionage unit in the area and the other one was led by two men, one of whom got out of the country one week after his arrest and the other who was already safe in Europe. According to Tartakow, Rosenberg said he had been to Ithaca twice to see Al Sarant and to make "pick-ups." Rosenberg also mentioned Vivian Glassman's trip to Cleveland, and said he thought the Russians themselves had picked her as a courier for that assignment. And Rosenberg

criticized William Perl for panicking and telling the FBI about Glassman's visit, but added he was a brilliant scientist from whom he had been able to get a lot of very good material.

It's hard to believe Julius Rosenberg really talked about these things in jail. But over 300 pages of FBI memos on reports from Tartakow contain details that could have come only from Rosenberg, and we have corroborated some of this information from independent sources such as James Weinstein. Thus in one memo Rosenberg is reported telling Tartakow about the last person he recruited into the operation. This person, the memo says, had a roommate who was "the son of a wealthy family." The roommate was a law student, and a friend of the lawyer O. John Rogge. Rosenberg also allegedly said the roommate of his last recruit had political arguments with his family. Rosenberg also is reported saying that his last recruit borrowed his roommate's car—a black Buick convertible—and drove him to Ithaca to see Alfred Sarant.

Of course all this describes Max Finestone and James Weinstein. It clearly matches the story Weinstein told us. His parents are very wealthy, his family did know O. John Rogge, and he did have difficulties with his family. The black Buick was Weinstein's car and he did frequently lend it to Finestone. The description of Finestone as the "last recruit" matches Weinstein's story of Max dropping out of the Party to do "secret work" in 1949. Weinstein's account of Julius Rosenberg's mysterious appearance in Ithaca in the fall of 1949 matches Tartakow's story of Rosenberg's trips to Ithaca for "pick-ups." Weinstein never told his story until 1978, yet it confirms information in 28-year-old FBI documents he didn't even know about.

When the first FBI files were released in December 1975, a few cursory news stories appeared concerning the Tartakow memos. The Rosenberg committee counterattacked. One writer called Tartakow a notorious "con man" and dismissed his memos as a "police suck." The Meeropol brothers, in a *New York Times* op-ed page article, stressed that even the FBI considered Tartakow "unreliable." It is true that when Tartakow first offered the FBI information about Rosenberg in December 1950, the FBI did officially characterize him as an "informant of unknown reliability." But after a few months, as the information Tartakow was bringing checked out, FBI agents changed their minds. Julius Rosenberg himself apparently trusted Tartakow. He arranged for Tartakow to go to work for Emanuel Bloch, the Rosenbergs' lawyer, when Tartakow was released from prison in July 1951. Among other chores, Tartakow drove Bloch and the Rosenberg sons up to Sing Sing.

Why would Julius Rosenberg have taken Tartakow into his confidence? For one thing, jail inmates do not get a wide choice of friends. And Jerry Tartakow was not your ordinary con. His background was quite

similar to Rosenberg's: both were Jewish, with immigrant, working-class parents, and both had been members of the Young Communist League in their youth.

But the main reason Julius Rosenberg trusted Tartakow may have been that he came with the very highest possible personal reference: from the general secretary of the US Communist party, Eugene Dennis, who was then also in the House of Detention for contempt of Congress. Today Tartakow lives in California and owns a small business. He told us that he actually developed a relationship with Eugene Dennis in jail, before he met Rosenberg. "Dennis and I became very close friends," Tartakow said. Tartakow claims he became a liaison between Dennis and Rosenberg. "Gene Dennis didn't want the three of us to be seen together at that time." Instead, Tartakow said, he often let Dennis know about his conversations with Rosenberg. A lawyer for the present Rosenberg committee, Bonnie Brower, mentioned to us that when Emanuel Bloch hired Tartakow as his driver, it was with Dennis's recommendation.

Tartakow's claim is plausible because the official line of the Communist party on the Rosenberg case at that time could be summarized as: "Julius who?" Dennis could not allow himself to be seen with Rosenberg, but he obviously had an interest in finding out what he had been up to and, more pointedly, whether or not he was going to break. Rosenberg didn't know that his friend Tartakow was squealing to the FBI, but he may have believed that what he was saying was getting to Eugene Dennis. This would explain why he would talk freely, even boast about his exploits. These boasts helped to seal his doom.

