

American Nazi Chief's Slayer Given 20 Years

ARLINGTON, Va. (AP) — John Patler, convicted of the slaying of American Nazi fuhrer George Lincoln Rockwell, has been sentenced to 20 years in prison but could be a free man in five.

Circuit Court Judge Charles F. Russell imposed sentence yesterday after denying a motion to set aside the verdict reached by a jury in December. However, Russell suspended execution of the sentence pending Patler's appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals.

INSISTING HE is not the man who shot Rockwell last August from a shopping center roof, Patler protested that "the events ever since my arrest have been a stampede to judgment. I am innocent, your honor."

The 30-year-old defendant had been one of Rockwell's closest aides until they argued and Patler left the party early last year.

Russell permitted Patler to remain free on \$40,000 bond during the appeal proceedings.

PATLER WOULD be eligible for parole after serving five years of his sentence.

Russell noted the sentence was the minimum for first degree murder in Virginia and added: "I hope you will conduct yourself in such a manner that you will serve the minimum number of years and return to be a useful member of society."

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KILLER OF ROCKWELL GETS 20-YEAR TERM

ARLINGTON, Va., Feb. 23 (Reuters) — John Patler, convicted of killing George Lincoln Rockwell, leader of the American Nazi party, was sentenced today to 20 years in prison.

In imposing sentence in Circuit Court, Judge Charles S. Russell denied a defense motion to overturn the guilty verdict returned last December.

The defense charged 22 court errors in Patler's 16-day trial following the fatal shooting of Mr. Rockwell last Aug. 25.

Judge Russell postponed the execution of the prison sentence for four months pending an appeal to the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals.

The defense lawyer, Thomas Harrigan, said he would file an appeal within four months but indicated that the case might not be heard for at least a year.

The judge allowed Patler to remain free on \$40,000 bail despite the objections of the prosecutor, William J. Hassan.

Patler said after the hearing that he planned to spend the next year "working for my father-in-law and doing freelance art work."

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