

10-29-76
R.E. BAKER

SPHEX CLUB

THE ANNA ROSENBERG INCIDENT

This is my first opportunity to give a paper before this Club. I greatly appreciate the honor of being asked to join your ranks and to speak from this podium. It is not false modesty, but simple truth to point out that I do not possess the scholarship which has obviously gone into so many of the papers I have heard.

For my subject I have chosen a little known and entirely forgotten event in recent history in which I played a small role. I have chosen to tell this story for two reasons - the first is that some of the information comes from a grand jury proceeding which was secret and from which only my memory is a recorder of what happened, a circumstance which you will admit makes it quite difficult for you to challenge my facts.

The second reason has more substance. What I have chosen to call the Anna Rosenberg incident occurred at a time when Joseph McCarthy was busy creating a new concept - McCarthyism - a concept which was to bring to him the censure of his colleagues. I hope that the lessons of that era are etched deeply enough in our social and political consciousness to ensure against their repetition.

I offer this as a small contribution to keeping the lessons of this ugly period before us. It is a real life story.

The time is late in 1950. The central subject is one Anna M. Rosenberg whose nomination by President Truman for the important position of Assistant Secretary of Defense was before the United States Senate for its consent.

The cast of characters contains some recognizable names:

The Senate Armed Services Committee's acting Chairman was Richard Russell of Georgia. Its members included Harry Flood Byrd of Virginia, Virgil M. Chapman of Kentucky, Lyndon Baines Johnson of Texas, Estes Kefauver of Tennessee, Lester C. Hunt of Wyoming, and shifting across the aisle to the Republican side: Styles Bridges of New Hampshire, Chan Gurney of South Dakota, Leverett Saltonstall of Massachusetts, Wayne Morse of Oregon, William F. Knowland of California, and Harry P. Cain of Washington.

Others who played prominent roles were - Fulton Lewis, Jr., the highly successful and influential radio commentator and the Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, a man of wide following through radio and press - his own.

Congressman Rankin of Mississippi and Senator McCarthy himself play supporting roles.

Important roles were played by people whose names will be familiar to few if any of you. Joseph B. Matthews, for more than six years the Director of Research for the House Un-American Activities Committee, in 1950, by his own description, "engaged in private research into the activities of Communists and the Communist Party." Benjamin H. Freedman, who with another made a comfortable living from Woodbury soap, with enough left over after he sold his interests to finance some political causes, mostly centering around Zionism. He was described in the hearings as an "anti-Semitic Jew". Ralph De Sola, a reformed Communist with little or no national image.

And, of course, Anna M. Rosenberg - the M is important, a 49-year old manpower expert. Mrs. Rosenberg was born in Hungary in 1901 and came to America in 1911 with her family by name of Lederrer. She became a citizen by act of her father's naturalization in 1917. With but a high school education, by the time of the war she had achieved sufficient stature in the broad field of labor to become a member of the War Manpower Commission and to catch the eye of no less an observer than General George Marshall. I say "catch the eye". The record is silent as to any possible suggestion that General Marshall's attention was attracted by other than her ability and knowledge, although Mrs. Rosenberg was a vivacious, attractive woman. It is the last purpose of this paper to suggest any more of their relationship.

November 29, 1950 was a Wednesday. Mrs. Rosenberg had been summoned from private life by President Truman at the explicit request of Marshall, then Secretary of Defense. It was to be an important position, requiring Senate approval, and was also noteworthy in that not many women had reached such lofty heights in government.

Nobody expected other than a routine hearing as the Senate Armed Services Committee was gavelled to attention by its regular Chairman, Millard Tydings, soon to drop from our story over his own personal tragedy.

And the hearing was indeed mostly routine. Mrs. Rosenberg told them of her life and what she had been doing since returning to private life from the War Manpower Commission. She listed some of her clients for whom she gave consulting services in the area of labor and public relations. They included Macy's Department Store, the five Rockefeller brothers, the John Hay Whitney foundation, Albert and Mary Lasker, Encyclopedia Britannica and others. Most of the questions explored possible conflicts of interest.

Mrs. Rosenberg testified that she accepted the job with great personal reluctance, saying that she "did not look for this job" and that she came "because General Marshall asked me" adding

that there was "not another human being in the world for whom (she) would have done (it) ..."

A telegram from the Secretary of Defense was inserted in the record clearly supporting her testimony as to the circumstances under which she was asked to take the job. It said in part: "I want you to know that I personally thought of her and selected her for the position without suggestion or recommendation or consultation from anyone."

There was a small break in the essentially harmonious drive towards unanimous confirmation. Three doctors from California sent telegrams protesting her confirmation on the ground that Anna Rosenberg was once a part of the Communist party apparatus, in particular the John Reed Club.

Mrs. Rosenberg denied knowing what the John Reed Club was until just before the hearing when she looked into it. She denied that she had ever been a member of that club or of any organization which was part of the Communist Party apparatus. She said it must be a case of mistaken identity - there were, she added, forty-six Anna Rosenbergs in the New York City Directory.

At the close of the Committee meeting that day, November 29, the Committee voted unanimously to recommend confirmation of Mrs. Rosenberg's appointment by the Senate.

