

The Rosenberg's Appeal for Stay of Execution is Unsuccessful

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General Information

Source:	The Camel News Caravan	Resource Type:	Video News Report
Creator:	John Cameron Swayze, David Brinkley	Copyright:	© NBC Universal, Inc.
Event Date:	06/19/1953	Copyright Date:	1953
Air/Publish Date:	06/19/1953	Clip Length	00:04:17

Description

NBC anchorman John Cameron Swayze announces to the country that captured spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg will be executed within the next half hour. They are the first husband and wife to die in the electric chair.

Keywords

Julius Rosenberg, Ethel Rosenberg, Execution, Death Penalty, Communism, Sing Sing Prison, Spies, Espionage, Supreme Court, President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Clemency, Emmanuel Bloch, Atomic Bomb, Cold War, Soviet Union, Russia

Transcript

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JOHN CAMERON SWAYZE anchor:

Ladies and gentlemen, and good evening to you. Four times today captured spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg appealed their sentence of death, and four times they were unsuccessful. They will be executed tonight, probably within the next half hour-- the first husband and wife to die in the electric chair.

Inside the stone walls of Sing Sing Prison, the Rosenbergs wait all day for word of their fate. Its now more than two years since they were first sentenced to die for organizing atomic espionage for Russia.

Rabbi Ervin Koslow, a prison chaplain, goes in. He will not leave until after the execution, which will be held before sundown because the setting of the sun this Friday marks the beginning of the Holy Sabbath, on the Jewish calendar.

A matron, Mamie Crayton, comes out after seeing Ethel Rosenberg. She says the woman refuses to believe she is going to die and insists she is innocent. State troopers surround the prison to prevent demonstrations, again there are none.

The hours pass slowly, Julius Rosenberg now 35, his wife Ethel now 37; married 14 years and one day; parents of two boys-- tonight dined on hard-boiled eggs, macaroni salad and tea. There was no time for their usual last meal. Their fate is decided in Washington, and here is that story from David Brinkley.

DAVID BRINKLEY, reporting:

In these last minutes before the Rosenbergs are electrocuted here at Sing Sing prison, here's how in Washington today their attorneys went through the last possible legal maneuvers to save them.

It began at noon at the Supreme Court, normally quiet but today surrounded by groups of the curious. The court met at noon. At 12:06 it announced the decision not to end the Rosenbergs stay of execution. That was a stay granted two days ago by Justice Douglass. That seemed to be the end, but it wasn't. Their attorneys promptly asked for another stay while they appeal to President Eisenhower again for clemency. The court said it would consider it.

Meanwhile the lobbyists, who came to Washington to work for the Rosenbergs, kept up their parade in front of the White House. People riding by in automobiles shouted, why they didn't go to Russia, but there was no other disorder so the police just left them alone. They even sang a little song somebody wrote especially for this occasion, but the picketing and singing did them no good, because the Supreme Court by this time, the governments lawyers having won their case, were leaving, the court had refused again to delay the execution.

A few minutes later Emmanuel Bloch, Chief Counsel came out and read us a telegram he had sent to the President.

EMMANUEL BLOCH: For the sake of American tradition, prestige, and influence urge redress for Rosenberg. The man should be afforded sufficient time to consider this serious matter.

NARRATOR: The President's answer came quickly. Here it is read by a White House press officer.

WHITE HOUSE PRESS OFFICER: The following is partially a statement from the President of the United States.

I am convinced that the only conclusion to be drawn from the history of this case is that the Rosenbergs have received the benefit of every safeguard, which American justice can provide. There is no question in my mind that their original trial and the long series of appeals constitute the fullest measure of justice and due process of law. Throughout the innumerable complications and technicalities of this case, no judge has ever expressed any doubt that they committed most serious cases of espionage. Accordingly only the most serious extraordinary circumstances could warrant executive intervention in the case. When democracy's enemies have been accused of a crime as horrible as that of which the Rosenbergs were convicted, when

the legal processes of Democracy have been marshaled to their maximum strength to protect the lives of convicted spies, when in their most solemn judgments-- the tribunals of the United States-- have been adjudged them guilty and the sentence just, I will not intervene in this matter.

NARRATOR: The President and the Attorney General were standing by in case the Rosenbergs decided at the last minute they wanted to talk. Now, back to New York...

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