

Government Employee Indicted as Nazi Spy By Jury in New York

Colombian Questioned
Here Two Weeks Ago
By FBI Agents *Star*

By the Associated Press. *13*

NEW YORK, Aug. 26—Roberto Lanas Vallecilla, 35, a foreign language translator for the Office of the Co-ordinator of Inter-American Affairs in Washington, was charged in a Federal indictment today with conspiracy to commit espionage for the German Reich.

Lanas, a native of Colombia, said at his arraignment before Judge John C. Knox that he wanted to plead guilty to the charge, but the jurist refused to accept the plea.

Bruce Barton, advertising executive and former member of Congress, headed the grand jury which handed up the indictment. The indictment took place before the United States entered the war, making 20 years' imprisonment the maximum penalty on conviction, Federal officials said.

Lanas has been employed by the Government since February, 1942. The indictment charged that all the alleged acts of espionage took place between September 1, 1940, and December 7, 1941, while Lanas was living in a New York hotel, and that the defendant entered into a conspiracy with German agents at Lisbon, Portugal, where he was a student.

United States Attorney John B. McNally informed the court Lanas was questioned in Washington by agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation two weeks ago, and at that time signed a statement indicating he had been paid more than \$3,000 by German agents.

Judge Knox expressed surprise a Government agency would hire Lanas without exhaustive investigation of his background, and asked: "Do they take any one who comes along down there?"

Assistant United States Attorney John Sonnett told the court most of the information it was charged Lanas forwarded to German agents was obtained from public sources. Mr. Sonnett said one communication to Portugal contained information on American airplane production and was written in secret ink.