

**GUIDE TO THE  
MICROFILM EDITION  
OF THE**

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**FBI FILE ON  
JULIUS AND ETHEL ROSENBERG**

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**A Microfilm Publication by**

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## Publisher's Note

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## Introduction

Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were a nondescript couple accused in 1950 by the U. S. government of operating a Soviet spy network and giving the Soviet Union plans for the atomic bomb. The trial of the Rosenbergs became a political event of greater importance than any damage they may have done to the United States. It was one of the most controversial trials of the twentieth century, and it ended with their execution. The arrest of the Rosenbergs was set in motion when the FBI arrested Klaus Fuchs, a British scientist who gave atomic secrets to the Soviets while working on the Manhattan Project. Fuchs's arrest and confession led to the arrest of Harry Gold, a courier for Soviet spies. Gold, in turn, led investigators to David Greenglass, a small-time spy who quickly confessed. Greenglass then accused his sister Ethel and brother-in-law Julius of controlling his activities. Julius Rosenberg was a committed Communist who had graduated from the City College of New York in 1939 with a degree in electrical engineering. In the summer of that year, he married Ethel Greenglass, a headstrong woman who was active in organizing labor groups. The couple had two sons—Michael, born in 1943, and Robert, born in 1947.

Julius opened a mechanic shop with his brother-in-law, but the business soon began to fail, largely due to lack of attention by Julius, who had begun spying for the Soviets. He started by stealing manuals for radar tubes and proximity fuses, and by the late 1940s had two apartments set up as microfilm laboratories. He had become the coordinator of a large spy network.

Julius immediately realized the implications of Harry Gold's arrest and began making arrangements to leave the country. However, the FBI moved swiftly; Julius was arrested in July 1950 and his wife in August. The government had little evidence against Ethel but hoped to use the threat of prosecuting her as a lever to persuade Julius to confess. The couple was charged with conspiracy to commit espionage, and their trial began on March 6, 1951. The prosecutor was Attorney Irving Saypol, the judge was Irving Kaufman, and the defense was led by Emmanuel Bloch.

From the beginning the trial attracted national attention. Saypol and his young assistant, Roy Cohn, decided to keep the scope of the trial as narrow as possible by establishing the Rosenbergs' guilt as the main target and by exposing their spy ring as a lesser concern. Nonetheless, the trial was punctuated by numerous arrests of spies associated with the Rosenbergs, some of whom appeared in court to testify against them.

From the beginning the defense had problems. Bloch tried to downplay the importance of the information that the prosecution claimed the Rosenbergs had stolen. He then turned around and requested that all spectators and reporters be barred from the courtroom when the information was discussed. Bloch later said that he was trying to impress the jurors with a bold move, but what he actually did was impress them with the importance of the information.

Bloch also accused David Greenglass of turning on his sister and her husband because of their failed business, but his efforts only elicited sympathy for a man who had been forced to turn in a family member. Greenglass damaged the Rosenbergs by testifying that Julius had arranged for him to give Harry Gold the design of the atomic bomb used on Nagasaki (which differed considerably from the Hiroshima bomb). When

Gold testified, he named Anatoli Yakovlev as his contact, thereby directly tying the Rosenbergs to a known Soviet agent.

After months in prison the Rosenbergs still maintained their innocence and began to write poignant letters, which were widely published, protesting their treatment. The case was followed closely in Europe, where many believed that the Rosenbergs were being persecuted as Jews (though Judge Kaufman was also Jewish). A movement began to protest the “injustice” of the Rosenberg trial. Passions both for and against the Rosenbergs grew so great that they even threatened Franco-American relations, as the French were particularly harsh in their condemnation of the trial as a sham.

By the end of the trial the defense had all but collapsed under the weight of the evidence and Bloch’s incompetence. His summation appealed to the jurors’ emotions, while prosecutor Saypol coolly ran through the testimony. Although the evidence against Ethel was slight, the jury and the public had come to believe that she was the mastermind behind the operation. Both she and Julius were found guilty and sentenced to death, a punishment more fitting of a treason conviction than the lesser charge of espionage.

