

Rosenberg Files Show F. B. I. Pressed Hard

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 6—The mass of material on the Rosenberg espionage case made public last week shows strenuous efforts by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to expand the charges against the defendants. Ethel and Julius Rosenberg were electrocuted in 1953, and Morton Sobell was sentenced with them in 1951 to 30 years' imprisonment.

The documents show F.B.I. complaints that Mr. Sobell's alleged interest in classified fire-control data had not been brought up in the trial. They indicate that agents had leads on the possible receipt by Julius Rosenberg of aerodynamics research reports but could not establish sufficient evidence.

Other inquiries appear to have faded away entirely, according to samplings among the 29,000 pages of F.B.I. material made available as a result of court petitions by the Rosenbergs' sons, Michael and Robert Meeropol, who are seeking to clear their parents.

The most striking disclosure, first made public on Nov. 21, was that David Greenglass, the star witness, told the prosecution before the trial that his sister, Ethel Rosenberg, was never present when Mr. Greenglass gave his brother-in-law, Julius, a complete description of the atomic bomb in the fall of 1945.

Corrected the Grammar

At the Federal court trial in New York on March 12, 1951, Mr. Greenglass testified that Mrs. Rosenberg had not only been present but also had typed his handwritten notes and helped correct his grammar.

United States Attorney Irving H. Saypol said in his summation that Mrs. Rosenberg had "struck the keys, blow by blow, against her own country in the interests of the Soviets."

Lawyers and scholars say it could take years to analyze the documents, which are not assembled in any order. Michael Meeropol, an assistant professor of economics at Western New England College, said recently that the National Committee to Re-open the Rosenberg Case hoped to raise \$400,000 for legal fees in the coming year and \$200,000 for operations. He said the committee had spent \$115,000 since it was organized in the spring of 1974.

Prosecutors Called 'Immature'

Some of the files show F.B.I. complaints about the "immaturity" of assistant prosecutors. One memorandum reported the "extreme dissatisfaction" of representatives of the Joint Congressional Committee on Atomic Energy and the Atomic Energy Commission about the prosecution.

The memorandum said United States Attorney Saypol had failed to bring out the fact that Mr. Sobell had asked Max Fletcher, the chief witness against Mr. Sobell, about the "Mark 56 project," reportedly a classified fire-control project on which Mr. Fletcher was working.

A 61-page report on various leads said that Mr. Elitcher

had told Mr. Sobell he was project engineer on a fire-control system in the Navy Department, and that Mr. Sobell had asked if he could get any reports written about it.

Other documents said the bureau had found records that Mr. Sobell, while employed by the General Electric Company in Schenectady, N.Y. visited the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on Nov. 11, 1944, regarding a mechanism related to the Mark 56 project.

No Proof of Espionage

A memorandum said that Mr. Sobell had worked for General Electric from June 1942, to June 1947, but that an investigation had "failed to develop any evidence of Sobell's involvement in espionage during his employment there."

Another report showed that the bureau interviewed Mr. Greenglass at the Lewisburg (Pa.) Penitentiary on Nov. 23-24, 1953, just after he told a Senate subcommittee headed by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin that Mr. Rosenberg had once referred to knowing about a "thinking machine."

The F.B.I. document said General Electric had reported that its employees used that expression about a "digital computer" project. The report said it was "more than likely that Mr. Sobell knew of the 'thinking-machine' and if he was the source of this information, he would have described it to Rosenberg as a 'thinking-machine.'"

The F.B.I. files are rife with leads followed up with varying results based on statements from "a confidential informant of unknown reliability" or "T-1."

Informant Was Revealed

The informant's name was disclosed inadvertently by the Justice Department when it failed to delete the name from a criminal division memorandum. He was identified as Jerome Eugene Tartakow, a fellow inmate of Julius Rosenberg at the Federal House of Detention in New York during and after the trial.

A memorandum by A. H. Belmont, an assistant F.B.I. director, said that Mr. Tartakow, who was described as "a confidence man," had told the bureau that "Rosenberg was apprehensive lest the F.B.I. learn of his obtaining passport photographs in June 1950 for himself and his family." Ben Schneider, the photographer, was the final surprise prosecution witness on rebuttal.

A memorandum to Mr. Belmont from an agent, C. E. Hennrich, that Mr. Tartakow had a "most unsavory record" and

might be trying to "con" his way out of prison.

A memorandum during the trial, dated March 16, 1951, said "this informant stated that he has endeavored to enlist the aid of Rosenberg in entering into the espionage setup and that Rosenberg had promised to assist him."

The informant was quoted as saying that "Rosenberg is very critical of the present setup of the American Communist Party, stating that it is 'shot through with F.B.I. agents.'"

The memorandum quoted the informant as saying Mr. Rosenberg had commented that "as far as the death penalty was concerned, he played the game and lost, and would have to take the results." But it went on, "Rosenberg stated that even if he is sentenced to 30 years, he will not have to serve more than five years because by that time there will be a 'Sovietized America.'"

One long series of F.B.I. investigations followed T-1's statement that Mr. Rosenberg told him of having spent 17 hours photographing material brought from Columbia University by William Perl.

The documents recount that the bureau had found that Mr. Perl had been a technical assistant to Dr. Theodore Von Harman, a Columbia aerodynamics expert, authorized on the scientist's behalf to receive classified material from the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.

They relate how Mr. Perl was on leave June 26 to July 9, 1948, from the Lewis Flight Propulsion Laboratory in Cleveland, and signed receipts on July 3, 1948, for 24 aeronautics

committee documents at Columbia. A third man asserted to have been involved in the photography was also on leave from a Cleveland job at the time, and the agents believed they had identified a fourth participant.

But F.B.I. technicians checked out the aeronautics documents and could not identify fingerprints or any of the four men.

Mr. Perl was arrested during the Rosenberg trial and convicted May 22, 1953. He was

to Expand Spy Trial

charged with perjury for having denied to a grand jury in 1950 that he knew Mr. Rosenberg and Mr. Sobell, and was sentenced to five years' imprisonment.

Assistant United States Attorney Robert Martin told the court that the Government had information that would "link this defendant with the Rosenberg espionage ring directly," but "cannot make it public at this time."

The files include a memorandum saying that Mr. Greenglass

had reported that Julius Rosenberg told him about an atomic engine for airplanes.

Another lead followed up was based on information from T-1 that said Mr. Rosenberg had told him of two trips to Ithaca, N. Y., to make "pickups" from Alfred Sarant, a Cornell University electrical engineer. A memorandum said the informant had reported that Mr. Rosenberg called Mr. Sarant "a member of his organization."

REMEMBER THE NEEDLES!