

Byron Price Blames 'Other Agencies' for Kellems Letter Leak

By the Associated Press.

Byron Price, director of censorship, told a Senate Post Office Committee yesterday that he believed a leak in some other Government agency was responsible for publication of parts of correspondence between Miss Vivien Kellems, Connecticut war contractor, and a German count in Buenos Aires.

He explained that his office made extracts of the correspondence and sent them to certain Government officials. He said he had tried vainly to discover the channels by which the highly restricted material became public and promised full co-operation in the investigation being carried on by the subcommittee.

The censorship chief agreed with members of the committee on the advisability of criminal penalties for disclosure of such information.

Identifies Nazi Correspondent.

Mr. Price identified Miss Kellems' correspondent, Count Frederick Karl von Sedlitz, as a representative of Metallgesellschaft, "great German metals syndicate * * * supplying * * * Hitler's war machine." He said Von Sedlitz had been communicating with Germany and had been trying to communicate with the United States. Von Sedlitz is on the United States' proclaimed list of enemies.

On February 6, Drew Pearson in a broadcast, quoted indirectly from some of the Sedlitz correspondence. On March 31, Representative Coffee, Democrat, of Washington made a speech in the House quoting from the letters and charged Miss Kellems had "played the Nazi game." Miss Kellems called Mr. Coffee's charges "lies" and asserted he had gained possession of the letters by illegal means. Senator Reed, Republican, of Kansas demanded a Senate investigation.

Telling the committee of his own investigation, Mr. Price said:

"I am not certain, but I believe it probable that censorship information was the source in each instance. I base that opinion on the similarity of phraseology used by censorship on the one hand, and by Mr. Pearson and Mr. Coffee on the other hand, in paraphrasing certain parts of the Zedlitz correspondence."

Six Intercepts Quoted.

He said that Mr. Pearson and Mr. Coffee between them quoted from six intercepts of the Zedlitz series. He explained that trained officials in his office make extracts from certain international civilian correspondence which appears to contain war information, and that the intercepts are sent to Government de-

partments believed to be interested.

Mr. Price said all six of the intercepts went to the State Department and to the Office of Strategic Services; three to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, three to the Office of Economic Warfare, two to Foreign Funds Control and one to the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs.

In addition, he said, copies of all six were sent to the British censorship.

"Immediately after the first publicity early in February, I asked the agencies who had received this material to make urgent and unsparing inquiry among their own personnel and give me an accounting," Mr. Price said. "Thus far I have received only denials and repeated assurances that all intercepts are handled according to the pledges of secrecy which have been given repeatedly to the Office of Censorship."

Nazi Spy Executed.

Explaining the role of censorship in the war effort, Mr. Price told of the arrest and execution of a German spy in Havana whose activities were uncovered by his office; of the conviction of a Californian who was writing about "fish livers" as a code for platinum shipments; of the location of new sources of strategic and critical materials, and of intercepted information leading to seizure of \$7,000,000,000 worth of enemy property.

Senator McClellan, Democrat, of Arkansas referred to alleged correspondence in which Miss Kellems addressed Von Zedlitz as "My Darling Boy" and signed "All My Love, Sweetheart." Chairman McKellar, Democrat, of Tennessee asked Mr. Price whether in his opinion such phrases might have been code.

"That's a universal code, isn't it?" Senator Reed, Republican, of Kansas, broke in, setting off laughter.