

PSYCHOLOGICAL STRATEG  
BOARD

January 16, 1953

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MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL SMITH:

In connection with yesterday's midday meeting, I am sending you the attached summary of overseas reaction to the Rosenberg case. The summary was prepared in the State Department.



Alan G. Kirk.

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

January 15, 1953

MEMORANDUM

TO: U - Mr. Bruce

FROM: EUR - Mr. Bonbright *21143,*

SUBJECT: Rosenberg Case

Due to our very real concern in regard to the Rosenberg case, Mr. Phillips and I requested a quick roundup of overseas reaction to and treatment of this issue.

A copy of this report is attached herewith. We feel that you might wish to use it as a basis for discussion at your luncheon today.

Attachment:

Copy of report on  
Rosenberg case.



P. CDHuyler:

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Authority	STATE DEPT. 641724-1205 <i>10/20/81</i>
By	<i>DJH</i> NLE Date <i>3/28/91</i>

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Office of Intelligence Research  
Coordinator for Psychological Intelligence  
Special Paper No. 9  
January 14, 1953

TO : IPO - Mr. Jesse MacKnight  
VIA : OIR/CPI - Mr. Louis T. Olson *lto*  
FROM : OIR/CPI - F. Bowen Evans *FBE*  
SUBJECT: The Rosenberg Case.

I. Treatment of the Rosenberg Case in the USSR and Satellites

The Rosenberg case has received no mention in the Russian press or radio. In avoiding mention of the case, the Soviet press and radio is being consistent with past practice; it has always ignored such cases of espionage and spying brought before the courts of other countries. It let the Canadian and British spy trials pass without any comment.

Only two of the Eastern European satellites, Rumania and Hungary, have dealt with the case at all, and they have not given it prominent treatment. The arguments which these two satellites have used are (1) that the Rosenbergs were sentenced to death without substantial evidence and on the basis of entirely unsubstantiated slanders; (2) that their sentencing is a part of the persecution of the progressive peace-loving elements within the US by the Wall Street war mongers; and (3) that the Rosenbergs are victims of an anti-Semitic policy.

As to why the Rosenbergs have been ignored by Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Albania, it may be that in the assignment of propaganda priorities the Rosenberg case was given a low priority, and that these satellites were unable to fit it in and push the program because of local propaganda commitments.

II. Treatment of the Rosenberg Case in Western Europe

A. The Communist Propaganda Campaign. The Communist campaign asking clemency for the Rosenbergs has been intensified in Western Europe during the past week, and consists not only in stepped-up Communist press attention but also numerous letters and petitions sent to American Embassies from Communist-front organizations. Embassy London has received 1,000 petitions and protests bearing several thousand signatures. Embassy Paris reports that since January 9 it has received telegrams, letters and petitions at the rate of approximately 50 per day. Embassy Hague reports that the Communist campaign has been stepped up; that it has received (to January 7) several thousand Communist-inspired



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letters and telegrams; and that small Communist groups have called at the Embassy to present petitions. In Stockholm the Communists have distributed some 200,000 copies of an appeal to "save the Rosenbergs from the electric chair." The Communist paper in Oslo -- defending the Slansky trials as anti-Zionist rather than anti-Jewish -- says that for the real enemy of the Jews one should look to America where the Rosenbergs are the victims of "judicial murder."

B. Non-Communist Opinion. With the notable exception of British and Scandinavian papers, the non-Communist press in Western Europe has become increasingly concerned over the issues involved. There is no evidence that non-Communist papers view the Communist campaign as other than an attempt to falsify the facts, and there has been non-Communist comment that the Communist attempt to link the case with anti-Semitism is designed to detract attention from the Slansky case in Czechoslovakia. However, in France, Belgium, Italy, and West Germany, pleas for clemency have very recently emerged in the Socialist and independent press and from official Socialist groups, and in England some Labor opinion supports clemency. Such non-Communist pleas for clemency are based on certain doubts about the guilt of the Rosenbergs, and on the ground that clemency will play less into the hands of Communist propagandists than will execution and consequent martyrdom.

In France such Socialist and independent pleas for clemency have recently become more numerous and insistent. Up to January 6 Embassy Paris reported success in having its releases used by the three largest morning papers (Figaro, Parisien-Libere and Aurore) and by Franc-Tireur and France-Soir. All these stories held the Rosenbergs fairly convicted and guilty as charged. But on January 9 Figaro shifted, making first-page pleas for clemency on the ground that execution will create martyrdom which the Communists will exploit. On the same day Socialist Populaire broke its silence, saying possibly the Rosenbergs were guilty but they had been convicted on the testimony of only one witness, a practice illegal in France. Also on the same day a Committee of the Socialist Party unanimously adopted a resolution which "without taking a stand on the fundamental question [of guilt]" nevertheless asked that President Truman grant clemency.

In Belgium a petition originated by Socialist Senator Rolin (described by Embassy Brussels as an argumentative crank) has received about 30 signatures and will soon be publicized and sent to Washington. The petition states that execution would endanger "the friendship which Belgian Socialists feel for the US." A Catholic paper has concluded the Rosenbergs' guilt was not conclusively proved, and that their execution is unjust since no American has ever been executed for spying.

Embassy Rome reported on January 12 that the non-Communist Italian Social Democratic Party had on January 7 addressed to the Embassy an appeal for clemency, which would "further underline before universal conscience the difference between the humanity of democratic justice



and the fanaticism of the tribunals of totalitarian states." This party believes clemency would have a favorable effect on Italian public opinion, which has been somewhat influenced by pictures of the Rosenberg children appearing in both Communist and non-Communist papers. Executions for "political" crimes was viewed with misgivings in Italy, the Party spokesman explained.

Embassy London has received a plea for clemency from two Laborites (Lord Chorley and F. Elwyn Jones, MP) who claimed wider support for their position in both the Labor and Conservative parties. They base their plea on the ground that the penalty is excessive and will give propaganda ammunition to the Communists. Embassy London doubts that there is much support in Parliament for this position.

In West Germany much of the non-Communist press now favors clemency, and considerable attention is being given to the case.

Much of the non-Communist press in Western Europe still opposes clemency, and this is particularly true in England and Scandinavia. There is no means at hand for judging what proportion of European non-Communist opinion favors clemency, but the evidence given above indicates a trend toward increasing sentiment in that direction.

