

French Court Rules Agent Libeled by Counterspy Chief

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PARIS, Nov. 30—The former head of the French equivalent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation was found guilty today of libelling the master spy who ran the Soviets' "Red Orchestra" espionage ring in Nazi-occupied Europe.

Jean Rochet, the former head of the Direction de la Surveillance du Territoire, was fined \$200 and ordered to pay one franc in symbolic damages to Leonold Trepper, the wartime spy credited by the Germans with having cost the lives of 200,000 troops.

Rochet, recently removed from the top internal security job and sent to a less prestigious post as a prefect (district governor) in Eastern France, immediately appealed the decision.

Trepper, now in his 70s, brought suit from his native Poland on the ground that a letter by Rochet to the newspaper *Le Monde* on April 14 libelled him by saying that after Trepper's capture in Paris in 1942, he collaborated with the Nazis to save his own life.

The letter also claimed that Trepper was allowed to escape in 1943 in exchange for having supplied the Nazis with information which led to the arrest, torture and death of other members of the "Red Orchestra" spy ring in France and Belgium.

For years, there has been no love lost between Trepper and Rochet, who based his charges on questionable German military intelligence, reports which Trepper's French friends contend were purposely misleading.

Starting in 1967, Rochet apparently personally blocked Trepper's requests for visas to visit France for pleasure or to take part in the libel suit. Ironically, Trepper, a Jew, has also been denied an exit visa to Israel by the Poles, who all but expelled most of Poland's few remaining Jews starting in 1968.

During the trial, Rochet became particularly incensed at

Gilles Perrault, the French author of a best-selling book on the wartime spy ring.

At one point Rocket accused Perrault and Trepper's lawyer, Daniel Soulez-Lariviere, of "setting out to insult the French police and attempting to cast dirt" on his counterspy organization.

Rochet is well known for his outspoken anti-Communism, and several years ago went on television to criticize the French Foreign ministry for tolerating the presence of hundreds of known Communist spies in Paris embassies.

From Warsaw, Trepper told newsmen that the court's verdict "was a very great (source of) satisfaction for me and for all the ring's survivors. There is justice in France, and I never doubted it."

It is questionable whether Trepper feels the same way about Poland or the Soviet Union in view of Moscow's

veto which has prevented him from joining his family outside Poland.

A life-long Communist, Trepper, or Leo Domb, as he was called before he commenced his espionage career for Moscow, managed to get into trouble with authorities everywhere he went as a young man.

He was arrested for spying by the British Mandate authorities in prewar Palestine and expelled from France in the early 1930s for his part in a Soviet spy ring smashed while collecting information on a French arsenal.

Recalled for training in the Soviet Union, he was dispatched to Belgium just before the outbreak of World War II in 1939. He operated there before moving to Paris, where he was able to infiltrate top Nazi circles.

Adm. Canaris, the head of German military intelligence, estimated that the information given to the allies by Trepper's network had cost the

German army about 200,000 men, mostly on the Russian front. The network informed the Russians, among other things, of the exact order of battle of the Wehrmacht when it invaded Russia and later at the crucial Battle of Stalingrad.

His year in German hands, in 1942 and 1943, did him no good despite the testimony of important members of his ring who claimed he had warned Moscow not to believe the ring's radio transmitters, many of which had been captured and whose operators were being fed false information in exchange for staying alive.

In any case, Moscow took no chances. In 1945, he was flown back from Paris and spent the next 10 years in Lubianka Prison. He was then allowed to live in Poland, where he was once president of the pro-government Jewish Cultural Society.