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The war on words : the Office of Censorship in World War II

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THE WAR ON WORDS:
The Office of Censorship in
World War II

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
University of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Alvin William McDaniel, Jr.

May 1972

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Byron Price, former Director of the Office of Censorship, willingly and eagerly responded to my many inquiries and provided a wealth of information unavailable elsewhere. His contribution to this paper is immeasurable.

To each of these gentlemen I offer my sincere gratitude for their insights, their assistance, and their friendship.

I

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Thesis

The purpose of this paper is to report on the results of research of the United States Office of Censorship from the birth of that office in 1941 to its timely death in 1945.

Jim Heath, in his article, "Domestic America during World War II: Research Opportunities for Historians,"¹ provided the impetus for the research that has resulted in this paper. Professor Heath states that most histories of World War II have relegated the American domestic scene to a secondary place in the process of reporting on the more exciting diplomatic and military aspects of the period.² He suggests that historians analyze the various published histories of the many short-lived bureaucratic offices necessitated by the contingencies of World War II. One of these offices was the U. S. Office of Censorship.

In reporting on the activities of the Office of Censorship this paper will discuss the government programs

¹Jim F. Heath, "Domestic America during World War II: Research Opportunities for Historians," The Journal of American History, LVIII (September, 1971), 384-414.

²Ibid., p. 384.

of compulsory and voluntary censorship, how they sometimes conflicted and overlapped, and how they stood up against military censorship. In chapter VI an appraisal will be made of the censorship program and its Director, Byron Price.

Problems and Limitations

The greatest problem encountered in researching the activities of the Office of Censorship involved the availability of official United States Government records and documents. The official Records of the Office of Censorship are described in brief summary form in Preliminary Inventory No. 54, published by the National Archives.³ The National Archives retains the only copies of these documents which collectively amount to more than five hundred cubic feet of information. The vast majority of these documents is either closed by Presidential Order or, in the case of certain documents, available only to ". . . those agencies of the Federal Government that have a legitimate interest in the information . . ." they contain.⁴ The Preliminary Inventory of these records lists thirty-one separate files, reports, indexes, recordings, budget estimates, ledgers, teletypes, books, memoranda, radio watch-logs, and other miscellaneous records. Of these records only one, A History of the Office

³Henry T. Ulasek (comp.), Preliminary Inventories: No. 54, Records of the Office of Censorship (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), 1953.

⁴Ibid., p. 7.

of Censorship, 1941-45 (7 vols.), is available for study, and that one only at high cost.⁵

There are, however, a number of documents, or copies of documents, contained in the Defense Collection of the University of California at Berkeley. These include an official report on the Office of Censorship, a collection of press releases by that office, and copies of the wartime censorship codes.⁶ These documents comprise the backbone of this paper.

There are only two secondary sources that deal directly with the Office of Censorship. Weapon of Silence⁷ was written by Theodore F. Koop, former Assistant Director of the Office of Censorship. In his book, Koop provides an overall view of the duties and activities of the office, but he ignores or glosses over much criticism of the voluntary censorship program. Koop is critical, however, of the efforts of military censors, who often acted in direct con-

⁵The cost of a negative microfilm copy of these seven volumes (4000 pages) is \$400; Jane F. Smith, Acting Director, Civil Archives Division of the National Archives and Records Service, to writer, November 11, 1971.

⁶Historical Reports on War Administration, A Report on the Office of Censorship (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1945). The press releases are found in a single volume under the title, U. S. Office of Censorship: Press Releases 1-68. This volume is minus a table of contents. The fifteen censorship codes are assembled in a single volume by the University of California library under the title, United States Office of Censorship: Miscellaneous publications (1942-1945). The table of contents for this volume is inaccurate and ill-arranged.

⁷Theodore F. Koop, Weapon of Silence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946).

flict with the Office of Censorship. Wartime Censorship of Press and Radio, by Robert E. Summers,⁸ is helpful because it documents much of the criticism leveled by journalists on the Office of Censorship during the early months of the war.

Research Strategy

As stated above, the documents of the Office of Censorship form the backbone of this paper. These documents provided a starting point from which certain persons, incidents, regulations, and concepts could be further investigated. In addition to these available documents and the two books cited above, the next most productive sources of information were the many periodicals published during the war. It is in these periodicals that one finds the bulk of criticism toward compulsory and voluntary censorship.

The writer attempted to correspond with as many former Censorship officials as could be located more than twenty-five years after the Office of Censorship ceased to function. The number of responses to these inquiries was encouraging. The quality of one particular response contributed immeasurably to the research. Byron Price, the former Director of the Office of Censorship, later Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations (1947-1954), provided prompt, willing, and able assistance at his own expense and on his own time.

⁸Robert E. Summers (comp.), Wartime Censorship of Press and Radio (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1942).

The research strategy, then, involved studying government documents, and a kind of reconnaissance patrol through many secondary sources. The periodicals of the period provided the main arsenal of ammunition for the scattered attacks of criticism on government censorship. The correspondence with Byron Price and the interviews with Norman Carlson and Melvin Jacobus were a significant breakthrough in the blockaded lines of official information.

The Office of Censorship fought World War II on a home-front battlefield that often extended beyond the shores of the United States and onto the high seas. The army enlisted by the Office of Censorship included both willing and reluctant soldiers -- the members of the American press and radio. The battles they fought always had two goals: the defeat of the enemy and the preservation of democratic freedoms. As was bound to happen, there were times when one goal had to be achieved at the expense of the other. The battles fought by this army in the war on words were sometimes small and sometimes large. They were never dull, though there were times when some persons questioned the strategic value of some of the battles. This paper tells that story.

II

THE CALL TO ARMS

Formation of the Office of Censorship

On the morning of December 7, 1941, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor. Just one hour after the Sunday morning attack the United States began censoring all telegraph, cable, and radiotelephone messages between Hawaii and the United States. Within a week Army censors were opening letters that passed to and from the United States and the Hawaiian Islands.¹

The ability of the United States Government to act as quickly as it did in censorship operations came as a result of planning for wartime censorship that went back more than two years. As early as September, 1939, the U. S. Navy was formulating plans for censorship operations. By August, 1941, the U. S. Army was conducting a censorship education program for a small number of its officers. The personnel trained by these two military branches were able to begin nominal censorship of postal and cable communications crossing the borders of the United States soon after the

¹Historical Reports on War Administration, A Report on the Office of Censorship (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1945), pp. 3-4; hereafter referred to as Report on the Office of Censorship.