But it was not to be that easy. Already Fulton Lewis, Jr. had raised the issue of membership in the John Reed Club on a national radio broadcast. How Lewis was first put on to the story has never been clear. But he would not use it without satisfying himself that he was probably on the right track. To be reasonably sure of his grounds, he did what a lot of people with a similar problem were doing. He called Dr. J. B. Matthews. When Matthews left the House Un-American Activities Committee where you will recall he had been its Research Director for over six years, he helped himself to a duplicate copy of their entire files, took them to Philadelphia and was an instant and successful expert. Among his several regular clients was the American Legion. If you wanted to know whether so and so was a commie, or at least a fellow traveller, just call Matthews - pay his fee - and you had the most authentic information outside of the FBI.

Yes sir, Fulton Lewis was on the right track. The files, Matthews assured him, showed that a group from the John Reed Club in New York had sent a petition to the New York Times. They were protesting what they called "red baiting" and some twenty-five had signed, presumably members, and among them was the name Anna Rosenberg. The Times carried the story May 19, 1930.

Was this petitioner the same Anna, as the Anna M., nominee for Assistant Secretary of Defense? "In all probability" or words to that effect, was Dr. Matthews reply to Fulton Lewis, Jr.

This was enough for Lewis to break the story on the radio.

Sometime before December 5th, a couple more of our cast got very active. On December 3rd, Benjamin Freedman paid a visit to Ralph De Sola at De Sola's residence in New York. Apparently Freedman was concerned about the Rosenberg appointment. He heard the Lewis broadcast and began to make inquiries. Freedman's lawyer who represented him in various lawsuits with the Anti-Defamation League, one Hamilton Richardson, had led Freedman to De Sola as a man Richardson knew as a former communist who had given information to the Dies Committee.

One day before, Freedman had called on J. B. Matthews and had come away with all of his grave fears about Anna's appointment confirmed. Matthews didn't want to be personally involved (he sold information, testifying would be giving it away). But he assured Freedman that it would be a dark day for America if the Committee's confirmation was left standing.

Back to the morning of December 3rd. Benjamin Freedman had himself a live witness! Yes sir, he couldn't believe his ears! De Sola had indeed been a member of the John Reed

Club from about 1934 to 1937 at which time he was a card carrying Communist. Had he known an Anna Rosenberg there? Better than that, he had been introduced to her, had spoken with her there on more than one occasion and had later been told to forget about having seen her there because of her new work in government activities. But best of all - shown a picture of Anna M. he made positive identification. They were one and the same.

Word of this remarkable event got from Philadelphia to Washington quickly. One person who knew immediately was the Reverend Gerald L. K. Smith, probably on a call from Freedman. Smith was in touch with Senator McCarthy. Someone, probably Smith, got the word to Congressman Rankin.

The following are excerpts from the printed record of the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday, December 5, 1950:

"The committee met, pursuant to call, at 2:40 p.m., in room 212, Senate Office Building, Senator Richard B. Russell presiding.

Present: Senators Russell (presiding), Byrd, Chapman, Johnson of Texas, Kefauver, Hunt, Saltonstall, Morse, Knowland, and Cain. Also present: Mark H. Galusha of the committee staff.

RESUME OF MEETING

The committee met in executive session to consider certain oral and written information which had come to the attention of the individual members of the committee relative to the nomination of Anna M. Rosenberg as Assistant Secretary of Defense. All the information received appears in subsequent hearings. No witness appeared at this meeting.

The acting chairman was directed by the committee to request of the Attorney General that the FBI file on Anna M. Rosenberg be made available to one or more members of the committee. The committee voted to request the appearance of, or if necessary to subpoena, the following persons to appear at a meeting of the committee to be held on Friday, December 8, at 10:00 a.m.: Ralph De Sola, 52 West Eighty-fourth Street, New York City; Helen Winner, 43 West Ninety-third Street, New York City; Benjamin H. Freedman, 300 Central Park West, New York City.

The following are additional excerpts from the record of the meeting:

* * * * *

Senator Russell. I think we ought to have a full disclosure on the record. A Member of the House of Representatives called me with respect to this nomination and stated that he had a witness there who wanted to be heard. I told him I had not

attended the hearings and that I would prefer to have it taken up with the chairman of the committee or some member of the committee who was present. He insisted, however, that I see him and the witness.

I, of course, was glad to do so. He came over with the witness, who I think is the same man who signed these papers. It is a Mr. Benjamin H. Freedman of New York City. Mr. Freedman was very violent in his opposition to Mrs. Rosenberg. He thinks she is utterly unfit for any position of any kind.

I, of course, had no personal knowledge of these suspicions, I might say, that he submitted as charges that she was not a fit person for this post...her affiliation with Communist-front organizations.

This statement purports to be signed by Mr. Freedman and reads as follows:

Dr. J. B. Matthews, 410 West Twenty-fourth Street, Penthouse B, New York City, stated that to his knowledge there is a file in the FBI regarding Anna M. Rosenberg which contains information "to prove that Anna M. Rosenberg is the least desirable person in the entire United States to be appointed to that position."

