

2d Suspect Held in N. Y.

Spy Probe

Post 6-30-43

German-Educated
Engineer Admits
Helping Nazis Get
U.S. War Information

A New Trial

SIX CONVICTED of aiding the saboteurs who were executed here last year win new trial. Page 3.

Aid and Comfort

By the Associated Press

New York, June 29.—A small man with a goatee stood before a United States commissioner today and calmly admitted, with a slight trace of a foreign accent, that he had been part of the espionage system feeding the Nazi high command with American war secrets.

The prisoner was Erwin Harry de Spretter, 53, a German-educated consulting engineer who was arrested as the accomplice of Ernest Frederick Lehmitz, 47, Staten Island victory gardener and air raid warden. Lehmitz entered a similar plea of guilty yesterday to violating the Wartime Espionage Act.

United States Commissioner Martin C. Epstein held De Spretter in \$50,000 bail for grand jury action as he did in the case of Lehmitz yesterday. If convicted on the

Stephan to Hang Before Dawn Friday

Detroit, June 29 (P).—Some time before dawn Friday, barring a presidential reprieve, German-born Max Stephan, convicted traitor, will be hanged in the courtyard of the Federal correctional institution at Milan, Mich.

Stephan, who aided the flight of a Nazi flier who escaped from a Canadian prison camp in April, 1942, has exhausted his avenues of appeal.

Workmen already are constructing the gallows which will be set up at Milan.

charges, the men face penalties of 30 years or more in prison, or death.

E. E. Conroy, chief of the New York office of the FBI, said De Spretter, also a Staten Island resident, had supplied Lehmitz with information concerning national defense plants.

De Spretter was a specialist in heat radiation and allied engineering subjects and as a consultant to firms holding war contracts had

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access to information of great value to the Axis, Conroy said. This information he turned over to Lehmitz at secret meetings, the FBI chief said, and added to it his observations of ship movements in New York Harbor and shipping preparations on the busy Staten Island waterfront.

Lehmitz forwarded De Spretter's data along with his own by writing in invisible ink between the type-written lines of apparently innocent letters sent to "friends" in neutral countries, and the material was forwarded from Switzerland, Spain and Portugal to Germany, Conroy said.

On one occasion, the FBI said, De Spretter was able to furnish Lehmitz with detailed specifications and photographic drawings of the planes made by an aircraft manufacturing company which were contained in a confidential book it had published and for which he received \$100.

Other information, pooled with that obtained by Lehmitz, relayed to the Nazis the movement of war and merchant ships, destinations and cargoes of convoys and troopships and shipbuilding progress, Conroy said.

There was a marked difference in the appearance of the men. Lehmitz, who the FBI said was trained in the Gestapo espionage school, dressed shabbily, worked as a porter in a waterfront restaurant and frequented bars and restaurants popular with sailors, Army men and men of the Merchant Marine. Although born in Germany, he was a United States citizen.

De Spretter, when he appeared in court, was well and expensively dressed. He received his degree in engineering at Heidelberg after studying in other German schools. Born in Uruguay, De Spretter was the son of a German father and a Spanish mother. He came to the United States in 1923, after serving in the Germany army in the last war, but never became a citizen.