Japanese aerial attack on Pearl Harbor.² On December 8, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, to take temporary charge of all phases of censorship.³ Thus, even before the Office of Censorship was born, military censors were conducting surveillance of all types of communications to and from the United States.

On December 18, 1941, Congress passed the First War Powers Act which gave the President the power to conduct the censorship of all ". . . mail, cable, radio, or other means of transmission passing between the United States and any foreign country."⁴ This Act also declared that any person convicted of evading censorship would be subject to ten years imprisonment, a \$10,000 fine, or both. There were those who would, before censorship ended in 1945, suffer the full force of this penalty. Based upon the powers granted him in the First War Powers Act, President Roosevelt, on December 19, issued an Executive Order formally establishing the Office of Censorship.⁵ As Director of this office the President appointed Byron Price, formerly Executive Editor and General Manager of the Associated Press. Price, born to farming parents in Indiana in 1891, had, after college,

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 4.

⁴First War Powers Act, Section 303, 55 Stat. 838, December 18, 1941; quoted in ibid.

⁵Executive Order 8985, December 19, 1941 (6FR6625).

become a correspondent for the Associated Press. By 1937 he had risen to the top position in that organization.⁶

Roosevelt's choice of Byron Price as the man who would soon be directing others to listen in on private telephone conversations and read the mail of law-abiding, patriotic American citizens was, as it turned out, a wise one. Journalists usually acquire an occupational distaste for any form of censorship. The concepts of the freedoms of speech and the press are seldom more intensely recognized or supported than they are by American newspapermen. To place as Director of Censorship another person, such as one who looked with favor on censorship, could have created a totalitarian danger that the country could ill afford. Price himself recognized that ". . . no one who does not dislike censorship should ever be permitted to exercise censorship."⁷

Price's statement was not mere rhetoric, for the Executive Order that created the Office of Censorship conferred on the Director of that office "absolute discretion" in censoring communications.⁸ The Director of the Office of Censorship was enabled to wield semi-dictatorial powers; he need answer only to the President of the United States. Such power and independence in a transitory cabinet position was unprecedented in American history.

⁶Theodore F. Koop, Weapon of Silence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 17-18.

⁷Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 1.

⁸Ibid., p. 5.

Construction of the Censorship War Machine

President Roosevelt directed Byron Price to oversee the compulsory censorship of international communications. Price was also asked to organize and supervise the censorship of the domestic American press and radio on a voluntary basis. The government had decided that compulsory censorship of the press and radio would not be necessary as long as patriotic publishers and broadcasters were able to cooperate by withholding from print and the air any information that might hamper the Allied war effort.

Price had to staff the central part of his censoring organization, begin recruiting and training ordinary citizens to work as censors (eventually replacing most military personnel), and coordinate all of the nation's newspapers and radio stations into a self-censoring unit. This meant contacting, organizing, and supervising more than two thousand daily newspapers, eleven thousand weekly or semi-weekly papers, 925 radio stations, and thousands of scientific and technical journals.⁹ In addition there were publications from commercial, industrial, financial, educational, religious, fraternal, and civic organizations that had to be constantly screened for information that might be contrary to the war effort. Buildings had to be located to house regional censorship operations. Accounting and administrative sections had to be set up. Thousands of persons from

⁹Koop, op. cit., p. 169.

all walks of life had to be trained as censors.¹⁰ The majority of citizens employed by the Office of Censorship -- teachers, housewives, bankers, writers, businessmen, and linguists -- was put to work as postal censors in post offices across the United States. Women were believed to make good postal censors.¹¹ According to Melvin Jacobus, former District Postal Censor for San Francisco, there were more women than men available as postal censors simply because a greater number of men were serving in the armed forces. This also meant that the Office of Censorship was able to choose from a larger group on the basis of intelligence. Simply stated, there were more intelligent women than men available to fill positions as postal censors because the men were in the armed forces overseas.¹²

While the organization and construction process was still only a few weeks old, the Office of Censorship issued, on January 15, 1942, the first censorship codes for broadcasters and publishers.¹³ These two codes were the first

¹⁰By February of 1943, the high point of operations, there were 14,462 persons employed by the Office of Censorship; cited in Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 8.

¹¹Koop, op. cit., pp. 34-35. Koop says that these women postal censors were ". . . patient and would plod steadily through letter after letter. . . ."

¹²Melvin Jacobus, interview, January 11, 1972.

¹³U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters, [Edition of January 15, 1942] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government [Printing Office]), [1942]; and Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, [Edition of January 15, 1942] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942.

suggested guidelines for broadcasters and publishers under the program of voluntary censorship. Further discussion of voluntary censorship will be taken up in chapter IV.

Censorship: The Silencing Service

Before we begin looking at the programs of compulsory and voluntary censorship, it is worthwhile to include a brief passage on the public relations aspect of the Office of Censorship. In order for voluntary censorship to work effectively in a country that boasts of its freedom of speech, a censoring agency needs, among other things, either a good public image, or no public image. It was impossible for the Office of Censorship to function entirely unknown to the public, although it tried very hard at times to stay in the background out of the public eye. The next best thing was for the Office of Censorship to have a good or acceptable public image, and there was a concentrated effort on the part of the Office of Censorship and the Office of War Information to build this desired image.

Byron Price was quick to admit that Americans would never like censorship: "No one need doubt where a censor would wind up in a popularity contest."¹⁴ In a letter to this writer Price stated that the Office of Censorship ". . . had no public relations staff" ¹⁵ However, the

¹⁴ Byron Price, quoted in Robert E. Summers, Wartime Censorship of Press and Radio (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1942), pp. 29-30.

¹⁵ Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

Office of War Information, headed by Elmer Davis, was the official public relations office for most government agencies, as well as being the propaganda office for the United States during the war. Indeed, these two agencies even managed to pool the public relations skills of its two Directors in a small book published at the height of the war for the sole purpose of explaining to the public the functions of the two offices.¹⁶ In this book Price stated that ". . . the Office of Censorship does not prepare or issue news."¹⁷ However, one has only to read through the almost daily press releases published by the Office of Censorship in order to take a skeptical view of this statement. These press releases, many of which were textual copies of addresses made by Price before various civic and professional groups, were clearly designed to answer and quiet criticism of censorship and to drum up continued support for and compliance with voluntary censorship by the press, radio, and the public.¹⁸

¹⁶ Elmer Davis and Byron Price, War Information and Censorship (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs), [1943].

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁸ Director of the Office of Censorship, PR-35, [Press Release No. 35] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Office of Censorship, October 28, 1942), p. 1. In this, a public radio broadcast, Price defined the related and cooperative functions of the Office of Censorship and the Office of War Information.