## [II. The Framing of Ethel]

The FBI documents show that the Bureau saw Julius Rosenberg as just next in a line of falling dominoes. If he cooperated, as Harry Gold and David Greenglass had cooperated before him, he would lead to more arrests in the biggest spy hunt ever. "The indications are definite," said a Bureau report on the day of his arrest, "that [Rosenberg] possesses the identity of a number of other individuals who have been engaged in Soviet espionage."

But the Rosenberg domino did not tip over. When FBI agents came to the Rosenbergs' apartment on July 17, 1950, Ethel Rosenberg demanded that the agents produce a warrant and allow her to phone their attorney. (An FBI report described her assertion of constitutional rights as a "typical Communist remonstrance.") Their attorney, Emanuel Bloch, had no intention of plea bargaining. The FBI then resorted to the federal court system as its instrument of coercion.

A report to J. Edgar Hoover on Rosenberg's arrest suggested that the Bureau "consider every possible means to bring pressure on Rosenberg to make him

talk, including . . . a careful study of the involvement of Ethel Rosenberg in order that charges can be placed against her, if possible." The FBI director approved, adding this handwritten comment in the margin: "Yes by all means. If criminal division [of the Justice Department] procrastinates too long let me know and I will see the A.G."

Two days later Hoover dashed off his own note to Attorney General J. Howard McGrath. "There is no question," he wrote, "but that if Julius Rosenberg would furnish the details of his extensive espionage activities it would be possible to proceed against other individuals." Hoover said that "proceeding against his wife might serve as a lever in this matter."

The only problem with this "lever" was that the government had no evidence against Ethel Rosenberg. In the case of the Greenglasses the threat of imprisoning Ruth, and thus of leaving their two children without a mother, was an effective way to keep David cooperative. The FBI always had enough evidence to convict Ruth. Among other evidence incriminating Ruth was her deposit in an Albuquerque bank of money received from Harry Gold. The FBI's *only* source of information on Ethel Rosenberg was the Greenglasses. Yet in all the interrogations of Ruth and David during July and August, 1950—a period when they were anxious to prove to the FBI that they were holding up their part of the bargain to keep Ruth from being indicted—there was hardly a reference to any overt act by Ethel.

Ruth Greenglass did tell her interrogators that Ethel was present when Julius Rosenberg asked Ruth to visit David in New Mexico during the war and ask him for information from the Manhattan Project. Ruth said she remembered expressing reluctance but Ethel chimed in with remarks to the effect of "let David decide." In a trial that testimony—uncorroborated and denied by the two other participants in the purported conversation—would have counted for very little.

Because there was so little to hang on Ethel, the government interrogators pressed David Greenglass about his sister at an interrogation on August 4, 1950. Here is the exchange between Assistant US Attorney Myles Lane and David Greenglass:

Lane: Was Ethel present in any of these occasions [When David gave Julius information]?

Greenglass: Never.

Lane: Did Ethel talk to you about it?

Greenglass: Never spoke to me and that's a fact. Aside from trying to protect my sister, believe me that's a fact.

Nevertheless, the FBI arrested Ethel Rosenberg one



Rosenberg defenders in Pennsylvania Station, February 14, 1953.

week later, charging her with the same crime as her husband—conspiracy to commit espionage during wartime.

The imprisonment of his wife was an awful blow to Julius Rosenberg. He worried about the effect of jail on her health and of course he was concerned about their children. Yet he remained determined to fight the case. The government knew all this because Rosenberg was talking about it to Tartakow. Tartakow's reports helped convince the government that nothing short of the ultimate "lever" would force Rosenberg to confess.