In the months between the sentencing and execution, criticism of the trial grew more strident, and major demonstrations were held. Nobel Prize winner Jean-Paul Sartre called the case “a legal lynching which smears with blood a whole nation.” In spite of attempts at appeal and a temporary stay issued by Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were executed on June 19, 1953, both refusing to confess.

Years after the execution the case still stirs debate. It can now be seen as arising from the height of Cold War hysteria fed by the Korean War, which had broken out the summer before the trial. It must be remembered that, although the Rosenbergs were Communists and spies, they did not spy for an enemy of the United States, as their sentence might indicate, but rather for its wartime ally. Recent studies of the couple’s activities show that the evidence against them was overwhelming. It is difficult, however, to imagine the execution of a married couple without understanding the paranoia that the Cold War produced.

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Source: “Rosenbergs,” *The Cold War, 1945-1991*. 3 vols. Edited by Benjamin Frankel. Gale Research, 1992. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center, Farmington Hills, MI: Thomson Gale, 2005.

#### FURTHER READINGS

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Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, *The Rosenberg File* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1983).

Walter and Miriam Schneir, *Invitation to an Inquest* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

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**FBI FILE ON  
JULIUS AND ETHEL ROSENBERG**



**Reels 1-27**

**Reel Notes: FBI File on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg**

<b>Reel No</b>	<b>Frame No.</b>	<b>Reel Contents</b>
1		File No.: 65-58236
	0001	Volume No. 1
	0165	Volume No. 2
	0481	Volume No. 3
	0600	Volume No. 4
	0885	Volume No. 5
	1164	Volume No. 6
2		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 7 (Part A)
	0416	Volume No. 7
	0865	Volume No. 7 (Part A)
3		File No.: 65:58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 7 (Part B)
	0498	Volume No. 7 (Part B)
	0994	Volume No. 8
	1101	Volume No. 9
4		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume 9 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0051	Volume No. 10
	0103	Volume No. 11
	0232	Volume No. 12
	0286	Volume No. 13
	0428	Volume No. 14
	0595	Volume No. 15
	0934	Volume No. 16
5		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 17
	0213	Volume No. 18
	0361	Volume No. 19A
	0744	Volume No. 19B
	1138	Volume No. 20
6		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 21
	0387	Volume No. 22
	0682	Volume No. 23
	1211	Volume No. 24



**Reel Notes: FBI File on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg**

<b>Reel No</b>	<b>Frame No.</b>	<b>Reel Contents</b>
7		File No. 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 25
	0165	Volume No. 26
	0222	Volume No. 27
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8		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 29
	0320	Volume No. 30
	0680	Volume No. 31
	1097	Volume No. 32
9		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 33
	0439	Volume No. 34
	0809	Volume No. 35
10		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 36
	0367	Volume No. 37
11		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 38
	0573	Volume No. 39
	0895	Volume No. 40
12		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 41
13		File No.: 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0182	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0354	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0528	Julius Rosenberg: See References
	0733	Julius Rosenberg: Referrals
	0980	Julius Rosenberg: Referrals
14		File No. 65-58236 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Julius Rosenberg: See References
	0215	Julius Rosenberg: See References
	0506	Ethel Rosenberg: See References

**Reel Notes: FBI File on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg**

<b>Reel No</b>	<b>Frame No.</b>	<b>Reel Contents</b>
14 ( <i>contd.</i> )	0511	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0529	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0535	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0540	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0556	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0566	Ethel Rosenberg: See References
	0577	Ethel Rosenberg: See References File No.: 65-63615
	0589	Unknown Subjects: Section No. 1
	0602	Julius Rosenberg: See References
	0740	Julius Rosenberg: See References
	0885	Julius Rosenberg: See References
	0934	Julius Rosenberg: See References
	15	
0001		Julius Rosenberg: See References
0631		Julius Rosenberg: See References File No.: 100-382371
0981		Volume 1: Retort, J. Rosenberg
0997		Volume 2: Retort, J. Rosenberg File No.: 65-58236
1004		Julius Rosenberg: June Mail
1016		Rosenberg, et al.: Referrals File No.: 65-45 (Albuquerque)
1047		Volume No. 1
1125		Volume No. 2
1129		Volume No. 3
1167		Volume No. 4
1176		Volume No. 5
16		
	0001	Volume No. 6
	0198	Volume No. Sub-A File No.: 100-105071
	0285	Volume No. 1 File No.: 65-15348
	0330	Volume No. 1
	0378	Volume No. 2 File No.: 65-16985
	0415	Volume No. 3
	0506	Elsur Files