It is his opinion that the information contained in the FBI file on Anna M. Rosenberg will support all the allegations made regarding her connections, participations, and/or relations with Communists, Communist-front, Communist transmission belt or pro-Communist organizations, and/or organizing movements.

That is signed by "Benjamin H. Freedman." There is another paper attached to this which reads as follows:

Mr. Ralph De Sola, 52 West Eighty-fourth Street, New York City, was a member of the Communist Party and his wife was also a member of the Communist Party at the same time, and for a period beyond the time Ralph De Sola was a member of the Communist Party. Ralph De Sola informed me on the morning of December 3, 1950, at his residence at 52 West Eighty-fourth Street, New York City, that he had attended meetings of the John Reed Club held over a period of years in three club rooms in the area of Sixth Avenue, around Eighth or Ninth Streets and elsewhere in the neighborhood.

Ralph De Sola stated to me that on numerous occasions he was present at the meetings of the John Reed Club when Anna M. Rosenberg, whose picture he identified in the newspapers as the person recently appointed as Assistant Secretary of Defense, was also present. Ralph De Sola stated to me at the time of our meeting, that on a certain day in either 1934 or 1935, word was received by the secretary of the club, whose name was told to me by Ralph De Sola but escapes my memory at this moment, ^{to} the effect that all records of the John Reed Club must be destroyed before the close of business that day, and that no records of any kind whatsoever, particularly membership records, were to remain in existence after the receipt of these instructions to destroy them. Ralph De Sola informed me that at the time of that meeting the policy of the supporters and sympathizers of the John Reed Club was to be radically altered. The leading figures within the orbit of the John Reed Club influence were to enter other organizations for the purpose of winning them over to the Communist ideology represented by the John Reed Club policy.

At the same meeting between myself and Ralph De Sola, he informed me that Anna M. Rosenberg, whose picture he identified in the newspapers as the Anna M. Rosenberg recently appointed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense, had designated his wife (Mrs. Ralph De Sola) to work in the educational field to plant Communist agents in the educational system in New York City, and that at the present time there are several Communists in the educational system in New York City who were placed there by Ralph De Sola's wife, pursuant to her responsibility resulting from her directions from Anna M. Rosenberg.

During this same meeting between myself and Ralph De Sola, he informed me that Anna M. Rosenberg, whose photograph he identified in the newspapers as the Anna M. Rosenberg recently appointed as the Assistant Secretary of Defense, O.K.'d the appointments of Henry Alsberg, Joseph Baker, and Aubrey Williams to their positions with the United States Government, the first two having been anarchists before joining the Communist Party, and the latter's record speaking for itself.

At this meeting between myself and Ralph De Sola, he emphatically stated and on many occasions repeated, that he was absolutely certain that the picture in the newspapers of the Anna M. Rosenberg, with whom he was acquainted through his attendance at the meetings of the John Reed Club, was

the Anna M. Rosenberg identified by these pictures as the person recently appointed to the position of Assistant Secretary of Defense.

That is signed by the same Mr. Benjamin H. Freedman.

(Whereupon, at 3:35 p.m., the hearing was adjourned subject to call.)"

Mrs. Rosenberg's ordeal had begun. December 5th was quite a day. Fulton Lewis, Jr. had heard about De Sola and told his leg man, Ed Nellor, to get on it fast. Nellor called Don Surine, a former FBI man now on Senator McCarthy's staff as an investigator, and told him he was going to Philadelphia and try to find this witness, De Sola. Surine told him that he could not get to De Sola except through Freedman, but Surine could take care of that and decided to go with Nellor.

Such a night in Benjamin Freedman's life. First, a call from Gerald L. K. Smith, telling him that two men were coming up to see him and De Sola. They were all right Smith assured him and Freedman should see them. Next, two FBI agents arrive and interrogated Freedman at some length. Then two men, probably those whose arrival was foretold by the Rev. Smith arrived. (Freedman later testified he thought they were investigators from the Senate Armed Services Committee itself.) They were Nellor and Surine and had to wait in the dining room while the FBI finished with Freedman.

Finally the two FBI men left, and after a brief conversation Freedman gave Nellor and Surine his card with a message written on it which would enable them to see Ralph De Sola. As Nellor testified later, they had gone to see Freedman because he "was supposed to be the guy who could get us in (to see) De Sola". In talking about that night Ben Freedman was to testify later that he "thought (he) stepped into a hornet's nest". And indeed he had.

Surine and Nellor had to wait until the next morning at 9:00 a.m. to see De Sola. They wanted to see him to get the names of other witnesses De Sola had indicated were in the John Reed Club when Mrs. Rosenberg was a member.

Nellor, at least, was not very much impressed with Freedman, testifying later that "he would not rely on Mr. Freedman for anything." But his impression of De Sola was different. He thought that "he told a straightforward story." He had questioned him at length that morning of December 6th, and he was later to say: "I listened to his story. I don't know what it is. As far as I am concerned, on the basis of other experiences with people like that, he is telling a straightforward story."