On February 8, 1951, an expanded and secret meeting of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy met to discuss the Rosenberg prosecution. The 20 top officials in attendance at this extraordinary strategy session included five senators, six representatives, three members of the Atomic Energy Commission and two representatives of the Justice Department. Assistant US Attorney Myles Lane said Julius Rosenberg was the "keystone to a lot of other potential espionage agents." Lane mentioned William Perl and Vivian Glassman, among others suspected of being in the wider spy ring and still at large. The Justice Department believed, he said, "that the only thing that will break this man Rosenberg is the prospect of a death penalty or getting the chair, plus that if we can convict his wife too, and give her a sentence of 25 or 30 years, that combination may serve to make this fellow disgorge and give us the information on these other individuals." Lane said, "It is about the only thing you can use as a lever on those people."

But Lane—who had spent many hours interrogating David and Ruth Greenglass—admitted to the committee that "the case is not too strong against Mrs. Rosenberg." Nevertheless, he emphasized, "it is very important that she be convicted, too, and given a stiff

# The Greenglass Letters

Among the most revealing documents contained in the recently released FBI files on the Rosenberg case are the wartime letters between David and Ruth Greenglass when David was stationed at Oak Ridge, Tennessee and Los Alamos, New Mexico. These letters were taken from the Greenglass apartment on the day of David's arrest. They are made public here for the first time. These letters contradict the story of how the wartime espionage started, as told at the trial by both the Greenglasses themselves and the government prosecutors (who had access to these letters).

The Greenglasses testified that they were young innocents, non-Communists, lured into spying for Russia by Julius Rosenberg. David Greenglass testified that he had doubts about what Julius asked him to do, but he "had a kind of hero-worship there, and I did not want my hero to fail." The Greenglasses' lawyer, O. John Rogge, declared, "David and Ruth Greenglass, yes,

wanted to see a better world, but they did not want to see a Communist world." In his summation to the jury, prosecuting attorney Irving Saypol described David Greenglass's motivation: "Greenglass's relations toward his older sister, Ethel, and her husband Julius were such that he was willing prey to their Communistic propaganda. He committed this crime because they persuaded him to do it."

The Greenglass letters confound this version. They show that David and Ruth were dedicated Communists, too young for formal party membership but active members of the Young Communist League. Ruth was president of her YCL chapter at the age of 20 and was slated for recruitment into the party when espionage intervened. The Greenglass letters are filled with odes to the Soviet Union. On June 29, 1944, David wrote to Ruth:

*Darling, I have been reading a lot of books on the Soviet Union. Dear, I can see how farsighted and intelligent these leaders*

*are. . . . Having found out all the truth about the Soviets, both good and bad, I have come to a stronger and more resolute faith and belief in the principles of Socialism and Communism. I believe that every time the Soviet Government used force they did so with pain in their hearts and the belief that what they were doing was to produce good for the greatest number. . . . More power to the Soviet Union and a fruitful and abundant life for their peoples.*

On December 29, 1943, David wrote to Ruth about their "anti-Soviet" acquaintances: "Either convert our friends or drop them."

David and Ruth both testified that the idea of espionage never came up between them until Ruth visited her husband at Albuquerque, on November 29, 1944, and told David that Julius knew he was working on the atomic bomb project and wanted information. They claimed they were both reluctant. David testified that his first response to his wife's message from Julius was that he "wouldn't do it," and he ultimately agreed only out of loyalty to Julius.

These letters paint a different picture. David was well aware of the significance of his wartime work, and

sentence." In that room full of lawyers, no one seemed disturbed that the government wanted a 25- or 30-year jail sentence for an individual against whom the case was weak.

The meager evidence against Ethel, and the stiff penalty being sought against her, were especially embarrassing because Ruth Greenglass remained unindicted, yet would be admitting from the stand that she had been deep in the conspiracy to steal atomic secrets.

Then suddenly, just 10 days before the trial opened, the Greenglasses completely changed their story about the extent of Ethel's involvement—thereby saving the government's strategy. The new version placed Ethel Rosenberg at the center of the espionage operation as her husband's dutiful typist.

What prompted this fortuitously timed reevaluation remains a mystery. The FBI files released so far merely indicate that Ruth Greenglass was reinterviewed on February 23 and 24, 1951, and that she volunteered "additional information" on Ethel. Two days later David Greenglass was reinterviewed. According to the summary cable sent to J. Edgar Hoover, he "furnished in substance the same information as related by Ruth Greenglass."

