

354 Hunter St.,
Ossining, N. Y.

June 16, 1953

President Dwight D. Eisenhower
White House, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President,

At various intervals during the two long and bitter years I have spent in the Death House at Sing Sing, I have had the impulse to address myself to the President of the United States. Always, in the end, a certain innate shyness, an embarrassment almost, comparable to that which the ordinary person feels in the presence of the great and the famous, prevailed upon me not to do so.

Since then, however, the moving plea of Mrs. William Oatis on behalf of her husband has lent me inspiration. She had not been ashamed to bare her heart to the head of a foreign state; would it really be such a presumption for a citizen to ask for redress of grievance and to expect as much consideration as Mrs. Oatis received at the hands of strangers?

Of Czechoslovakia I know very little, of her President less than that. But my own land is a part of me, I should be homesick for her anywhere else in the world. And Dwight D. Eisenhower was "Liberator" to millions before he was ever "President." It does not seem reasonable to me, then, that a letter concerning itself with condemned wife as well as condemned husband, should not merit this particular President's sober attention.

True, to date, you have not seen fit to spare our lives. Be that as it may, it is my humble belief that the burdens of your office and the exigencies of the times have allowed of no genuine opportunity, as yet, for your more personal consideration.

It is chiefly the death sentence I would entreat you to ponder. I would entreat you to ask yourself whether that sentence does not serve the ends of "force and violence" rather than an enlightened justice. Even granting the assumption that the convictions had been properly procured (and there now exists incontrovertible evidence to the contrary), the steadfast denial of guilt, extending over a protracted period of solitary confinement and enforced separation from our loved ones, makes of the death penalty an act of vengeance.

As Commander-in-Chief of the European theatre, you had ample opportunity to witness the wanton and hideous tortures that such a policy of vengeance had wreaked upon vast multitudes of guiltless victims. Today, while these ghastly mass butchers, these obscene

racists, are graciously receiving the benefits of mercy and in many instances being reinstated in public office, the great democratic United States is proposing the savage destruction of a small unoffending Jewish family, whose guilt is seriously doubted throughout the length and breadth of the civilized world! As you have recently so wisely declared, no nation can chance "going it alone." That, Mr. President, is truly the voice of the sanity and of the leadership so sorely needed in these ~~perilous~~ times. Surely you must recognize then, that the ensuing damage to the good name of our country, in its struggle to lead the world toward a more equitable and righteous way of life, should not be underestimated.

Surely, too, what single action could more effectively demonstrate this nation's fealty to religious and democratic ideals, than the granting of clemency to my husband and myself.

Such an act would also be a fitting reply to a small boy's desperate appeal. His bright young mind and homesick heart prompted him (even as his mother was prompted), to see in Mr. Oatis' release, a hope for the release of his own dear parents. I approach you then as he did, solely on the basis of mercy, and earnestly beseech you to let this quality sway you rather than any narrow judicial concern, which is after all the province of the courts. It is rather the province of the affectionate grandfather, the sensitive artist, the devoutly religious man, that I would entreat. I ask this man, himself no stranger to the humanities, what man there is that History has acclaimed great, whose greatness has not been measured in terms of his goodness? Truly, the stories of Christ, of Moses, of Ghandi hold more sheer wonderment and spiritual treasure than all the conquests of Napoleon!

I ask this man, whose name is one with glory, what glory there is that is greater, than the offering to God of a simple act of compassion!

Take counsel with your good wife; of statesmen there are enough and to spare. Take counsel with the mother of your only son; her heart which understands my grief so well and my longing to see my sons grown to manhood like her own, with loving husband at my side even as you are at hers -- her heart must plead my cause with grace and with felicity!

And the world must humbly honor greatness!

Respectfully yours,

(signed) (Mrs.) Ethel Rosenberg #110-510

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