So Nellor and Surine came back to Washington somewhat impressed with De Sola and the tempo of the inquiry, spurred by Fulton Lewis, Jr.'s bolder radio charges and by Senator McCarthy and Gerald L. K. Smith's work in the halls and cloak rooms of the Senate and the Senate Office Building. Smith was said to have been "running around the Senate office Building with a copy of Freedman's statement regarding De Sola".

On Thursday morning, December 7, 1950, the Senate Armed Services Committee met. The following is an official Resume of Meeting:

"The committee met in executive session to further discuss matters relating to the nomination of Anna M. Rosenberg to be Assistant Secretary of Defense. No witnesses appeared at this meeting. The acting chairman reported to the committee that he had been advised by the Attorney General's Office that the FBI file on Anna M. Rosenberg has been transmitted to the Secretary of Defense. The Attorney General's Office suggested that the matter of making the file available to the committee be taken up with the Office of the President. The President's Office suggested that the Secretary of Defense be called before the committee to give his interpretation of the files.

The committee took the position that since the name of Anna M. Rosenberg as Assistant Secretary of Defense was before the Senate for confirmation and had been officially referred to the Armed Services Committee for consideration, it was the constitutional responsibility of the committee to thoroughly investigate all available information relative to the nominee. A subcommittee consisting of Senator Byrd, Senator Hunt, and Senator Cain was named to consult with General Marshall relative to making the FBI files on Anna M. Rosenberg available to the committee.

The committee voted to request the appearance of, or if necessary to subpoena, Dr. J. B. Matthews to give testimony before the committee.

(Whereupon, at 11:45 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.)"

The Committee met again the following day, Friday morning, December 8th. Senator Byrd reported that with Senators Cain and Hunt he met with General Marshall. The President - Mr. Truman - had authorized General Marshall to let the sub-committee review the FBI files on Anna M. Rosenberg. Byrd had a conflicting appointment so only Cain and Hunt saw the files.

Senator Cain said that he had read every word in what he described as a "very long FBI report". It had taken two hours. He said that he had "Read it against all of those allegations, with particular references to the John Reed Club, that had been made against Mrs. Rosenberg. Instead of that file supporting or substantiating any of those charges, the file, in a 95 percent fashion at least" he said, "supports the acknowledged and established loyalty of Anna M. Rosenberg".

His colleague, Senator Hunt, said: "I would like to associate myself with the statement made by the Senator." Senator Byrd said he would go over the file that evening and the sub-committee would make a formal report.

The first witness was then called. It was Ralph De Sola. He was handed a statement. Being reminded that he was under oath, De Sola swore that all of the statements it contained were the truth.

It reads in part as follows:

"STATEMENT OF RALPH DE SOLA IN RE ANNA ROSENBERG

I, Ralph De Sola, solemnly swear and affirm that I was a member of the Communist Party of the U.S.A., section 3 International, from about September of 1934 to January of 1937. I was recruited by James Magraw of the John Reed Club and attended meetings with him at the club during the late summer and fall of 1934. While in his company I met Anna Rosenberg, and he advised me that this outstanding social worker was a party member but like many important comrades was kept out of general activity that might expose her to enemies of the Communist Party.

In 1935, the John Reed Club was dissolved at the order of the Communist Party and its membership rolls destroyed so as to better conceal the identity of leading party members such as Anna Rosenberg who by that time was already in the higher echelons of the New Deal.

In October 1935, James Magraw became the supervisor in charge of the WPA reporters project in New York City and later became director of the writers' project in this city. He said to me at one time when the Communist supervisors had a fraction meeting in his home on Greenwich Street that it would be very important for all of us to forget early party contacts, such as Anna Rosenberg, in our job relationship as the Communist Party had most important work for these top comrades. Magraw was the close confidant of Henry Alsberg, national director of the writers' project and also of Jerre Mangione, assistant to Alsberg and later deputy to the Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization until he was exposed as a Communist and forced to resign.

Anna Rosenberg, one of the founders of a Communist-inspired magazine for social workers, one of the founders of Science and Society--A Marxist Quarterly, and later associated with the New Deal administration and later with the department store, R. H. Macy in New York, is the same Anna Rosenberg that I recall attending meetings with at the John Reed Club on Sixth Avenue near Eighth Street in New York City and to whom I was introduced to by my Communist Party sponsor, James Magraw.

.

Anna Rosenberg, I was advised by James Magraw, also a Communist Party member, was responsible for passing on the appointments of some of Harry Hopkins' closest administrators such as Jacob Baker, Henry Alsberg, Aubrey Williams, and others who were notoriously liberal in their hiring of known Communists and their appointment of known Communists to top supervisory jobs in the WPA and other New Deal agencies. The history of her appointees is to be found in the various congressional reports cited above. Without exception they showed strong Communist tendencies and did all they could to promote un-Americanism during their tenure and prior to their exposure and resignation under fire. Anna Rosenberg can be trusted, unless she has suddenly changed her previous

course of action and sympathy, to again fill our Government with subversive or sympathetic to subversive people-- Communists, fellow travelers, and friends of fellow travelers.

The foregoing may be investigated and will be supported by the undersigned, but it is specifically requested, in the interest of future service to the Government, that this statement can be treated as confidential and be used only in executive sessions.