The Greenglasses now claimed that David had handed over his handwritten notes and sketches of the atomic bomb right in the Rosenbergs' living room, in

September 1945. According to the FBI cablegram, Ruth then reported that "Julius took the info into the bathroom and read it and when he came out he called Ethel and told her she had to type this info immediately. [Ruth] said Ethel then sat down at the typewriter which she had placed on a bridgetable in the living room and proceeded to type the info which David had given to Julius."

Oddly, the FBI files contain only summaries of these crucial February 1951 sessions when the Greenglasses suddenly changed their story about Ethel. The earlier interrogations all were recorded and transcribed. James B. Kilsheimer, who attended the February interrogations as an assistant US attorney prosecuting the Rosenberg case, is now in private law practice in New York. He said recently that the Greenglasses changed their testimony because at first, "David had a reluctance to talk about his sister." Kilsheimer said the new story "wasn't sudden. It was a gradual breakdown. Each time I went to talk to him there would be some additional information."

But the FBI files do not show a series of conversations in which David Greenglass "gradually" disgorged more information about his sister. Moreover, the February story was not "additional" information: it was a flat-out contradiction of the story Greenglass previously had told interrogators of how he delivered the sketch and notes of the atomic bomb to Julius Rosenberg.

it was he who sought to inform Julius about it. The Greenglasses were not innocents lured into a web by Julius Rosenberg: they were equal participants in the planned espionage.

For example, David wrote Ruth on August 4, 1944, from Kansas City:

*Dear, I have been very reticent in my writing about what I am doing or going to do because it is a classified top secrecy project and as such I can't say anything. In fact, I am not even supposed to say this much. Darling, in this type of work at my place of residence there is censorship of mail going out and all off the post calls. So dear, you know why I didn't want you to say anything on the telephone. That is why I write C now instead of comrade. P.S. . . . Not a word to anybody about anything except maybe Julius.*

Another letter from David to Ruth on November 9, 1944 contradicts the Greenglasses' account that David was unaware of the proposed espionage conspiracy until Ruth's November 29 visit and that he was reluctant. In the letter David Greenglass referred to a telegram—apparently one with a cryptic message—that he had sent Ruth. He

wrote that he was "worried about whether you understand what my telegram is about." David continued:

*I really shouldn't because I know that you are intelligent and will understand.*

*I was happy to hear that you spent a pleasant day with the Rosenbergs. My darling, I most certainly will be glad to be part of the community project that Julius and his friends have in mind. Count me in dear or should I say it has my vote. If it has yours, count us in.*

When we showed this last letter to the Greenglasses in our recent interview, and quoted from some of the others, they were somewhat taken aback. They said the letters had never been returned to them and they had completely forgotten about their existence. David quickly acknowledged the letters indicated he was trying to alert Julius about his work on the atomic bomb as early as the summer of 1944. "I knew Julius would want to be involved with something like that," he said. In explanation, David then recalled a 1943 conversation with Julius Rosenberg as they waited on the ticket line at the Capital Theater on Broadway. "He

told me he had powerful friends and we'll go into business after the war. They'll use us as a screen for getting the information."

Looking at the November 9, 1944 letter on the table in front of him, David said: "This fits in with that bit at the Capital Theater." Asked if the "friends" referred to in the letter were the Russians, David replied: "That's right. There were no other friends." As to the suggestion that the reference to the "community project" clearly showed that David himself was willingly volunteering for espionage, he replied, "Well, let's say I was promising cooperation."

The prosecution in the Rosenberg trial never used any of these letters, even though they provide powerful documentary evidence supporting the existence of a conspiracy. The reason is apparent. As part of the deal offered the Greenglasses—leniency in exchange for their role as cooperative state witnesses—the government was willing to make it appear that they had been reluctantly lured into espionage by the Rosenbergs.