III

COMPULSORY CENSORSHIP:

THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

Cable, Radio, and Telephone Communications

The surveillance of all communications crossing the borders of the United States by radio, telephone, cable, or letter had begun by December 13, 1941. This initial censorship effort was carried out by advance units of the Army and Navy. When the newly-created Office of Censorship took over these duties, it had a functioning, though somewhat primitive organization to build upon.

Under the able leadership of Byron Price, the Office of Censorship began constructing the compulsory censorship codes that would regulate all radio, telephone, cable, and mail communications. All such communications would be read or examined before they were allowed to leave or enter the United States. The objective of this and all censorship was to insure that ". . . military information which might be of aid to the enemy be scrupulously withheld at the source."¹

¹Franklin D. Roosevelt, statement quoted in Historical Reports on War Administration, A Report on the Office of Censorship (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1945); p. 5; hereafter referred to as Report on the Office of Censorship.

The first compulsory censorship codes to be issued were those for operating companies, cable and radio, and radiotelephone communications.² These three types of communications were those that were most often utilized for the rapid transmission of international messages. It was necessary to maintain stringent surveillance of these communications to insure that no information of value be transmitted to the enemy, either intentionally or inadvertently. Those companies providing radiotelephone or cablegram services to businesses or individuals were required to submit all proposed messages to a censor for clearance before the message was transmitted. Field censors were stationed in the operating rooms of these companies. In most cases these local censors could evaluate most messages in a very short period of time. If necessary, they could delay a proposed message until they sought advice from the Office of Censorship in Washington. These censors would, upon reviewing a proposed international message, take one of eight types of action:

- (1) PASS
- (2) DELAY

²U. S. Office of Censorship, Rules for Operating Companies, Edition of February 19, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942; hereafter referred to as Rules for Operating Companies (2-19-42); U. S. Office of Censorship, U. S. Cable and Radio Censorship Regulations, Edition of February 19, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942; hereafter referred to as Cable and Radio Regulations (2-19-42); and U. S. Office of Censorship, U. S. Radiotelephone Censorship Regulations, Edition of February 19, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942; hereafter referred to as Radio-telephone Regulations (2-19-42).

- (3) PARAPHRASE
- (4) DELETE a part
- (5) SUPPRESS
- (6) CANCEL
- (7) RETURN FOR CORRECTION
- (8) REFER to Chief Cable Censor for his action or advice.³

A large number of American businesses utilized radiotelephone and cable messages in conducting their normal business affairs. Few people, if any, felt these businesses would intentionally aid the enemy, but many did not realize how seemingly innocent messages could be of great value to the forces of Germany and Japan. German U-boat commanders could, by intercepting these messages, study the names of ships and cargo lists to determine which ones would be carrying the more strategically important goods, and then lie in wait for these ships. For this reason operating companies were prohibited from transmitting unauthorized coded call letters or special business signals that could possibly be utilized as a code. Even "fixed" or "canned" holiday greetings that could possibly be utilized as codes were prohibited without special permission.⁴

Those persons or companies using cablegrams or telegrams between the United States and any foreign country had

³Rules for Operating Companies (2-19-42), pp. 4-5.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

to adhere to specific regulations. All telegrams (or cablegrams, radiograms, etc.) had to contain the full name and address of both the sender and the addressee.⁵ This regulation, while serving an important purpose, produced some rather amusing incidents. One cable censor was more than a bit surprised when he insisted that a cablegram from London fully identify the sender, who had merely signed his message "George." In compliance with the censor's request, the following reply was promptly sent:

FULL NAME IS GEORGE REX;
ADDRESS, BUCKINGHAM PALACE.⁶

Cablegram regulations applied to everyone -- including the King of England.

Anything contained in a cable message that could possibly serve as a code was prohibited. On August 31, 1943, the U. S. Office of Censorship announced an Agreement between it and British Censorship to prohibit cablegrams and radiograms containing orders for flowers between the United States and Europe. It was feared that anyone, including enemy agents, might use a type of flower, the number of flowers, or their color to transmit coded messages. To protect against this possibility British and American Censorship officials prohibited cablegram and radiogram orders for flowers between their two countries in order to ". . . prevent the use of

⁵Cable and Radio Regulations (2-19-42), p. 2.

⁶Theodore F. Koop, Weapon of Silence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 65.

flowers as a medium of private codes."⁷ Cable users were also prohibited from making any reference to ". . . location, identity, description, movement, or prospective movement of any merchant vessel, aircraft, naval or military vessel or naval or military force, including the collective or individual personnel thereof, operated by the United States or other nations opposing the Axis powers."⁸

Telephone or radiotelephone connections crossing the borders of the United States were monitored by censors. The first radiotelephone code limited the languages of these calls to English, French, Spanish, and Portuguese, and languages other than English were allowed only when translators were available at the censoring point.⁹ Persons using international telephone service were prohibited from mentioning merchant or military shipping information, from using any numbers or words that could be interpreted as codes, from criticizing the armed forces of the United States, or from saying anything that the censor, in his judgment, believed would ". . . bring aid or comfort to the enemy" ¹⁰

A telephone censor could immediately interrupt or completely cutoff any telephone conversation he felt violated censorship

⁷Director of the Office of Censorship, PR-49, [Press Release No. 49] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Office of Censorship), August 31, 1943; these press releases hereafter referred to as Censorship Press Release No. , (date).

⁸Cable and Radio Regulations (2-19-42), p. 5.

⁹Radiotelephone Regulations (2-19-42), p. 1.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 2.

regulations. Cable and telephone censors were established throughout the United States and in other parts of the world. There were censorship stations in Honolulu, Brownsville, New York, Nogales, Seattle, Chicago, Tucson, Akron, Balboa, New Orleans, Miami, San Antonio, Los Angeles, San Juan, El Paso, Iceland, and various border points between the United States and Mexico.¹¹ The U. S. Office of Censorship also cooperated with Allied censorship in parts of Europe by trading both information and personnel.

The most important function of cable censorship may have been the protection of merchant ships. Censors prohibited all reference to ship movements in international communications. This effort, according to official sources, was ". . . wholly successful. No instance of loss or damage to a merchant vessel through interception of communications was reported throughout the entire war."¹²

Business firms, however, had to be able to carry on their operations. These firms had to be able to notify their trading associates that shipments of goods would depart and arrive at certain ports at certain times. In order to carry on these functions, business firms using cable or radio-

¹¹Koop, op. cit., p. 29.