Signed in the presence of Benjamin H. Freedman this 5th day of December, 1950.

RALPH DE SOLA.

Witness:

BENJAMIN H. FREEDMAN

In the lengthy questioning that followed, De Sola stood very firm. He was even quite aggressive. For instance this:

"I have been told that Mrs. Rosenberg when questioned by your committee, claimed that there were at least 40 Anna Rosenbergs in the City of New York...I checked the New York telephone book. There are only five Anna Rosenbergs in there," and he added, "I don't count 40, but she may have been a sorceress."

And again, "If Mrs. Rosenberg has left the Communist movement, let her declare that fact now and openly. If she is no longer associated with Communists, let her disclose the names of various Communists with whom she has associated in the past and with whom she has conspired." Pretty heady words. And he adds with questionable logic: "If (she) knows of another by that name who resembles her so closely that I may be said to have committed an error in identification, then let her produce the other Mrs. Anna Rosenberg for your inspection and for mine."

And his recollection for detail was good. Hear this exchange:

"Senator Russell. What were your contacts with Mrs. Rosenberg at these meetings, Mr. De Sola?

Mr. De Sola. Just as the contact I might have with any of you gentlemen in this room. I am standing here talking to someone, I see someone over there, I have been told that was Mrs. Rosenberg, and at a later date, after I was recruited, I was introduced to her.

I chatted to her generally a few minutes about the wonderful growth of the Communist movement and success of the John Reed Club idea. That was the extent of my contact with her.

Senator Russell. Who presided over the John Reed Club on the occasion when you met Mrs. Rosenberg?

Mr. De Sola. I believe it was a lecture symposium on proletarian poetry, and I believe the leader of the discussion group that evening was Isidore Schneider."

And again, a few minutes later:

"Senator Russell. So the only conversation you recall having with her was when you both were discussing the great success of the movement?"

Mr. De Sola. Yes, sir.

Senator Russell. Who else was present during that conversation?"

Mr. De Sola. Mr. James Magraw, who had introduced me to her.

Senator Russell. Was it in the clubroom?"

Mr. De Sola. Yes; it was in the clubroom. Generally standing around in little groups, the way people do, and chatting.

Senator Russell. Do you recall the name of any more people who were there at that time?"

Mr. De Sola. In the last few days I have given what you might call hours of detailed testimony to investigators in the FBI, to special agents. I signed a 15-page statement last night, which must have the names of at least 50 people who were at the John Reed Club.

I might ask the Senator in the interests of time of all you gentlemen here to get hold of that from the FBI, because it is most complete, and I give names, and we checked as to the addresses where these people might be living now in the hopes that they could be helpful."

Only on one point was there any break at all in De Sola's testimony and that proved much more damaging to Freedman than to De Sola. De Sola positively denied that he had ever told Freedman that De Sola's first wife was designated by Rosenberg to place Communist Agents in the New York educational system.

Though the committee members tried very hard, there was no erosion in De Sola's story.

The next witness was Helen Winner. She had been De Sola's first wife. She testified that she had not been a member of the John Reed Club, but had attended a few meetings and knew De Sola then before they were married. She had never seen Anna Rosenberg there and had no knowledge that she was ever a member or was a Communist.

Senator Johnson asked if she thought De Sola was a truthful person. Her answer was yes, but with a qualification:

"Miss Winner. That he is a truthful person, with certain limitations; that is, the limitation is not the truthfulness, but the fact that I think he believes what he says; I think sometimes there might be a far-fetched something behind it. It is an awfully difficult thing to explain. I think when he knows a fact, I would be inclined to think that there is at least something in it, you know, even though he may see it from some angle or in some way that would make it not quite that to me."

And again on the subject:

"Senator Hunt. Would you care to tell the committee while you were married with Mr. De Sola, would you say he was friendly to the Jewish people?

Miss Winner. I would say this: That Mr. DeSola, who was half a Jew and half not, has a great deal of conflict in his own mind on the subject.

I think he makes a cause of it. I mean, I think what he is inclined to do, you see, is when he has failures of his own in the outside world of one sort or another, he will always project it on some outside situation; that is, he is not the kind of person ever to say, "Maybe it is my fault."

And because in his youth--this is the stuff that he has told me, I was not around, of course--there were certain jobs he could not get, and he attributed them to antisemitism, and then became a great champion of Jewishness in that sense after that.

Now, he is likely to do that, you see; that is part of a certain fanaticism that I am talking about, that I talked about before; I mean a certain extremism.

I think any man in his position is likely to feel two ways and be a little complex on the subject. I cannot answer your question directly."

With the testimony of De Sola and his former wife completed the Committee called Anna Rosenberg to testify again. She wasted no time in coming to the point:

"Senator Russell. The witness, Ralph De Sola, who appeared before the committee, has undertaken to testify to the fact that he knew you, had met you and seen you at a meeting of the John Reed Club.

I was not present at the other hearing before this committee. Do you care to make any further comment on that at this time?

Mrs. Rosenberg. I would like to still be under oath, Senator. Am I still under oath? If not, I would like to take another one.

Senator Russell. Yes.

