

BOOK ① REVIEW. 6.212

THE ROSENBERG LETTERS, Published by Dennis Dobson, London, obtainable Pickwick Bookshop, 45 Kerk Street, Johannesburg.

D/C
B/D

Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were ordinary people. History, in American the shape of the current/hysterical fear of the workingclasses, has ensured for these two people a permanent place in mankind's memory, for it was for the betterment of mankind that this loving husband and wife made the supreme sacrifice.

The Rosenbergs were arrested and accused of espionage in 1950. They protested their innocence throughout the case, but were finally executed in 1953. The volume ~~is~~ under review consists of a wide selection of the letters that the couple wrote to each other during the three years of their imprisonment. In addition there are a few letters written to their friend and lawyer, Emanuel Bloch. The letters have been published to establish a fund for the two Rosenberg children.

S/C
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The letters are beautiful for three main reasons. They record an unsurpassable faith in human worth: they enshrine in all its beauty the love of a man for a woman and the love of a woman for a man: they are written in language which by reason of its simplicity is exalted.

The Rosenbergs had a political creed which was that their own lives had value and purpose so long as their lives were devoted to the cause of human progress. They lived and worked consciously for the day, when there shall be for all mankind, 'Peace, bread and roses'. As Julius remarks, 'The real beauty of the good life is participating in the forward movement of

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humanity'. How simple a creed, how profound. How glaringly it exposes the anti-humanitarianism of all governments and all individuals who place sectional interests above the interests of ~~all~~ mankind. What a righteous and ennobling faith such a creed places in the men and women of the world. How gloriously, at the same time, it proclaims the integrity, the intelligence and self-respect of the holders. There is no room for hate and strife and humiliation, only the building of 'a monument to love and joy, to human worth'.

S/C

The Rosenbergs had so deep a love of life, their own and the lives of earth's millions, that they had to accept death rather than betray that love.

It is a peculiar experience, the reading of these letters.

The reader is embarrassed almost to find himself reading correspondence that was never intended for public perusal.

Soon, however, we cannot help participating in the rare and beautiful love that existed between this husband and wife.

Above all things in these cries between two divided yet united hearts, one is left humble and admiring before their enveloping, passionate, adult love that ~~lived in~~ these two human beings. In a world of ~~cheap~~ tawdry marriages and tawdrier liaisons, the Rosenbergs have purified the ideal of married love. These letters will last for all time as great love letters.

The style of the writers is not quotable, so apt is every word, so direct and concise the ~~stilted~~ language. Simple words acquire a richer meaning in the context of these letters.

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At random I open the book and read,

Julie Darling,

The concerned tears rose at once as I read your letter. I am constantly tossed upon a sea of righteous wrath for all the pettiness and indignity that hems us in. Sweetheart I draw you close into loving arms and warm you with my warmth. I feel so inadequate in the sight of your need, yet I long to believe I have had some small something to do with the extraordinary stability you have been exhibiting,
Ever your wife,
Ethel.

S/C

While reading these letters one aches with a pignancy which at times finds relief in tears. Their limitless concern and compassion of these parents for their two boys grips the emotions painfully: Julie's tenderness towards his Mother: their love and admiration for Manny Bloch: their faith in the consciences of the people of the earth - all weave into the letters an emotional quality that is intensely moving.

One cannot read these letters without hating with a bitter, bitter hatred the individuals in the United States who brought about their electrocution: a rebellious hatred ~~for~~ of the system which could demand, grant and condone the barbaric treatment handed to the Rosenbergs. One cannot help being convinced of the innocence of these people and being shamed that one did not do more to try and avert their fate.

It is interesting and alarming to realise from the letters that the Rosenbergs were tried once and once only. ~~IN~~ All the numerous appeals were ~~ing~~ excursions into legal academics. Never after the first trial was evidence led either for or against them. No opportunity was given to expose the contradictions in the prosecution's case, nor to rebut false evidence. The first verdict was given in an atmosphere calculated to

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inflame the jury against the accused and yet never again was there an opportunity to test the validity of the verdict. It revolts the reader to see how stubbornly and speciously every appeal was turned down. One wonders whether Eisenhower can ever sleep easily again.

The reader takes note, too, of the revealing and shameful attempt on the part of the American government to bargain with these two in the condemned cell. ~~They were told~~ "Something can be worked out, if you will agree to co-operate", they were told. Ethel Rosenberg replied in immortal words, 'Suffice it to say that my husband and I shall die innocent before we lower ourselves to live guilty. Nobody can dictate terms to the Rosenbergs, who follow only the dictates of heart and soul, truth and conscience and the God-blessed love we bear our fellows'.

I urge every lover of humanity, every lover of great literature, every one whose spirit ~~falters~~ falters in the fight for justice and free thought to buy this book at once, to keep it always at hand for inspiration, for consolation and for a renewal of faith in mankind and our destiny.

Bob

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TREASON TRIAL, 1956 1961

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