¹²Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 28-29. The statement is cautiously made; it would have been undesirable to attribute such losses to inadequate cable censorship. Winston Churchill in The Second World War, Vol. V, Closing the Ring (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951), pp. 3-16, provides data on Allied and U. S. merchant fleet losses, but he does not attribute any losses to faulty censorship.

telephone communications were authorized to use any one of nine commercial codes in their messages. Each coded message had to include a prearranged coded abbreviation or indicating symbol at the beginning of each message to indicate to censors the authenticity of the message and the code being used. The nine commercial codes and indicating symbols authorized by the Office of Censorship were:

<u>Commercial Code</u>	<u>Indicating Symbol</u> ¹³
ABC Sixth Edition Code	ABC
ACME Commodity and Phrase Code and Supplement	ACME
Bentley's Complete Phrase Code	BENCOM
Bentley's Second Phrase Code	BENSEC
Lombard General Code	LOMGEN
Lombard Shipping Code and Appendix	LOMSHIP
New Standard Half Word Code	STANHAF
New Standard Three Letter Code	STANTER
Peterson's Third Edition	PET

In addition certain banks and other businesses were allowed to use "test words" in international communications. These test words usually appeared as the first or last word in the text of a message and were used by these firms to insure the authenticity of their messages.¹⁴

Commercial codes and test words were necessary exceptions to censorship regulations prohibiting the use of private codes. The maintenance of business activity was essential to the war effort and to the American economy.

¹³Censorship Press Release No. 5, January 20, 1942; see also David Kahn, The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1967), p. 516.

¹⁴Censorship Press Release No. 39a, January 30, 1943,
p. 12.

Cable and radiotelephone censorship lasted for the duration of the war. On January 30, 1943, censorship regulations covering cable, radio, and radiotelephone communications were combined in a single code.¹⁵ The nature of compulsory censorship is best described by quoting a sentence from this revised code: "All communications shall be sent, filed or transmitted at the sender's risk and may be condemned, suppressed, delayed, or otherwise dealt with at the discretion of the censor without notice."¹⁶

Compulsory censorship of international communications by cable, radio, or radiotelephone was rigidly fixed and enforced. The majority of the users of these types of international communication devices were bona fide businesses that normally conducted their activities on an international scale. These businesses, for the most part, readily complied with censorship regulations and there is little available evidence to support the existence of significant non-compliance or protest of the cable and radiotelephone regulations by these business firms.

Some individuals did try to evade cable censorship without actually trying to aid the enemy. One man in Pearl Harbor wanted to advise his friends in the United States that

¹⁵U. S. Office of Censorship, U. S. Censorship Regulations, Edition of January 30, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1943; hereafter referred to as Censorship Regulations (1-30-43). This revised and combined code included postal censorship regulations; postal censorship is discussed in the next section of this chapter.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 2.

he was leaving Hawaii on a specific date and that he would arrive in the United States on another date. Cable censors would not allow use of these dates because they obviously revealed the departure and arrival times of the ship on which the man would sail. This man then attempted to disguise the dates in his cablegram. He was caught and fined two hundred dollars for attempting to evade censorship.¹⁷

Postal censorship did not receive the same degree of compliance as did cable censorship. Postal censorship was compulsory, it also touched upon the life of the ordinary citizen more than any other form of compulsory censorship. Protests of postal censorship were frequent. There were numerous incidents of non-compliance, and attempts to evade postal censorship often resulted in severe penalties. The story of postal censorship is the subject of the next section of this chapter on compulsory censorship.

Postal Censorship

The censoring of all mail entering or leaving the United States began within hours of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Army and Navy officers, previously trained as postal censors, handled this operation until the Office of Censorship was equipped to assume direction of postal censorship.

Compulsory censorship of communications crossing the borders of the United States comprised ninety-nine percent of

¹⁷Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 45.

the work of the Office of Censorship.¹⁸ Of this total, postal censorship required the greatest effort. More than one million letters per day passed through postal censorship stations and required, at the peak of operations, more than ten thousand employees.¹⁹ Obviously, postal censors did not read every letter that entered or left the country. Mail from servicemen overseas was checked by military censors. The percentage of other mail read by the personnel of the Office of Censorship was, and still is, a secret.²⁰ Even before envelopes were opened their destination and return addresses were checked against a "watch list." When one of these addresses was found on an envelope the letter was examined. Postal censors were also trained to spot handwriting peculiarities because enemy agents using the mails could obviously change their addresses.²¹

The first postal censorship code was issued by the Office of Censorship in April of 1942.²² Postal censorship regulations applied to all mail crossing the borders of the United States. These regulations covered matter prohibited in international mail, mail to enemy nationals in any country,

¹⁸Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

¹⁹Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 19.

²⁰Ibid., p. 21.

²¹Ibid.

²²U. S. Office of Censorship, U. S. Postal Censorship Regulations, Edition of April 13, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942.

mail to prisoners of war, and the mailing of exposed and unexposed film.²³ Information prohibited from international mail was basically the same as that prohibited in cable, radio, and telephone communications that crossed the borders of the United States.

The Office of Censorship hired thousands of ordinary citizens who were trained as postal censors. Their training lasted hardly more than a week before these people were put to work opening, examining, and censoring mail.²⁴ Included in this wide range of personnel were postal censors who could act as translators in more than a hundred languages.²⁵ There were translators who could read shorthand in such esoteric languages as Haitian, Creole, Hindustani (in Braille!), Portuguese Romanized Japanese (Japanese language Romanized by Portuguese Catholic priests; also used by Japanese who lived in Brazil), and Papiamento (a language comprising Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese and English).²⁶

In January of 1943 postal censorship regulations were revised and were included in the general U. S. Censorship Regulations,²⁷ which also included cable, radio, and tele-

²³Ibid., pp. 1-5.

²⁴Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 19-20.

²⁵Ibid., p. 19.

²⁶Mary Knight, "The Secret War of Censors vs. Spies," Readers Digest, March, 1946, p. 80.

²⁷Censorship Regulations (1-30-43). Postal censorship regulations in this combined code are on pages 5-7.

phone regulations. This edition was then used intact for the duration of the war. One important section of these new postal censorship regulations prohibited the use of secret inks in international mail.²⁸ The inclusion of this prohibition resulted, in part, from the activities of a German agent, Ernest Lehmitz, who operated out of Staten Island. A summary of the Lehmitz story follows below.