Mrs. Rosenberg. He is a liar, and I would like to lay my hands on that man, Senator. It is inhuman what has been done to me in the past few days, and I am grateful to you people for the time you have spent; but I listened to the radio last night, and my family listened and heard that I am charged with disloyalty.

Now, if this man is crazy or a Communist, I want to face him, Senator. I have never been a member of the John Reed Club; I have never been a Communist; I have never sympathized with Communists; I have spent my life trying to do something to help my country. I was ashamed to put these things on today, to have charges like that made against me. Forgive me, I know you have been here all day, but this has been a terrible ordeal for me."

She asked if she could face her accuser, and it was done. Here from the transcript is the confrontation:

"Senator Russell. Well then, I suppose that the next order of business would be to bring this man De Sola in.

.
(Mr. De Sola was brought into the committee room.)

Senator Russell. Mr. De Sola, you are aware of the fact, of course, that you are still a witness before this committee and under oath. I would like to ask you if you know the lady who is sitting on my right.

Mr. De Sola. Yes, that is Mrs. Anna Rosenberg.

Senator Russell. Will you identify her as the same Anna Rosenberg about whom you talked and about whom you testified today?

Mr. De Sola. I do."

Shortly thereafter, the committee let De Sola question Anna Rosenberg leading to this exchange:

"Mrs. Rosenberg. Let him ask any questions he wants to.

Senator Russell. All right, Mr. De Sola.

Mr. De Sola. Mrs. Rosenberg, I have heard it said that you say there is another Mrs. Anna Rosenberg who, perhaps, I and the other people have been confusing with you; that she is a writer and she lives on Sixth Avenue.

For your own sake and for the sake of our country, for the sake of clearing up the possibility that there may be misidentification in my mind and that there may be somebody that looks so exactly like you and would physically have changed so exactly like you over the years, that I might have made a mistake, or that I might be in some way doing something that is harmful to you personally or to a much larger issue, to the security of our country and the defense of our country, will you please tell us or tell me or tell the investigators of this committee where they can find that Mrs. Rosenberg, so that I could get a look at her?

Mrs. Rosenberg. Do you want me to answer, Mr. Chairman?

Senator Russell. If you wish.

Mrs. Rosenberg. Mr. De Sola, there are several Anna Rosenbergs in New York. I don't know them; I have not seen them, but the post office records, the telephone book, show that there are several Anna Rosenbergs.

It is up to you to have looked at them before you make such a serious accusation against me.

Mr. De Sola. I heard it said that you know that one of them is a writer and that this is the Anna Rosenberg that people are talking about. If you know her, can't you produce her or can't you help this group here?

Mrs. Rosenberg. Can I answer that?

Senator Russell. Yes.

Mrs. Rosenberg. Mr. De Sola, I read the Dies committee report, and the Anna Rosenberg was a writer. I am not a writer. The Anna Rosenberg signed herself as Anna Rosenberg; I have always signed myself as Anna M. Rosenberg.

I have never written anything, never been a member of any writers club, and no one knows better than you.

Mr. De Sola. Pardon me, Mrs. Rosenberg. I am not saying that you were a member of any writers club. The John Reed Club was a revolutionary club; it was not a writers club. There were artists, writers, professionals, and all sorts of people there.

Mrs. Rosenberg. You are an expert on that; I am not, Mr. De Sola. I will take your word as to what it was.

Mr. De Sola. And on the writers project I didn't say you were there and I never mentioned you to the Dies committee as being the Anna Rosenberg that I knew or that had signed anything.

Mrs. Rosenberg. Why didn't you, Mr. De Sola? It was your duty to do it. Why didn't you mention it?

Mr. De Sola. I mentioned you to the FBI and I mentioned a lot of other people to the FBI, and to this day I can't force them to make an investigation of any of these things. These things have to come as they have to come.

Mrs. Rosenberg. May I ask a question?

Mr. De Sola. This is a very painful duty and a very embarrassing sort of thing to have to come to here.

Senator Russell. All right, Mrs. Rosenberg.

Mr. De Sola. But I am far from convinced, in the absence of your bringing any one of these 4 or 40 or this Anna Rosenberg writer that you say you know about or confronting me with her, I am far from convinced that you are not exactly who I think you are.

Mrs. Rosenberg. Mr. De Sola, I am not here to convince you."

And a bit later:

"Mrs. Rosenberg. Mr. De Sola, I don't believe that any human being wants to do what you are doing purposely. Please come and look at me carefully and see whether you know me from my pictures or you actually know me. You came into the room and you said, 'That is the woman.' You never looked at me. Do you know what you are doing to me?

Mr. De Sola. I am looking at you and I am looking at you now.

Mrs. Rosenberg. And I am the woman that you sat next to or talked to in the John Reed Clubs?

Mr. De Sola. We stood up when we talked.

Would you mind standing up?

Mrs. Rosenberg. I will stand up. Now tell me, am I the woman in the John Reed Club?

Mr. De Sola. Yes, ma'am; you are, I am sorry to say so.

Mrs. Rosenberg. And all these years you never found that out and you never told it to the Dies committee? What made you tell it now, please tell me?

