

Rosenberg Atomic Espionage Spy Case Chronology

August 28, 1949 - The Soviet Union detonates its own atomic bomb.

January 1950 - German born physicist Klaus Fuchs confesses to British authorities that he had been a Soviet military intelligence spy from 1941-45 and had betrayed information about the American top-secret atomic bomb project (the Manhattan Project) to his underground contacts. Klaus Fuchs also tells his interviewers that he had picked up information in New York and New Mexico from an American courier who he knew only by the cover-name "Raymond."

February 1950 - Banner headlines splash across newspapers throughout the nation announcing Klaus Fuchs' confession and serving as the catalyst for an intensive search by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for "Raymond," who months later was found to be Harry Gold.

June 15, 1950 - Gold, aka "Raymond," recognizes David Greenglass in FBI photos. He writes on the back of one, "This is the man I contacted in Albuquerque, New Mexico in June 1945."

June 15, 1950 - David Greenglass is picked up by FBI agents and later signs a confession.

June 17, 1950 - Julius Rosenberg, an engineer and father who had been involved in the Communist party, is arrested on suspicion of espionage as a result of having been named by his wife's brother, David Greenglass, who had confessed to authorities. (Greenglass is still alive, but living under an alias, and his grand-jury testimony remains sealed.)

July 20, 1950 - Harry Gold, a confessed Soviet courier who met with numerous industrial spies during the early Cold War period, pleads guilty in federal court to conspiracy to transmit documents to a foreign power. In his grand jury and court testimony Gold states that he served a courier for atomic energy information gleaned from Klaus Fuchs, a Soviet military intelligence (GRU) agent. Gold also admits that he transmitted information about the development of the building of an atomic bomb (the so-called Manhattan Project) to his Soviet contacts. Gold was given a 30-year prison sentence.

August 1950-March 1951 - Grand jury at federal court in New York hears from witnesses about the alleged spy ring.

August 11, 1950 - Ethel Rosenberg, wife of Julius, former strike organizer and mother of two young sons, is arrested as she leaves the federal court house following her second appearance before the grand jury.

Mid-August 1950 - Morton Sobell, an American engineer who was identified as being involved in espionage with Julius Rosenberg, is captured after fleeing to Mexico by agents of J. Edgar Hoover's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).

November 28, 1950 - Gold associates Abraham Brothman and his business partner, Miriam Moskowitz, are convicted and sentenced for grand jury deception by a federal judge.

March 6, 1951 - The joint trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and Morton Sobell begins in room 107 of the federal courthouse in New York City with Judge Irving R. Kaufman presiding. Judge Kaufman had also presided over the Brothman/Moskowitz trial.

April 5, 1951 - Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and Morton Sobell are all indicted and found guilty of conspiring to commit espionage (a violation of Title 50, section 34 of the U.S. Code Espionage) and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were sentenced to death. Ethel's brother, David Greenglass (who had entered

a plea of guilty and had cooperated with the government by providing key trial evidence against his relatives), is given a 15-year sentence, and Morton Sobell receives a 30-year sentence.

June 19, 1953 - The Rosenbergs are executed in the electric chair at Sing Sing Prison in Ossing, New York.

1953 – 1995 - Over a dozen non-fiction books are written about the Rosenberg case. It also inspires reflections by personalities ranging from Nikita Krushchev to Woody Allen, multiple novels, a song by Bob Dylan, and other drama. In these intervening years, some involved convicts such as David Greenglass, Harry Gold and Morton Sobell are released from jail.

October 1995 - During an interview with Michael Dobbs of The Washington Post, Anatoli Yatskov, aka Anatoli Antonovich Yakovlev, the Soviet Vice-Consul in New York City and a Soviet spymaster, brags that the Soviet Union had managed to penetrate the wall of secrecy around the Manhattan Project, and that his agents had stolen the major process for manufacturing the atomic bomb from the United States. While Yatskov claimed that the FBI had not managed to uncover even half of his network, he is adamant that he had not known the Rosenbergs and could not shed any light on their case. However, in his 1995 confession he did confirm that Harry Gold was a courier for his network.

October 1999 - Harry Gold's testimony before a federal grand jury is released to the public as a result of the successful petition by historians to unseal the records of the grand jury investigation of Alger Hiss.

December 2001 – David Greenglass says on CBS' 60 Minutes II, that his grand-jury testimony providing evidence against his sister Ethel might not have been true. He says he could no longer remember whether or not she had typed his notes to make a neater document for the Soviets. Greenglass also says a prosecutor who later became Sen. Joseph McCarthy's aide influenced him to incriminate his sister to save his own wife. He had also spoken candidly to authors Ronald Radosh and Sam Roberts for their books.

January 31, 2008 - National Security Archive and its coalition of various historical societies and authors files a petition to release the 1950-51 grand jury minutes pertaining to the Rosenberg trial.

June 26, 2008 - Government contests the release of some records but does not contest the release of witnesses who have died.

July 22, 2008 - Judge Alvin Hellerstein, United States District Judge for the Southern District of New York, orders the release of at least 36 witnesses' testimony from the Rosenberg grand-jury proceedings.

August 26, 2008 – Judge Hellerstein orders release of 43 grand jury witnesses statements, permitting withholding only of the statements of David Greenglass, Max Elichter and William Danziger, each of whom is living and contested the release.

September 11, 2008 - The grand jury testimony of 43 of 46 witnesses in the Rosenberg prosecution is released to the public as a result of the successful petition by the National Security Archive and historians.