

How much do A-bomb spies know?

U.S. secrets flow to Russia while justice dawdles



Espionage. Ruth Greenglass confessed, William Perl denied implication in Russia's cut-rate spy ring.

When British scientist Dr. Klaus Fuchs confessed last year he had spilled to the Russians everything he knew about the A-bomb—which was plenty—many an American muttered over his morning paper that the addlepated English should never have been trusted with “the secret” anyway. This week, as the spy trial of U.S.-born Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and Morton Sobell entered its final phase, it became painfully evident that American security, too, had been about as watertight as a cardboard canoe.

In fact, if Scotland Yard had not nabbed Fuchs, the American links in the spy chain might never have been identified. Even after Fuchs had described his U.S. “contacts,” it took the FBI a good three months to arrest the first one—biochemist Harry Gold of Philadelphia. Through him it located his colleagues, David and Ruth Greenglass.

According to the testimony of Gold and Greenglass, the Russian campaign to crack the Manhattan Project was run in this country by Anatoli Yakovlev, then Soviet vice-consul in New York, now presumably a comfortable resident of the USSR. Yakovlev used Gold as a courier to pick up information from Fuchs during the scientist's tour of duty at the Los Alamos atomic laboratories. He used the Rosenbergs chiefly to snare and squeeze Greenglass—then a U.S. Army machinist at Los Alamos—for engineering details of the A-bomb's construction.

Yakovlev did a good job—and a very economical one. He doled out a paltry \$700 to Greenglass, a bare living to the Rosenbergs. (Fuchs had already been paid in Britain the princely sum of £100 for his services.)

For this, Yakovlev apparently received:

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• • From Fuchs, a description of the A-bomb, at least eight months before the Hiroshima attack.

• • From Greenglass, sketches of the high-explosive "shaped charges" whose "implosion" sets off the bomb's nuclear chain reaction, plus the names of the project's chief scientists.

• • From Rosenberg, a top-secret proximity-fuse he stole from the Emerson radio plant; military data on jet propulsion, furnished him by physicist William A. Perl; and (via Sobell) highly classified material on electronics.

For his part in this operation, Fuchs got 14 years in jail, Gold 30 years. Greenglass has not yet been sentenced. Sobell and the Rosenbergs, if convicted on the charge of treason, could get death.

To an uneasy American people, however, it appeared last week that while retribution for spies might be sure, it was also a bit slow. Checking back against the testimony in the Remington trial, some observers noted wryly that the FBI had raided the Russians' "cover organization," World Tourist, Inc., back in 1939. There they flushed a top Soviet spy, Jacob Golos—who was then fined \$500 and given a suspended sentence of 4-12 months for failure to register as a foreign agent. Who were his chief contacts in the ensuing three years? One of them, according to Golos's mistress, Elizabeth Bentley, was a man named Julius Rosenberg.

Sometime in the next few weeks, the Atomic Energy Commission will be making new and ultrasecret tests at Eniwetok atoll under the command of Air Force ace General Elwood R. Quesada. What the public would like to know is:

Will there be a Gold or a Greenglass at Eniwetok?