

Rosenbergs' Talks With Lawyers Were Spied On

New York

Files of the FBI show that an informant gave the agency reports on defense lawyer-client talks traditionally regarded as protected by confidentiality, during and after the atomic spy trial that led to the 1953 electrocution deaths of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Walter Schneir, an author-researcher, who has specialized in the Rosenberg case, contends that if the existence of such information had been known and the Rosenbergs could have shown this to a federal court "they might well have been granted a new trial."

Schneir, who turned up much of the new data, was co-author with his wife, Miriam, of "Invitation to an Inquest," a book published in 1965 that concluded that the Rosenbergs had been "punished for a crime that never occurred."

The documents cited by Schneir are among 29,000 pages made available after the executed couple's sons, Michael and Robert Meeropol, sued to see files under the Freedom of Information Act. The sons hope to demonstrate their parents' innocence.

Schneir cited FBI documents dated Nov. 19, 1951, referring to an informant's reports on "visits to the Rosenbergs by their attorney Emanuel Bloch" in Sing Sing Prison and Feb. 29, 1952, on the informant's "contact on various occasions with Emanuel Bloch, attorney for the Rosenbergs."

"For example," Schneir said, "on Oct. 22, 1951, Emanuel Bloch and the two young sons of the Rosenbergs drove to Sing Sing for a visit. Their chauffeur was a secret FBI informant."

"Inside the death house, the discussion of Bloch with his condemned clients was listened to and duly reported to the FBI."

"Homeward bound, the driver tried to engage Bloch to talk, hoping to pick up a few additional scraps for his FBI masters."

The informant, as had previously been made known, was a prisoner with Rosenberg in the Federal House of Detention in Manhattan. He continued his relationship with the Rosenbergs and Bloch after being released from prison and was a free man when the incident cited by Schneir occurred.

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