**S.S. and R.R.**

Here is how Greenglass described the September 1945 transaction in his signed statement dated July 17, 1950:

*Almost as soon as I got to New York City Julius Rosenberg got in touch with me and I met him on the street somewhere in the city. At that time I furnished Julius Rosenberg with an unsealed envelope containing the information I had been able to gather concerning the atomic bomb, as well as a couple of sketches of the molds which make up the bomb.*

In an August 4, 1950 interrogation with Myles Lane, Greenglass repeated that "when we were alone [Julius] brought the subject up" and at that time "I gave him a complete description of what I know." When Lane then asked "Was Ethel present on any of these occasions," Greenglass answered: "Never."

In his revised version, Greenglass told the FBI that Ethel had to be called in to type the atomic bomb information because his handwriting was very difficult to understand. Ruth Greenglass testified to this at the trial. But the FBI files offer hundreds of pages of David's handwriting (including his wartime letters to his wife), all of which are completely legible, even in the poor quality Xerox copies supplied by the FBI.

When the Rosenberg trial opened on March 6, 1951, no one in the courtroom except the men at the prosecutor's table knew about the radical inconsistencies in the Greenglasses' testimony. The Rosenbergs'

lawyer, Emanuel Bloch, did not attempt to get the Greenglasses' various pre-trial statements.

Thus the Greenglasses' 10-day-old story of how Ethel Rosenberg typed the atomic secrets was treated as no less certain than the rest of the prosecution's story about spying in 1944 and 1945, in New York and New Mexico. Chief prosecutor Irving Saypol, in his summation to the jury, described Ethel striking the keys of the typewriter, "blow by blow against her own country, in the interests of the Soviets." Judge Irving Kaufman found the revised Greenglass testimony so convincing that he characterized Ethel Rosenberg as a "full-fledged partner in this crime," and determined that she should share equally in her husband's sentence.

Why did the Greenglasses suddenly bring up the story of Ethel's typing after eight months of interrogation? The best answer to that mystery ought to come from the Greenglasses themselves. Both are still alive. Having rebuilt their lives under new identities after David's release from jail in 1960, the Greenglasses have zealously guarded their privacy. They never before talked to any student of the case. But with the help of their lawyer, O. John Rogge, and by promising not to reveal their current identities or whereabouts, we were able to contact them earlier this spring. After many hesitations, and one occasion when they showed up and

*(continued on page 24)*

then got cold feet, we finally conducted an interview on the evening of June 12 in Mr. Rogge's office.

During a two-and-a-half hour discussion on all aspects of the Rosenberg case, 40 minutes were spent reviewing in detail the sequence of interrogations that followed David's arrest. What the Greenglasses say they remember now is so filled with contradiction, lapses of memory and apparent evasions that we went away unconvinced that the typing incident ever took place.

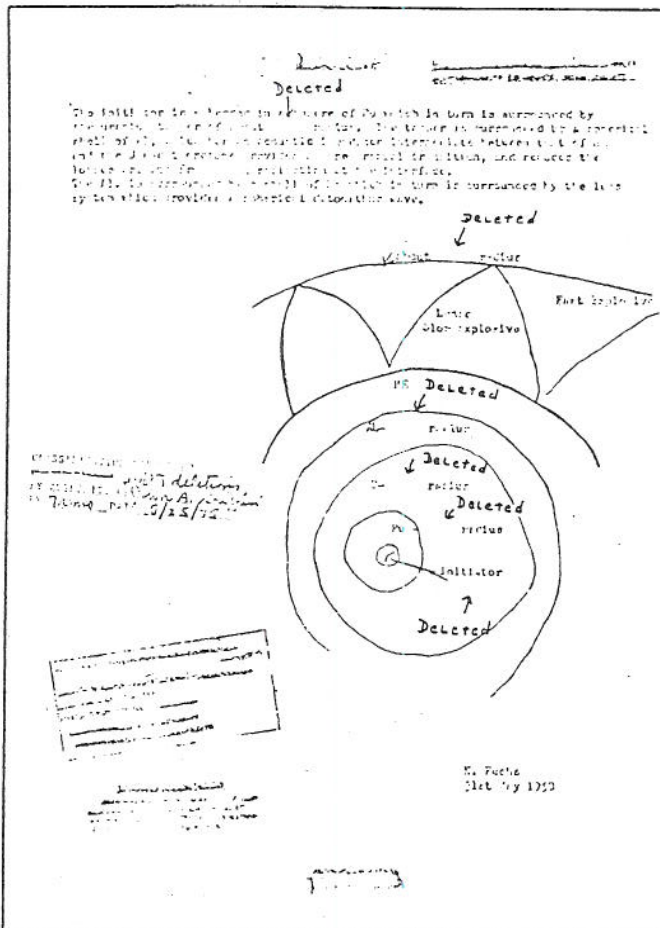
At first, when asked whether the whole story had been told to the FBI in the summer of 1950, Ruth answered: "You mean did we hold anything back? I doubt that." We pointed out that the FBI files indicated that long after Ethel's arrest that summer, there was no mention of her being present when information was passed to Julius. David offered the explanation that he was trying to keep his sister out of the case at first. Asked how he then came to implicate her, David said: "Well I recall at one point, it's in my mind, that one of the FBI men said to me: 'You came to Julius's apartment and you discussed all this stuff. Where was Ethel?' so at that point I said, 'Yeah, she must have been around,' because obviously she was."