Mr. De Sola. Because I am sorry to see that we have a Secretary of Defense who has to be assisted by a Communist. I am sorry for our country. If you had been put in a social-security agency where it was just a question of some sort of social work, social-welfare work, I could have said cynically to myself, "Well, those people get there anyway, and she can't do too much harm" and the defense agency is -----

Senator Russell. Just a moment. We will proceed in an orderly way.

Mrs. Rosenberg. I have no questions to ask this man. I would like to get on the record, Mr. Chairman, that I have never seen this man in my life. Now, if he attended any meeting before me, I have no recollection of ever seeing his face."

With that the committee adjourned to meet again on Monday, December 11th.

If you lived in Lynchburg during this time and read The News, the first reference to what was going on in the Armed Services Committee room would have been on Friday morning, December 8th.

On page 10 an AP story was headlined "Closed Hearings Ordered on Rosenberg Charges". The story said that Senator Russell had ordered a face to face meeting between Mrs. Rosenberg and three unnamed witnesses relating to the charges which had been made that she was pro-Communist. The hearings would be closed Senator Russell was quoted as saying "in view of the very delicate situation existing today".

To put you in some perspective as to the period, the first page headline in that same paper told you that "10,000 Trapped Americans Try a New Escape Drive" as our troops were retreating from the Yalu River in Korea.

On Saturday, page nine of The News had "Anna Rosenberg Denies Charges of Red Witness". Another inside story informed you that "Liz Taylor, Nick Hilton Have Trouble" - "Pretty Actress Goes Home to Mother: Husband Vanishes".

The next morning the first page carried a story headlined "Music Critic Gets Threats from Truman". And, I couldn't resist this; on the following day, Sunday, December 10, the sports page had a big headline: "EC Glass High School Gridders Dominate All State" and a sub-head "Coaches Name Five Hilltoppers". It was the coincidence that got me - two of the five were Ralph Shaner and Johnny Palmer, and of course, Palmer now as Head Coach has Ralph's son as his starting quarterback. For you followers of Glass, the other three were Jimmy Wade, Bill Cox and Buddy Adams.

I looked at the following few days and on the 13th, a Wednesday, on the first page was this headline "Truman, Trigger-Tempered Letter Writer, Dashes off Another". That was, of course, to Mr. Herbert of Louisiana.

But I have digressed enough. Back to De Sola vs. Rosenberg.

On Monday, December 11th, this hardworking committee held hearings on this subject from 7 p.m. to past 10 p.m. Dr. Joseph B. Matthews was the first witness. He was obviously uncomfortable at having been called, and he was furious at poor old Ben Freedman. It seems he had admonished Freedman not to get him - Matthews - involved and by all means not to quote him. He was read a part of Freedman's statement that indicated Matthews knew that the FBI file contained information "to prove that Anna M. Rosenberg is the least desirable person in the entire United States to be appointed to that position".

Matthews reply "I have never made any such statement in my life. I have never had any such thought and therefore could not have made the statement." Dr. Matthews could not wait to get a letter into the record - a letter of abject apology from Freedman to him dated December 9th. Poor Ben had been severely chastised by one of his all time heroes and he is groveling. He writes:

"You may have a valid basis for denying me your friendship, but I pray that it will not interfere with my humble request for your forgiveness. There is no excuse for what I have done. Rationalizing my unintentional infidelity to the sacred assurance which you accepted without hesitation or reservation does not salve my troubled conscience."

The uncomfortable Dr. Matthews said he didn't know anything of value to the committee. Matthews could recognize a losing cause when he saw one. He didn't bother to mention that he had earlier volunteered a "fact sheet" on Mrs. Rosenberg which had circulated freely in the Congressional Halls, or that it was his assurances that got Fulton Lewis to air the story from its beginning.

Ben Freedman was called to follow Matthews. He tried to make it clear that his great wrong to Matthews which brought forth his letter was because he had violated Matthews' instructions to keep him out of it - he insisted that what he indicated Matthews had said was the truth. But it was a most difficult night for Ben Freedman. Typical is the exchange with Senator Cain:

"Mr. Freedman. Mr. De Sola talked to me for 3 hours, but I remember Dr. Matthews, in his flannel bathrobe, standing up there and telling me, 'Get them to get that FBI file. It will show' - in substantially the same words - 'that she is the least desirable person to appoint to that position.'

I remember that and, if he denies it, he told me in advance that whatever he said that I stated he said, he was going to deny, because I had no right to quote him. He told me that. That is why I wrote him that letter.

Senator Cain. In summary, Mr. Freedman, I want to be certain I understood you correctly, you do not know that a single solitary word of your statement to this committee is true, except as you have assumed that it was true as coming from Dr. Matthews, on the one hand, and Mr. De Sola on the other? You have no knowledge of the validity of any of these charges against Anna M. Rosenberg?

Mr. Freedman. No.

Senator Cain. You have not a single fact to support your statement?