The Lehmitz story. In February of 1942, a letter mailed from New York to a suspicious address in Bilbao, Spain was intercepted and found to be carrying a secret message written with invisible ink. For the next two months the Office of Censorship carefully watched all mail from this person in New York. The letter writer used two aliases in his return addresses, "Fred Lewis" and "Fred Sloane." His letters during this period were intercepted and all were found to be carrying secret-ink messages. On April 11, 1942, "Lewis" sent his last messages, which stated, in invisible ink, that he was suspending his operations. The letters were closed with "Heil Hitler." "Lewis" had been writing to, among others, an address in Portugal. The Federal Bureau of Investigation began a handwriting analysis of baggage declarations of passengers from Portugal and a match was discovered between "Fred Lewis" and Ernest Frederick Lehmitz of Tompkinsville, New York. Lehmitz was kept under surveillance for more than a year and in June, 1943 he was arrested. He

²⁸Ibid., p. 5.

had operated a boarding house on Staten Island, specializing in rooms for sailors from whom he hoped to gather valuable shipping information. In September Lehmitz was sentenced to thirty years in prison for his activities.²⁹ Lehmitz's sentence, though severe, was not as harsh as that meted out to a German agent in Havana. This man, apprehended through the efforts of American and British Censorship, was given a highly secret, seven hour military trial and then summarily shot by a firing squad of the Cuban army.³⁰

Keeping a close watch for secret inks was the job of the Technical Operations Division of the Office of Censorship. This highly specialized and secret division enlisted the aid of chemists, physicists, and ink and paper specialists. Invisible inks were of two general types. The organic type included the use of milk, vinegar, fruit juices, and urine as invisible ink, and all were used during the war. These elements could be applied to paper and would remain invisible until the paper had been heated, which would then cause the written message to appear. The second type of invisible inks used what are known as sympathetic chemicals. This involved using one chemical to write an invisible message and later applying a second chemical to the same paper to render the writing visible.

²⁹For the Lehmitz story see Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 46-47; see also Koop, op. cit., pp. 83-87.

³⁰See Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 45-46; also Koop, op. cit., pp. 3-15.

The most popular methods for writing in invisible ink were of the organic type. Enemy agents had to utilize the simplest methods and materials because they could not carry a large collection of supplies and chemicals with them at all times. Also, sophisticated chemicals could not always be obtained by an agent without arousing suspicion. For these reasons fruit juices -- and human urine -- were used quite frequently.

With these simple methods and supplies enemy agents had to write -- or print -- clearly, and their messages had to be simple and succinct. Often these messages appeared as though they had been written by a youngster, and this posed a special problem for the Office of Censorship. Many ten-year-old boys in the United States during the war were as familiar with invisible ink manufactured from fruit juices or vinegar as were enemy agents using the same methods. Many American youngsters used these homemade secret inks to send "club" messages to one another through the U. S. Mail. Postal censors could not distinguish between the innocent secret ink message of a ten-year-old club member and the concealed messages of dangerous enemy agents. Therefore every instance of secret ink usage had to be investigated, and F.B.I. agents, acting on Censorship information, often found themselves explaining to parents the reasons their young sons should not be allowed to continue using invisible inks. The young boys were clearly -- albeit innocently -- in violation of wartime censorship regulations and such violations could

bring a \$10,000 fine and ten years in prison. Usually a visit to the parents of an unknowing young violator sufficed, but each investigation of invisible ink usage cost the Office of Censorship much time and money during the war.³¹

In addition to secret inks, postal censors had to be on the watch for "open codes." This was the prearranged use of apparently harmless numbers, letters, or words that could convey hidden messages. Such things as international chess games, the mailing of student's grades, letters with knitting instructions, or even the childish scrawl of an infant could in reality be prearranged codes. These things were all prohibited in international mail. One case of an open code using prearranged words brought a stiff prison sentence for Velvalee Dickinson, a dealer in dolls. A description of the Dickinson case is the next topic under postal censorship.

The Dickinson Story. Velvalee Dickinson was born in Sacramento, California in 1893. As an adult she worked in San Francisco and was popular in Japanese-American social life. In 1937 she moved to New York and opened an exclusive doll shop. By 1942 she had a world-wide clientele.³²

In January of 1942 a Seattle woman contacted the Federal Bureau of Investigation and gave them a letter that

³¹Much of this information on secret or invisible inks derived from interview with Norman Carlson, January 11, 1972; see also Kahn, op. cit., pp. 522-524.

³²For the Dickinson story see Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 48-49, and Koop, op. cit., pp. 92-98.

had been "returned" to her from Buenos Aires. The letter had originally been mailed from the United States to Buenos Aires, but because the letter was incorrectly addressed the Argentine post office returned it to the return address given on the envelope. The return address on the envelope was that of the Seattle woman, but she stated that she knew no one in Buenos Aires and had not mailed the letter. The letter contained reference to a broken doll "dressed in a Hula Grass skirt." An added message said, ". . . I expect all damages to be repaired by the first week in February."³³

Shortly afterward an Ohio woman received a similar letter marked "Return To Sender," also from Buenos Aires. This letter bore her Ohio return address but had not been mailed by the Ohio woman. This letter said, ". . . Mr. Shaw will be back to work soon."³⁴ On the chance the letters might be coded messages the Office of Censorship checked all mail going to the address in Buenos Aires. Other letters were then intercepted containing odd messages that told of "dolls" being "repaired." Checking with the persons whose addresses were given as the return addresses on these letters to Buenos Aires, the F.B.I. discovered that these women all knew Velvalee Dickinson, an exclusive doll dealer in New York.

In January of 1944 F.B.I. agents arrested Mrs. Dickinson and searched her apartment, finding ". . . Japanese

³³Koop, op. cit., p. 92.

³⁴Ibid., p. 93.

clothing, records of Japanese music, . . ." and an address book containing the names of Japanese friends.³⁵ The letters Mrs. Dickinson mailed to Buenos Aires (she admitted mailing them) were incorrectly addressed and therefore returned by the Argentine post office to the return address indicated on the envelopes. Many of the names and places Mrs. Dickinson used in these letters were the same as the names of some United States warships being repaired in various cities. Apparently, "dolls" being repaired in San Francisco could mean "ships" being repaired in San Francisco. Some of the names used in Mrs. Dickinson's letters, such as "Mr. Shaw," matched those of well-known warships, such as the "U.S.S. Shaw." The authorities believed that Mrs. Dickinson attempted to convey information on the condition and location of American and Allied war vessels.³⁶ Mrs. Dickinson was charged with censorship evasion. A more serious charge would have been more difficult to prove, for there was apparently no proof that she had contacted an enemy of the United States. Velvalee Dickinson was found guilty of the lesser charge and sentenced to ten years in prison and a \$10,000 fine.³⁷

Other postal censorship regulations required that stamp dealers and bona fide stamp collectors acquire special

³⁵Ibid., p. 97. Incredibly, Koop implies that Japanese clothing and Japanese phonograph records found in Mrs. Dickinson's apartment constituted incriminating evidence!

