

Raid Warden Pleads Guilty As Nazi Spy

NEW YORK, June 28 (U.P.). Ernest Frederick Lehmitz, 57, naturalized citizen and an air-raid warden, pleaded guilty to being a German spy today when arraigned before U. S. Commissioner Martin C. Epstein.

He was charged with violating the espionage laws by transmitting vital United States war information to Germany. He was held in \$50,000 bail for Grand Jury action.

Lehmitz was specifically accused of violation of the Federal espionage statutes, which is punishable by a jail sentence of 30 years, or death.

J. Edgar Hoover, director of the FBI, revealed that Lehmitz was seized in New York city in what may turn out to be one of the most sensational spy cases of the war.

E. E. Conroy, special agent in charge of the New York office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, said Lehmitz transmitted his information to his superiors in Germany by writing messages in invisible ink between the lines and on the reverse side of apparently innocent letters to "friends" in neutral Europe.

His reports, Conroy said, included comments on American public opinion and civilian morale and information on civilian defense and air raid precautions.

Reports "Confusion"

These, he said in one message to Germany, were in "indescribable confusion." This report was sandwiched in between the lines of an innocent appearing letter which also contained information of the whereabouts of two American battleships.

Another letter, Conroy said, told of the shipment of bomb sights by the United States and also reported on the construction and repair of ships at the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the loading of transports and other vessels at Newport News, Va.

Lehmitz, who, according to Conroy, got much of his information by frequenting taverns patronized by members of the armed forces and defense workers, went into painstaking detail in many of his reports.

One message specified the type and number of guns carried in convoys. Another reported that



I.N.P. Photo
ERNEST F. LEHMITZ
Admits Spy Activities

thousands of American troops were leaving in transports, some for Australia and others for England and Africa. He included the actual number of ships in some convoys and their destinations, with complete descriptions of their cargoes.

Tells of 11-Ship Convoy

On one occasion, Conroy said, Lehmitz told his superiors that a certain aircraft factory was at full capacity, three ships a day. In another letter he wrote about "11 ships leaving for Russia, including a steamer with airplane motors and 28 long-range guns. One steamer has a deckload of airplanes and below deck airplane motors, Boeing and Douglas airplane parts, with Curtiss-Wright airplane motors and small munitions, searchlights and telegraphic material."

Lehmitz made an unsuccessful attempt to learn Allied invasion plans, according to one letter, which reported "place and time of the intended landing attempt not possible to confirm, whether

the continent of Europe from Great Britain or Spanish or Portuguese islands."

Lehmitz, a one-time employe of the German consulate in New York, began his alleged spy activities in January, 1942, shortly after Germany declared war on the United States, the FBI said.

"In writing these letters," Hoover declared, "Lehmitz had used numerous fictitious names and addresses in the hope that his identity could not be established. However, in spite of these names and addresses, it was known that these letters were all written by the same individual."

Lehmitz apparently was well financed, according to Hoover. "Investigation has shown that Lehmitz has received a large sum of money through international banking channels," the FBI director stated. Hoover did not disclose when the exchange of money took place nor who sent it to Lehmitz.

The alleged German spy made every effort to convey the impression, according to Hoover, that he was "an honest and upright American citizen and in order to carry out this impression he even became an air-raid warden on Staten Island."

Investigation has shown that he attempted to sell to the United States Government an invention for a huge sum of money, Hoover continued, in an attempt to indicate "that he desired to do all he could to assist the war effort of the United States."

Hoover would not reveal what kind of an invention that Lehmitz attempted to sell to the United States.

Came to U. S. in 1908

The FBI said that Lehmitz was born in Hamburg, Germany, and now lives at Tompkinsville, Staten Island, New York. He came to the United States in 1908 and for a time was employed at the German consulate in New York city until that office was closed at the outbreak of the first World War. He was naturalized a citizen in Richmond county, New York, on October 4, 1924. He is known to have made at least three trips to Germany, the latest beginning October 30, 1938, and ending March 17, 1941, and it apparently was during those journeys that he made his contacts with the German intelligence.