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For Immediate Release: Newly Declassified National Security Agency Memo Reveals That U.S. Government Knew Ethel Rosenberg Was Not A Spy Long Before Her Trial and Execution

Rosenberg was executed on grounds that she conspired to provide Soviets nuclear secrets

Sons of Ethel Rosenberg call on President Biden to formally exonerate their mother

Washington D.C. – The National Security Agency (NSA) released a formerly classified document that confirms that the U.S. Government knew that Ethel Rosenberg was not a spy long before her trial and execution. In response, her sons, Michael and Robert Meeropol, are calling on President Joe Biden to exonerate Rosenberg by issuing a presidential proclamation stating that she was wrongfully convicted and executed.

“My brother and I are both relieved and angered to learn that the U.S. government concluded that our mother, Ethel Rosenberg, was not a spy, seven months before her trial in 1951 and nearly three years before her execution in 1953. We are relieved to know the truth, but we are angered that the U.S. government committed this unspeakable injustice and then took 74 years to finally tell the truth by declassifying and releasing this key exculpatory memo,” said **Michael Meeropol, 81**.

“We are deeply gratified to have finally confirmed our long-held view based on decades of research by us, our attorneys, historians and journalists that our mother was not engaged in espionage, said **Robert Meeropol, 77**. “To right this wrong — this injustice committed against her and our family — the U.S. government must correct the historical record officially, and we urge President Biden to issue a presidential proclamation stating that our mother, Ethel Rosenberg, was wrongfully convicted and executed.”

In response to a July 2022 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request by the Meeropol brothers, the National Security Agency (NSA) released an August 22, 1950 handwritten memo from Meredith Gardner, then-chief analyst of the NSA. The newly declassified memorandum reveals he concluded from reviewing Soviet intelligence that Ethel Rosenberg was not a spy. Specifically, Gardner explained in the memo (in section 5) that “she knew about her husbands [sic] work, but that due to ill health she did not engage in the work herself.”

Despite this finding by the government’s top expert on decoding Soviet communications seven months before Rosenberg’s trial, federal prosecutors proceeded to try her on the charge of conspiring to commit espionage, recommended the death penalty, and colluded to deliver a swift, unjust death sentence. The long-discredited Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), J. Edgar Hoover, was made aware of the conclusion of Gardner’s memo but chose not to share it with those with the power to alter her conviction, including presidents Harry Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The release of this recently declassified memo serves as the capstone for an overwhelming body of evidence that the U.S. government knew that Ethel Rosenberg never spied for the Soviet Union.

“I was ten and my brother was six when we were orphaned by the execution of our parents,” said **Michael Meeropol**. “That unjust act by the U.S. government shaped our lives. Despite our good fortune to have been raised by loving adoptive parents, whose last name we live out our lives with pride, we have relentlessly pursued the truth about our parents throughout our adult lives. We are deeply gratified that we finally know the truth about our mother.”

“As we pressed the NSA to declassify and release this memo, which proves that our mother was not a spy, we benefited from the tremendous support of Congressman Jim McGovern (D-MA) and his staff. Moreover, we believe that National Director of Intelligence Avril Haines’ call for more transparency encouraged a new and more open approach by the NSA, which declassified this exculpatory memo, thanks to the staff of its FOIA division. We hope this release is not a one-time exception to a history of secrecy but signals a broader shift by the national security community to greater openness,” said **Robert Meeropol**.

“President Biden has the power to right this historic injustice, redress the harm done to my family, and bring peace to my father and uncle in their lifetimes,” said **Jenn Meeropol**, the Executive Director of the Rosenberg Fund for Children, who is also Robert’s daughter and one of Ethel Rosenberg’s granddaughters. “Our family is asking members of the public to support our demand for justice by signing our petition calling on President Biden to exonerate Ethel at www.rfc.org/exonerate-ethel.” This national petition campaign is being organized by the Rosenberg Fund for Children (www.rfc.org), the organization Robert founded almost 35 years ago in his parents’ memory.

Please click here [<https://www.rfc.org/2024-exonerate-ethel-press-release>] to access a succinct backgrounder and timeline on the case of Ethel Rosenberg.

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