When we said that according to the FBI files the Greenglasses never mentioned the incident of Ethel's typing until two weeks before the trial, they both expressed astonishment. "You mean that was the first mention of it?" Ruth asked. David exclaimed: "Is that a fact?"

Ruth in particular couldn't recall when she told her interrogators the story of the typing. "I know it was told to them, but I don't remember when. I can't remember when I told them a particular thing."

But Ruth said that she never really had the details of the September 1945 incident in the Rosenbergs' living room—the passing of the A-bomb information and Ethel's typing—fixed in her mind, even during the FBI interrogation. Ruth said she just assumes "that we probably went over for dinner [to the Rosenbergs'] and did it at that time [September 1945] frankly because that would have been the way it would have been done." Asked if she could remember now going over to the Rosenbergs' for dinner in September 1945 and bringing the atomic bomb sketches, she answered, "No." "I remember David bringing something and giving it in his [Julius's] house, but as to whether it was this time [September 1945] I can't remember."

David Greenglass did make a stab at describing the particulars of the September 1945 transfer of information. "This is many years later. This is not five years later but 40 years later we are talking about almost. OK. What happened I think is this: I remember him coming over and giving him the sketch and later on he said 'It's got to be typed and you better come over.' The idea was for me to stand there correcting. That's how it came about. That's why we went over, but I already gave him the sketch." This version contradicts David's



## The Real Thing

This is a sketch Klaus Fuchs drew for the FBI during an interrogation in prison on May 26, 1950. It was reproduced in a letter summarizing what Fuchs had told the FBI, and sent to members of the Atomic Energy Commission on July 18, 1950. The letter was among the FBI papers released—with deletions—very recently. We showed this sketch to Philip Morrison, who was one of the top physicists in the Manhattan project. He remarked, "It's the real thing." Fuchs told the FBI that he had given a sketch just like this one, plus explanatory notes, to his Soviet courier in June 1945. By contrast, David Greenglass did not produce his sketch for the Russians until September 1945. Compared to Fuchs's, Greenglass's crude sketch was next to worthless.

trial testimony that he brought the sketch with him when he and his wife went to the Rosenbergs' for dinner.

The Greenglasses both emphatically denied that the government or the FBI put any pressure on them to change their story on Ethel's involvement. But when the interview was over, David said in a sort of summary statement: "If it was a choice between her [Ruth] and my sister, I'd take her any day—that was the choice that I thought I had. It was all in my mind. Nobody put pressure on me."

In sentencing Julius and Ethel Rosenberg to death, Judge Kaufman said that they had "altered the course of

history," and had caused the "Communist aggression in Korea with the resulting casualties exceeding fifty-thousand." Here too, the government knew things that no one in the courtroom was aware of. It possessed secret documents—now released—demonstrating that what Greenglass gave to Rosenberg, and Rosenberg passed on to the Soviets, had little practical value.

