

Executing the Rosenbergs: death and diplomacy in a cold war world

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Abstrak

In the summer of 1950, FBI agents arrested Julius Rosenberg and charged him with conspiracy to commit espionage. Specifically the Justice Department accused him of passing-through his brother-in-law-the secret of the atomic bomb to the Soviet Union. A few weeks later they charged Julius is wife Ethel with the same crime to pressure them to name spies. Convicted and sentenced to death at the height of cold war anti-communist hysteria, the couple was plunged into a whirlwind of appeals, protests, and propaganda until their executions in June 1953. Their deaths did little to silence protest, however; as martyrs their case became legend and cast a spotlight on their two orphaned sons. More than half a century later the trial and executions remain living and breathing controversies. This book uses nearly one thousand newly discovered state department documents for the first time to expose protest movements from 84 cities in 48 countries around the world. While the Truman administration initiated the charges against the Rosenbergs, officials were just beginning to grasp the significance of the case overseas when Eisenhower took office. This prompted a harsh reset in the governments largely untested propaganda apparatus, which struggled to persuade the global community of the wisdom of executing the couple. Allies and potential allies remained unconvinced that the United States had the moral authority to lead and win the Cold War. These new documents allow the history of the Rosenberg case to be told as a pivotal and transnational Cold War event.