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<b>Reel No</b>	<b>Frame No.</b>	<b>Reel Contents</b>
16 ( <i>contd.</i> )		File No.: 65-16985
	0511	Volume No. 1
	0600	Volume No. 2
		File No.: 65-15348
	0906	Volume No. 3
	1016	Volume No. 4
	1059	Volume No. 5
	1066	Volume No. 6
	1213	Volume No. 7
17		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 8
	0078	Volume No. 9
	0085	Volume No. 10
	0091	Volume No. 11
	0097	Volume No. 12
	0108	Volume No. 13
	0252	Volume No. 14
	0295	Volume No. 15
	0398	Volume No. 16
	0532	Volume No. 17
	0577	Volume No. 18
	0584	Volume No. 19
	0701	Volume No. 20
	0805	Volume No. 21
	0824	Volume No. 22
	0849	Volume No. 23
	0880	Volume No. 24
	0928	Volume No. 25
	0935	Volume No. 26
	0942	Volume No. 27
	1039	Volume No. 28
	1144	Volume No. 29
	1209	Volume No. 30
	1238	Volume No. 31
	1280	Volume No. 32
	1287	Volume No. 33
	1294	Volume No. 34
	1301	Volume No. 35

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<b>Reel No</b>	<b>Frame No.</b>	<b>Reel Contents</b>
18		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 36
	0067	Volume No. 37
	0127	Volume No. 38
	0206	Volume No. 39
	0266	Volume No. 40
	0356	Volume No. 41
	0412	Volume No. 42
	0598	NY: Elsur Log
	0605	Volume No. 1, Sub-A
	0726	Volume No. 2, Sub-A
	0848	Volume No. 3, Sub-A
	0975	Volume No. 4, Sub-A
	1103	Volume No. 5, Sub-A
	1203	Volume No. 6, Sub-A
		Volume No. 7, Sub-A [See Reel, 20, Frame No. 0435]
19		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 8, Sub-A
	0215	Volume No. 9, Sub-A
	0368	Volume No. 10, Sub-A
	0484	Volume No. 11, Sub-A
	0604	Volume No. 12, Sub-A
	0725	Volume No. 13, Sub-A
	0819	Volume No. 14, Sub-A
	0976	Volume No. 15, Sub-A
	1141	Volume No. 16, Sub-A
20		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 17, Sub-A
	0195	Volume No. 18, Sub-A
	0236	Section No. 1, Sub-B
	0243	Section No. 2, Sub-B
	0250	Section No. 3, Sub-B
	0257	Section No. 4, Sub-B
	0264	Section No. 5, Sub-B
	0271	Section No. 6, Sub-B
	0278	Sub File C
	0298	Volume No. 1, Sub-D
	0435	Volume No. 7, Sub-A

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Reel No	Frame No.	Reel Contents
20 ( <i>contd.</i> )	0620	Green Sheet Section
	0940	Volume No. 2, Sub-D
	1096	Volume No. 3, Sub-D
	1221	Volume No. 4, Sub-D
21		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 1, Sub-E
	0137	Volume No. 2, Sub-E
	0259	Volume No. 3, Sub-E
	0426	Volume No. 4, Sub-E
	0615	Volume No. 5, Sub-E
	0726	Volume No. 6, Sub-E
	0832	Volume No. 7, Sub-E
	0920	Volume No. 8, Sub-E
	1047	Sub File F
	1058	Sub File G
	1078	Sub File H
	1094	Volume No. 43
	1148	Volume No. 44
	1155	Volume No. 45
	1269	Volume No. 46
22		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 47
	0166	Volume No. 48
	0305	Volume No. 49
	0366	Volume No. 49-A
	0372	Volume No. 50
	0495	Volume No. 51
	0544	Volume No. 52
	0551	Volume No. 53
	0670	Volume No. 54
	0693	Volume No. 55
	0774	Volume No. 56
	0854	Volume No. 57
	0861	Volume No. 58
	0904	Volume No. 59
	0968	Volume No. 60
1041	Volume No. 61	
1057	Volume No. 62	

