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Convicted A-Spy Sobell Freed After 17 Years' Jail

LEWISBURG, Pa. (AP) — Morton Sobell, convicted with Julius and Ethel Rosenberg of conspiring to steal atomic secrets for the Soviet Union, was freed from prison Tuesday after serving 17 years of a 30-year sentence.

Sobell, 52, left Lewisburg Penitentiary for New York City several hours after the U.S. Court of Appeals in New York ordered him released.

Sobell, a radar expert, was given time off for good behavior. The appeals court also ruled he should be credited with 7½ months he spent in jail for inability to post \$100,000 bail prior to sentencing in 1951.

This allowed his release now instead of Aug. 24 this year, the scheduled release date.

The Rosenbergs were executed in June 1953. Sobell was accused of helping them recruit others into a spy ring led by Klaus Fuchs, a British scientist, and Harry Gold, a Philadelphia biochemist, during World War II. Fuchs served nine years for betraying atomic secrets in Britain.

WIFE 'ECSTATIC'

Mrs. Sobell, who teaches at a private high school in New York's Greenwich Village, said, "I feel wonderful. I'm ecstatic."

She said Sobell wanted to study engineering, mainly medical electronics.

His son, Mark, 19, a computer programmer, said, "it's about time they let him go because he is innocent."

Mrs. Rosenberg's brother, David Greenglass, was the main

government witness against Sobell and the Rosenbergs. Greenglass was released in 1960 after serving 9½ years of a 15-year sentence for conspiracy.

Gold pleaded guilty to espionage conspiracy and received 30 years. He was freed in 1966.

Specifically, Sobell was convicted of conspiring to commit espionage by transmitting to the Soviet Union documents, writings, sketches, notes and information related to national defense, said the Justice Department.

CITE 1966 LAW

His release was ordered by Judges Paul R. Hays, Henry J. Friendly and Leonard P. Moore. They cited provisions of the 1966 bail reform law that calls for crediting all time served in jail toward completion of a sentence.

Sobell and his wife have made more than a dozen attempts to free him. The U.S. Supreme Court refused a hearing only last November.

The Committee to Secure Justice for Morton Sobell in New York City maintained he was a victim of a frameup that included worthless sketches presented in court as secrets of the atom bomb.

In a separate and concurring opinion, Judge Moore noted the trial judge, Irving R. Kaufman, orally sentenced Sobell to a 30-year maximum term, recommending against parole, but that Kaufman told a defense lawyer in open court that the jail time served would have to be considered.