³⁶Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 49.

³⁷Ibid.

permits from the Office of Censorship before they could mail stamps out of the country.³⁸ American postage stamps were nearly as good as American greenbacks and the government did not want these stamps to get into the hands of the Axis powers. One Presidential Cabinet member mailed a remittance of two dollars for a Nazi publication in Mexico. When this remittance was returned to him by censors he protested and appealed on the grounds his mail was exempt from censorship because of his official position. Byron Price replied to the irate Cabinet member that his office was ". . . charged with censoring all communications, not all except his."³⁹

Postal censors discovered, through an intercepted letter, a shipment of diamonds concealed in chocolates.⁴⁰ Censors also discovered a German cipher whereby an entire page, typewritten in code, was reduced to the size of a period, which could then be hidden in an otherwise innocent letter.⁴¹ Publishers of scientific or technical journals could apply for a special license to mail their publications abroad only after signing affidavits stating that employees preparing articles for mailing were ". . . trustworthy and . . . not connected with subversive activities."⁴²

³⁸Censorship Press Release No. 33, n.d. [September, 1942 (?)].

³⁹Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

⁴⁰Knight, op. cit., p. 81.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Censorship Press Release No. 11, March 18, 1942.

Many persons tried to evade postal censors even though they were not attempting to aid the enemy. One man in New Zealand was fined for concealing a letter between the pages of a magazine he mailed to Utah. A woman tried to hide a letter in a basket of flowers as she entered the United States. She was caught and fined forty dollars for censorship evasion. Shoes were a favorite place of concealment, and one man in Panama received a jail sentence of sixty days for attempting to evade censorship in that manner.

Postal censors also protected American investments and contracts by carefully examining important business mail. In one case the United States had contracted for the entire output of Ecuadorian quinine, which was used to combat malaria. An intercepted letter from a firm in Ecuador told of a large transfer of quinine to a European port. The shipment, which the United States Government considered to be in violation of its contract with Ecuador, was already on its way to Europe by sea. A United States destroyer was dispatched and the quinine cargo was promptly seized on the high seas. In time of war anything is fair, even if it borders on piracy! This was not the only case of seizure of cargo at sea. Censorship intercepts led to the knowledge of a vitally-needed cargo of zinc. This ship was forceably turned back to an American port and the cargo commandeered.

A Belgium firm operating out of the United States and specializing in the production of industrial diamonds was found to be smuggling these diamonds into Europe. A letter

from this firm to another in Sweden advised the Swedish firm that a shipment of steel twist drills would soon leave the United States. The letter instructed the Swedish firm to dip the drills in an acid bath. A postal censor thought this was rather severe treatment for steel drills and recommended an investigation. The drills were found to be hollow, filled with diamonds, and capped with a bronze plug. The acid bath would melt the bronze plugs and expose the diamonds. The head of the firm in the United States was convicted of censorship evasion and sentenced to one year in jail.⁴³

The foregoing represent only a very small percentage of the exciting and successful activities of postal censors. Not all decisions by postal censors were quite so exciting, nor as easily understood. One magazine called the decision of a postal censor "individual idiocy" when he censored an American citizen's letter to a friend in South America in which the American said the United States was in for a long, hard war.⁴⁴ Three weeks after Pearl Harbor the Hawaiian volcano Mauna Loa erupted, belching smoke and fire. Local censors carefully deleted all reference to the eruption in mail leaving Hawaii on the grounds that, because the flames from the eruption were visible at night, the Japanese might use Mauna Loa as a beacon for another assault on Hawaii.⁴⁵ Maybe

⁴³Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 45-53.

⁴⁴"Nonsense by the Censor," New Republic, July 13, 1942, p. 36.

⁴⁵Koop, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

the censors felt the Japanese navy had forgotten how to get to Hawaii after three long weeks! In February of 1942 Los Angeles Times issues being sent to Mexico (and other countries) by U. S. Mail were, without the publisher's knowledge, subjected to "razor blade" censoring by postal censors before being sent on to the subscribers. At the same time newspapers originating in Texas and presumably carrying the same syndicated articles arrived in Mexico untouched by the censor's razor blade. One item deleted from the Los Angeles Times by postal censors concerned the funeral of Carole Lombard.⁴⁶

There is some evidence that postal censorship was used in attempts to muzzle critics of the Roosevelt administration. Wendell Willkie engaged in what James MacGregor Burns calls "constructive criticism" of the Roosevelt administration.⁴⁷ Willkie, a supporter of individual rights and an ardent internationalist, criticized the government for its slowness in civil rights, and urged Roosevelt to establish a "second front" to help Russia. Willkie, "goaded the President," according to some persons,⁴⁸ criticized the "racists and reactionaries" of the Democratic party. He also

⁴⁶ News story from "Editor and Publisher," February 21, 1942, p. 6, reprinted in Robert E. Summers (comp.), Wartime Censorship of Press and Radio (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1942), pp. 184-185.

⁴⁷ James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), p. 174.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 437.

charged Roosevelt with ". . . one-man rule, confused administration, [and] self-perpetuation in power . . ." ⁴⁹ In 1942 Willkie chided Roosevelt for not using the U. S. Navy more aggressively following Pearl Harbor. ⁵⁰ His continuous attacks on the Roosevelt administration ". . . covered generally the wide range habitual to the leader of the opposition party . . ." ⁵¹

In late 1942 Willkie was preparing to write articles for the London Evening Standard. Roosevelt was "scared" that Willkie's discourse on foreign affairs, "which he does not understand," would damage international relations. ⁵² The President instructed Price to visit Willkie and explain that ". . . he must submit to censorship at the border like everyone else." ⁵³ This was done and Willkie did not like it. He continued to criticize the administration and the Office of Censorship for their policies. He rebuked Price for allowing a speech by Vice-President Henry Wallace to leave the United States undelayed to be reprinted in England. Willkie's articles, however, were delayed by censors before they were allowed to leave the country. ⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 499.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 222.

⁵¹ Byron Price to writer, December 20, 1971.

⁵² Ibid. Price quotes Roosevelt.

⁵³ Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

⁵⁴ Koop, op. cit., pp. 252-254.

This was not the only time censorship would be used in an attempt to muzzle a critic of the administration. In early 1944 the private correspondence of Vivien Kellems, an American citizen and frequent administration critic, was made public on the floor of Congress. A furor arose that involved President Roosevelt, Congress, and the Office of Censorship. That affair is the next, and last, story under postal censorship.