Mr. Freedman. I have not, and if they are wrong, I would want to injure her or harm her less than anybody in the world because, first, she is a woman, and I have nothing in the world against anybody. I only worried when I heard what was -----

Senator Cain. Did this fine feeling occur to you, Mr. Freedman, when you sat down to prepare a statement, the truth about which you knew nothing? Did it not occur to you

that 'I am in this statement going to hold in jeopardy, and seriously, the name of an American, the name of a woman, and I better be certain of what I am doing before I do it?' Because I did not call to your attention, Mr. Freedman, the fact that as a result of this statement you have partly, under oath, in the presence of this committee agreed to withdraw part of it, and you have felt impelled, because you broke a confidence with Dr. Matthews, to write him an extended letter of apology.

Did it not occur to you that unless you knew that you were right that you were likely to bring serious and everlasting harm to an innocent person?"

The Committee had had enough and adjourned at 10:25 p.m. to reconvene in the morning.

The Committee also found - or the FBI did - Isidor Schneider. He testified he knew De Sola, but not well. Did not know Magraw. Had never met Anna Rosenberg and had nothing to offer the Committee whatsoever. He did attend two or three John Reed Club meetings. Did not recall seeing De Sola and, of course, did not see Anna M. Rosenberg.

The case made by De Sola was evaporating. Magraw was called and did not support any important statement made by De Sola. Just before the Committee once more confirmed Mrs. Rosenberg, Senator Russell introduced into the record a report from Mr. Freedman that he had become disgusted with the Rosenberg case and torn up and flushed down the toilet his complete file on the case.

The detailed FBI report had all but convinced the members of the Committee. It did not support De Sola, nor did any of the witnesses the committee could find. Even Joe McCarthy voted to confirm Mrs. Rosenberg when it got to the Senate floor.

In the beginning I said that I had played a small role in this incident. I had. I was an Assistant United States Attorney at the time, for the District of Columbia. On Saturday, December 16th, the Lynchburg News had a lead editorial entitled "The Rosenberg Case". It said that one good thing about the matter was that the truth was all out, and Anna was fully vindicated. It went on to suggest that some perjury convictions would be another good thing and that a good perjury conviction might scare off such reckless scoundrels in the future.

The News was not alone in its suggestion that the issue of perjury should be pursued. The Senate sent its committee record to the US Attorney's office. A special Grand Jury was impaneled and Cecil Heflin, a senior assistant US Attorney, and I, very much a junior assistant, were assigned to the Grand Jury.

The FBI was literally at our disposal. Already they had located the real Anna Rosenberg - the one who was a communist and a member of the John Reed Club. In a brilliant bit of investigative work she was found in California. She was Mrs. Isadore Klein, a painter who signed her works by her maiden name, Anna Rosenberg.

She had signed Anna Rosenberg to the petition protesting red baiting which had appeared in the New York Times in 1930. You will recall that this was the only evidence which linked Anna M. to the John Reed Club, other, of course, than De Sola's testimony.

It was clear that De Sola had not been correct. The crime of perjury is lying under oath. To commit the crime you must know what you are saying is not true. All of the Grand Jury's effort was directed at that question. If a motive could be established for De Sola to lie, that would be it. We, of course, looked for money. Lord, but we looked for money! Hal Bacon and I were ecstatic. Hal, a contemporary of mine, had by that time replaced the senior man. The FBI had found a recent ten or fifteen thousand dollar deposit in De Sola's mother-in-law's account in Toronto. Could it be traced to Ben Freedman? It could not. In fact there was a perfectly proper explanation for De Sola's mother-in-law's good fortune.

That was to be it. We could not prove that De Sola knew he was lying. The Grand Jury was dismissed.

I have thought about this case many times over the years. It was an exciting time for me.

I have no doubt that De Sola was sincere. He was also a fanatic. His first wife's description had been pretty accurate.

My nominee for the villain of this piece was J. B. Matthews. He could thank the McCarthy induced hysteria for creating a climate where he was allowed to help himself to Dies Committee files and achieve a place of suprising respect and distinction as an expert - as the expert.

My respect for this man was not improved by his appearance before our Grand Jury. I was questioning him. I asked him why he had assured Fulton Lewis, Jr. that he was on the right track. He said that was because his files - get that, his files - showed an Anna Rosenberg as signing the John Reed Club petition protesting red baiting. He said he knew that this was the same Anna because he knew the Communist mind. They would not use anyone on such a petition who was not prominent. He had looked at Who's Who in American Jewery for that time and only Anna M. was listed.

I had nothing to lose, so I asked him what he knew about the people whose names appeared immediately above and immediately below the name Anna Rosenberg - they were listed alphabetically.

He did not recognize them. Emboldened, one by one I asked him about every single name on the list. He could not identify a single name as that of a prominent person!

Anna M. Rosenberg went on to serve her country with distinction. As far as I know, De Sola dropped from sight, which is what I will try to do now.

Raymond E. Baker
October 28, 1976

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Senate Committee on Armed Services hearing
before the Committee, November 29, 1950
81st Cong., 2nd Session, Gov. Printing Office 1950

"Case History of a Smear". A. Heidenheimer,
New Republic 123:15-16 December 25, 1950

"Clean Bill of Health" Newsweek 36:19 D 25 1950

"Disintegration of the Charge of Subversive Activity"
Nation 171:685 D 30 1950

The News: Lynchburg, November 29, 1950
through December 15, 1950