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<b>Reel No</b>	<b>Frame No.</b>	<b>Reel Contents</b>
23		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	Volume No. 63
	0179	Volume No. 64
	0418	NY: See References, Batch No. 1
	0461	NY: See References, Batch No. 2
	0495	NY: See References, Batch No. 3
	0625	NY: See References, Batch No. 4
	0676	NY: See References, Batch No. 5
	0711	NY: See References, Batch No. 6
	0755	NY: See References, Batch No. 7
	0829	NY: See References, Batch No. 8
	0862	NY: See References, Batch No. 9
	0920	NY: See References, Batch No. 10
	1000	NY: See References, Batch No. 11
	1039	NY: See References, Batch No. 12
	1063	NY: See References, Batch No. 13
	1086	NY: See References, Batch No. 14
	1149	NY: See References, Batch No. 15
	1179	NY: See References, Batch No. 16
	1227	NY: See References, Batch No. 17
	1254	NY: See References, Batch No. 18
	1280	NY: See References, Batch No. 19
24		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	NY: See References, Batch No. 20
	0064	NY: See References, Batch No. 21
	0150	NY: See References, Batch No. 22
	0224	NY: See References, Batch No. 23
	0355	NY: See References, Batch No. 24
	0484	NY: See References, Batch No. 25
	0605	NY: See References, Batch No. 26
	0705	NY: See References, Batch No. 27
	0808	NY: See References, Batch No. 28
	0873	NY: See References, Batch No. 29
	0955	NY: See References, Batch No. 30
	0977	NY: See References, Batch No. 31
	1014	NY: See References, Batch No. 32
	1045	NY: See References, Batch No. 33
	1154	NY: See References, Batch No. 34

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<b>Reel No</b>	<b>Frame No.</b>	<b>Reel Contents</b>
25		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	NY: See References, Batch No. 35
	0269	NY: See References, Batch No. 36
	0461	NY: See References, Batch No. 37
	0470	NY: See References, Batch No. 38
	0516	NY: See References, Batch No. 39
	0559	NY: See References, Batch No. 40
	0588	NY: See References, Batch No. 41
	0619	NY: See References, Batch No. 42
	0658	NY: See References, Batch No. 43
	0766	NY: See References, Batch No. 44
	0824	NY: See References, Batch No. 45
	0875	NY: See References, Batch No. 46
	0962	NY: See References, Batch No. 47
	0987	NY: See References, Batch No. 48
	1034	NY: See References, Batch No. 49
	1120	NY: See References, Batch No. 50
	1156	NY: See References, Batch No. 51
	1236	NY: See References, Batch No. 52
	1269	NY: See References, Batch No. 53
	1274	NY: See References, Batch No. 54
26		File No.: 65-15348 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0001	NY: See References, Batch No. 55
	0023	NY: See References, Batch No. 56
	0058	NY: See References, Batch No. 57
	0145	NY: See References, Batch No. 58
	0206	NY: See References, Batch No. 59
	0241	NY: See References, Batch No. 60
	0269	NY: See References, Batch No. 61
	0283	NY: See References, Batch No. 62
	0310	NY: See References, Batch No. 63
	0394	NY: See References, Batch No. 64
	0418	File No.: 190-60: Index References
	0496	File No.: 62-15218: Civil Action Administration
		File No.: 100-95459: John Rogge:
	0535	Volume No. 1
	0843	Volume No. 2
	0991	NY: Elsur Logs
	0996	File No.: 65-15348, Serials 1B285-1B634

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Reel No	Frame No.	Reel Contents
27	0001	File No.: 65-15348, Serials 1B285-1B634 ( <i>contd.</i> )
	0302	File No.: 65-15348, Serials 1B284
	0628	File No.: 65-15348, Serials 1B635-1B636