The Kellems story. To begin the Kellems story it is necessary to describe a basic postal censorship procedure. The United States and British Censorship offices utilized a "watch list" of German nationals living in various parts of the world. Using this Proclaimed List of Certain Blocked Nationals⁵⁵ censors could watch for mail to certain individuals in certain cities. Many cities of South America and Europe were believed to be centers of Axis activity. Buenos Aires was one, and ". . . anything to or from Lisbon was sure to be opened."⁵⁶ Important passages taken from mail to and from these German nationals were labeled "Intercept" and relayed to appropriate agencies having an interest in their contents. Thus censored portions of citizens letters were distributed into many hands. These "intercepts" were, of course, treated as secrets. But when a secret is shared by

⁵⁵Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 11. The number of names on this "watch list" fluctuated between 75,000 to 100,000 persons; see Knight, op. cit., p. 80.

⁵⁶"Intercepts," New Yorker, May 11, 1946, p. 22.

too many people, it soon loses its element of secrecy.

Vivien Kellems was an American industrialist. She headed a successful manufacturing firm in Connecticut. She had long been a vocal critic of the operations of the Roosevelt administrations, especially of the various income tax laws. In 1942 Miss Kellems ran for Congress but was defeated by Clare Boothe Luce in the primaries.⁵⁷ In January of 1944 Vivien Kellems voiced her intention to refuse to pay a portion of her 1943 income tax. In addition she urged other industrialists to do the same.⁵⁸ Miss Kellems, who traced her heritage to 1636 in Virginia,⁵⁹ declared the employee withholding tax laws to be ". . . illegal, immoral, and unconstitutional."⁶⁰ To support her statement she would quote scripture from the Bible:

And it came to pass in those days
that there went out a decree from
Caesar Augustus, that all the world
should be taxed. And all went to be
taxed, everyone into his own city.⁶¹

Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau criticized Miss Kellems's statements as "smacking of disloyalty."⁶² On the

⁵⁷Anna Rothe (ed.), Current Biography (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1948), pp. 340-342.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 341.

⁵⁹Vivien Kellems, Toil, Taxes and Trouble (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1952), p. 10.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 8.

⁶¹Quoted in ibid., p. 18; the passage is Luke 2:1-3.

⁶²Rothe, op. cit., p. 341.

floor of the House of Representatives, Congressman John Coffee of Washington said Miss Kellems' remarks on the withholding of payment of her taxes were "highly dangerous." He accused Miss Kellems of "downright subversive conduct" because she called on other employers to follow her example of noncompliance with the tax laws. The Congressman hardly meant to praise the lady when he implied that the profits from her company (which had defense contracts) ". . . were earned through the blood . . ." of her countrymen fighting in the front lines. Coffee further characterized Miss Kellems as a "P-A-Y-triot," rather than a patriot, and said that by her statements ". . . she is, in effect, working to bring about the establishment of fascism . . ." in America.⁶³

Shortly after Coffee made his remarks on the floor of the House,⁶⁴ columnist Drew Pearson, in a radio commentary, reported that Vivien Kellems had been corresponding privately with a "blocked" German national living in Argentina. Pearson even quoted directly from one of Miss Kellems' private letters to this German national.⁶⁵ A furor arose over Pearson's quotations from one of Miss Kellems' private letters. Where had he gotten the private correspondence of an American citizen? Was not the privacy of the United States Mail inviolate?

⁶³Congressional Record, 78th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1944), Pt. 90, No. 8, p. A403.

⁶⁴Coffee's remarks were made on January 26, 1944.

⁶⁵Koop, op. cit., p. 136.

On March 31, 1944, Congressman Coffee again mounted his pulpit to inveigh against Vivien Kellems. Further classifying her remarks on taxation as "sabotage," he said Vivien Kellems' public statements were motivated by ". . . seditious enemy influences" ⁶⁶ Casting doubt and suspicion on Miss Kellems's loyalty, Coffee echoed Drew Pearson's charges that she ". . . has for some 2 [sic] years been carrying on with a well-known Nazi agent named Count Frederick Karl von Zedlitz in Buenos Aires, Argentina." ⁶⁷ But what came next from Congressman Coffee was even more surprising, for he began to quote verbatim from Miss Kellems' personal correspondence to and from von Zedlitz. Coffee stated that Miss Kellems addressed this "Nazi agent" as "My darling boy" and signed her letters to him with "All my love, sweetheart, Vivien." This was explosive! A United States Congressman had somehow come into possession of an American citizen's private correspondence, and then made that correspondence public. There was only one ultimate source for these excerpts from this lady's private correspondence -- the U. S. Office of Censorship, or one of its cooperating agencies.

Concluding his characterization of Miss Kellems as a ". . . tool of the Goebbels propaganda machine [and] the lover of a Hitler fifth column spy . . . ," Congressman Coffee then deferred further criticism, citing ". . . the

⁶⁶ Congressional Record, 78th Cong., 2nd Sess. (1944), Pt. 90, No. 3, p. 3369.

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 3370.

rules of etiquette and the spirit of fair play"

Coffee refrained from further disclosure of Miss Kellems's private correspondence with von Zedlitz because, he said, it afforded him ". . . no pleasure to refer to the personal life of any lady in a critical way."⁶⁸

Vivien Kellems immediately protested this invasion of her privacy and an investigation was launched by the Senate Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads. All correspondence that crossed the borders of the United States was subject to compulsory censorship, and this included the Kellems-Zedlitz letters. In addition, Zedlitz was a known German national living in Argentina; correspondence between he and any person in the United States would receive strict surveillance from postal censors. Miss Kellems logically charged that someone in the Office of Censorship, or in some other government agency to which Censorship intercepts had been sent, had leaked her private correspondence to unauthorized individuals and that these individuals had illegally disclosed portions of her letters to Pearson and Coffee. The Senate Committee concurred.

Byron Price, as Director of the Office of Censorship, was the first witness to testify before a sub-committee handling the investigation. Price expressed his belief that the Kellems-Zedlitz correspondence had been leaked by some government agency other than the Office of Censorship. He empha-

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 3371.

sized the fact that other government agencies were privy to Censorship intercepts. Under order of a subpoena, Price produced in executive session copies of the Kellems-Zedlitz correspondence, but because these intercepts contained secret censorship markings they were not made available in public session. In December, 1944, Vivien Kellems said that she believed she knew how the intercepts were leaked to Pearson and Coffee and offered to state these beliefs to the sub-committee in executive session. The sub-committee, however, requested that she testify in public session. She refused and the Senate Committee dropped its investigation without submitting a report.⁶⁹ Kellems contended that the Roosevelt administration purposely leaked her correspondence in retaliation for her opposition to government policies.⁷⁰

On May 23, 1944, Price testified that Zedlitz had communicated with a number of persons in the United States.⁷¹ However, Vivien Kellems was the only one of these persons whose correspondence was leaked and made public. She was also the only one of these persons who had publicly criticized the administration. Price was questioned about the importance of including in Censorship intercepts such personal phrases as "My darling boy" and "All my love, sweetheart." His answers largely evaded the question.