Back in May 1950, the FBI had interviewed Klaus Fuchs. Fuchs admitted having told the Russians just about everything he knew about the atomic bomb. Given Fuchs's position at the highest scientific echelons of the Manhattan Project, this meant practically everything known in 1945 about the construction of the bomb, and the implosion process as well. One written report he delivered to Harry Gold, he told the FBI, contained "a description of an atomic-bomb . . . , a sketch of the bomb and its components with important dimensions indicated, and a written description of various technical aspects of the bomb." Fuchs handed over his notes and sketches months before Greenglass's material was purportedly typed by Ethel Rosenberg in her living room. The government thus knew that Greenglass's own sketch, and other information supplied by this machinist with no scientific training, were both piddling and redundant compared to the material supplied by Fuchs.

At the Rosenberg trial, however, there was no one to challenge the government's story of Greenglass and the Rosenbergs having delivered to the Russians *the* secret of the atomic bomb. The defense attorney actually helped the prosecution establish this point. In a move that has never been rationally explained, Emanuel Bloch moved to have Greenglass's testimony about the notes and sketches he delivered to Rosenberg in September 1945 impounded, because of the vital national security secrets they contained. The prosecution could not have been more delighted.

Klaus Fuchs got 14 years, was eventually released from prison, and then, until his recent retirement, headed East Germany's nuclear science program in Dresden. David Greenglass, expecting three to five years as a reward for his cooperation, received 15 years, and served 10. Ruth Greenglass, as agreed, was never indicted. Julius and Ethel Rosenberg went to Sing Sing to await electrocution.

The government now had that powerful lever it was looking for—one that it thought might finally break Julius Rosenberg and lead them to his friends—to Barr and Sarant, to Perl, Glassman, Finestone and perhaps even some others.

### [Aftermath: The Propaganda War]

The death penalty was so outrageous, so violated one's ordinary sense of equity and fair play that it drew attention to a cause that even the organized left previously had ignored.

With the din of cold war propaganda rising on all sides, the reality of who the Rosenbergs were, what

they really believed in, what they had actually done was never frankly discussed.

The Communist movement's initial response was to pretend the Rosenbergs didn't exist. Then when the party realized, first that the Rosenbergs wouldn't break, and second that thousands, perhaps millions, of people might be willing to march to stop the executions, it stepped in with banners unfurled.

Half a dozen former party members we talked to, including two former top leaders who went to jail under the Smith Act and a leading writer for the *Daily Worker*, said that it was widely assumed by insiders that the Rosenbergs had dropped out of the party for strategic reasons; several said it was to do "secret work." Herman Starobin, a CP member who was a college friend of Julius Rosenberg, went so far as to say: "I am pretty convinced, though I could never prove it, that there was a relationship between Julie and the Russians."

Junius Scales, who served a five-year jail sentence for his party leadership role, told us that when party members dropped out to work for the Russians, one of the surefire signs was that their subscriptions to the *Daily Worker* were canceled, and it was usually handled from the top, not through the subscription department. He told us: "I know that in the Rosenbergs' case that took place, that they were dropped and it was handled at the highest level at the time. It wasn't handled routinely."

Yet at the time of the campaign to save the Rosenbergs, when these men were still in the party, it could not even be admitted that the Rosenbergs were Communists. The official propaganda line was that the Rosenbergs were the first victims of American fascism; that they were swept off the streets because they were simple, good "progressives" and Jews.

The Rosenbergs too preferred a defense along these lines. They were even willing to die, not merely to protect a few of their friends, but also to defend the Communist party, and to uphold its version of cold war history.

The government was committed to its own big lie. In its public pronouncements, it hammered away at the theme that the Rosenbergs were jointly responsible for changing the course of history to the disadvantage of the United States.

For the last time, on the morning of the executions, President Eisenhower repeated the myth of Ethel's full involvement, echoing the words of Judge Kaufman, and citing the alleged "millions of dead whose deaths may be attributable to what these spies have done." Even as the president issued that statement, the FBI stood by at the Sing Sing death house with their questionnaire, ready to ask Julius if his wife was "cognizant" of his activities. In a case full of deceptions this was the most cynical of all.

But then the full truth—messy, complicated, unflattering to almost everyone involved—was the last thing that either side wanted out.