

# An exchange on the Rosenberg case

23 September 2000

*The following is an exchange of letters on the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.*

I am greatly disturbed by your inclusion of the Rosenbergs in your examples of a "legacy" of repression in the US. The Rosenbergs were guilty. The former Soviet KGB archives that have been recently declassified prove their guilt. They were not people to be martyred! They gave the former USSR the ability to make the atomic bomb!! The most repressive society in world history was given the ability to lay waste to entire counties due to the Rosenbergs' betrayal of the US!! You and I may not agree with the current economic set up in the country or some of the new laws put into effect to stifle opposition, but I still consider myself an American and I am not naïve enough to think that the former USSR was some kind of workers paradise. You only hurt yourself, the cause and others, when you spout off while your head is obviously buried away from the injustices that have been carried out in the former "utopia" of the USSR and by naming traitors as people who were "oppressed" by the US. Lies, distortions, paranoia and naïve rambling only push people away from you.

SM

24 August 2000

Dear Reader,

Please excuse the delay in replying to your letter of several weeks ago.

We are in fundamental disagreement with everything you have written on the subject of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

Let me assure you that we are not hurting our cause by explaining that the Rosenbergs were victims of state repression. However, perhaps your cause is not the same as ours.

First of all, the selectively declassified Soviet archives, released by authorities who undoubtedly have their own motives, leave many questions unanswered and raise others. There remain definite grounds for

controversy and doubt on the alleged guilt of the Rosenbergs.

Above all, they were targeted as part of an hysterical anti-communist crusade. They were found guilty only of conspiracy to commit espionage on behalf of what was then a wartime ally of the US. They were sent to their deaths, not in order to fight the crimes of the Stalinist regime in the USSR, but to terrorize workers and socialists in the US. Even defenders of the Rosenberg trial have admitted that there was virtually no evidence against Ethel. She was executed only because she refused to cooperate with the authorities.

What was the political motivation behind the Rosenberg trial? It was part and parcel of the McCarthyite witch hunt. In the period after the Second World War the US became the policeman for world capitalism and the US government reversed its previous policy of alliance with Stalin. This had nothing to do with opposition to Stalin's repression. It was dictated by fear of the movement of the working class internationally. By equating all working class opposition with the alleged danger from the USSR the ruling establishment sought to tame the American labor movement, to purge it of all militants and genuine socialists. Just as in other witch hunts in American history, the hunt for spies and the targeting of foreign enemies and so-called "traitors" in our midst was designed to find scapegoats, to confuse and divide the working class, to line workers up behind their own enemies in the name of the "national interest."

You write that you consider yourself an American, as if that settles the question of the Rosenbergs. Allow us to point out to you that there are two Americas: the America of the working class and the America of the ruling elite. The main enemy of the American workers is right here at home, in this elite which is enriching itself while millions struggle to make ends meet or go hungry in the richest country in the world. At the same time whole sections of the world's population face a

modern day apocalypse from war, poverty and disease produced by the capitalist system.

The Rosenberg case is not ancient history. Have you noticed the recent humiliating retreat forced on the FBI and Justice Department in the Wen Ho Lee case? This Taiwanese-born US citizen was targeted because of his ethnicity and was held in chains in solitary confinement for nine months, only to be released by a judge who apologized for this treatment. The same kind of hysteria which led to this mistreatment of Wen Ho Lee was at work in the prosecution of the Rosenbergs, but the political circumstances were very different than they are today. They were convicted and executed, despite a massive outcry from all over the world against this barbaric treatment.

You write that the Soviet Union was “the most repressive society in world history.” We need no lectures on the crimes of Stalinism. The Trotskyist movement, which we represent today, was exposing these crimes when the Roosevelt Administration and all the leading spokesmen of American capitalism were singing the praises of Stalin, as he massacred genuine socialists in the Moscow Trials and the mass purges of the 1930s! How can you explain the support extended to the Moscow regime by Washington precisely when it was engaged in wiping out the leaders of the Russian Revolution?

If you are at all interested in seriously considering these issues, you should make a serious study of the subjects, beginning with the important material on the *World Socialist Web Site*, including our archives.

Sincerely,

Fred Mazelis

for the *World Socialist Web Site*

19 September 2000



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**