⁶⁹Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁰Koop, op. cit., p. 137.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 138.

There were only three agencies that received the Kellems-Zedlitz intercepts: British Censorship, the Office of Strategic Services, and the State Department. Neither British Censorship nor the Office of Strategic Services were questioned by the sub-committee. The State Department, however, testified that it had distributed the intercepts to at least two other subordinate agencies. These two agencies reported that their copies of the Kellems-Zedlitz intercepts had been destroyed.⁷²

So the leak was never officially discovered. The Kellems affair was closed. Vivien Kellems absolved Byron Price of any guilt, implying that he was following instructions from higher authority.⁷³ According to Byron Price, the Director of the Office of Censorship was ". . . responsible only to the Commander-In-Chief himself" ⁷⁴

During the Kellems investigation Time magazine reported that ". . . all Washington knew that someone in the Office of Censorship slipped the juicier portions of the

⁷² Ibid., pp. 138-139. These intercepts from the Office of Censorship to other government agencies all bore the following notice: "The attached information was taken from private communications, and its extremely confidential character must be preserved. The information must be confided only to those officials whose knowledge of it is necessary to the prosecution of the war. In no case should it be widely distributed, or copies made, or the information used in legal proceedings or in any other public way without express consent of the Director of Censorship." Cited in Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 7.

⁷³ Koop, op. cit., p. 142.

⁷⁴ Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

Kellems-von Zedlits Correspondence to columnist Drew Pearson and Representative Coffee."⁷⁵ Price, however, was satisfied that ". . . no one in Censorship was to blame."⁷⁶ He contacted Drew Pearson and personally asked him ". . . to refrain from publishing any more such material and none appeared in print thereafter."⁷⁷ According to Byron Price, "The censors take every precaution to keep the mail as secure and as private as possible" ⁷⁸ In the Kellems case, someone failed.

The Office of Censorship acted as an intelligence gathering agency which dispensed confidential information to other agencies of the government. Thus the Department of State, the F.B.I., the Army, and many other government departments, would request that the Office of Censorship provide them with information they felt was important to their operations. The various government agencies would then "act" upon the information provided by the Office of Censorship. In the early years of the war these "acting agencies," as they were collectively called, often exercised their privileged right to Censorship intelligence to the fullest extent. Indeed, some agencies, and particularly the State

⁷⁵"The Administration: Faithless," Time, April 17, 1944, p. 23.

⁷⁶Byron Price to writer, December 20, 1971.

⁷⁷Ibid.

⁷⁸Quoted in Elmer Davis and Byron Price, War Information and Censorship (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, [1943]), p. 63.

Department, the Army, and the F.B.I., requested that the Office of Censorship provide them with all information of a suspicious nature, even though that information had no apparent relationship to the agency making the request. In effect, these agencies wanted, and in the first months of the war received, free and full access to Censorship intelligence.

Byron Price soon became concerned with the practice of providing unlimited information to these acting agencies and decided to incorporate a new policy within his office. Price had made a visit to some offices of the Department of State and discovered "stacks" of Censorship intercepts -- excerpts from the private correspondence of American citizens -- in unlocked storerooms. He then decided that the number of intercepts provided to these acting agencies would be limited to only those that the Office of Censorship felt the acting agency required. Blanket requests for information from the F.B.I. and the Army were denied, and each request for information received from these agencies was then decided on its individual requirements. The tendency of these acting agencies to request more confidential information than they actually required was a problem with which Byron Price had to deal for the duration of the war.⁷⁹

Postal censorship continued to function, even though the Kellems affair was somewhat embarrassing. There were

⁷⁹The above information on the relationship between the Office of Censorship and other government agencies based on interview with Norman Carlson, January 11, 1972.

other times when postal censorship came underfire. Many of these instances involved postal censorship of the press and will be treated under the subject of voluntary censorship in this paper.

Two months before General Eisenhower's forces landed on the beaches at Normandy postal censors took special precautions with mail going to servicemen overseas. These precautions included stringent censorship of mail from the United States to servicemen overseas, and ". . . an arbitrary ten-day delay . . ." of mail coming to the United States from military personnel in Europe.⁸⁰ "When the Director ordered all mail from servicemen in England impounded during a short period before D-Day he was showered with inquiries and protests but received [only] a single really abusive letter."⁸¹ Following V-E Day postal censorship of mail to Europe was relaxed and postal censors concentrated their efforts on the war with Japan in the Pacific.

There was another form of compulsory censorship that deserves some mention. Military censorship had been in effect since Pearl Harbor. While military censorship was an effort independent of the Office of Censorship, the functions of the two censoring agencies often overlapped and conflicted with one another. Further sections of this paper will touch upon military censorship as it came into contact -- and

⁸⁰ Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 14-15.

⁸¹ Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

conflict -- with the Office of Censorship. But a brief view of military censorship is in order here before the reader moves on to those sections.

Military Censorship

The Army and Navy retained censorship jurisdiction over their personnel and over journalists operating in the theaters of war. All mail from servicemen overseas passed through either Army or Navy censorship before it was dispatched to the United States. These military censors had to watch for and delete any reference to the location of military personnel, units, or equipment. Soldiers and sailors were seldom allowed to tell their families where they were. Military censors were stationed at various mail dispatch points wherever troops were located. Each Navy censor read an average of thirty letters per day mailed by sailors. These letters averaged two thousand words each, so that each Navy censor read about sixty thousand words each day. According to one source, out of sixty thousand words read daily, only ten would have to be deleted by the censor.⁸² This type of censorship activity was the daily ritual of military censors. There were other activities by military censors that could not be called daily ritual.

American correspondents with military units overseas had to sign agreements that they would submit all of their

⁸²James D. Johnson, "We Censors are Frustrated Humans," Saturday Evening Post, September 22, 1945, p. 34.

material to military censorship before it was dispatched. Civilian censorship in the United States usually utilized a rule such as "Will the publication of this material help the enemy?" Military censors, both at home and abroad, usually added another guideline, such as "Is publication of this material good for the Army?"⁸³ Therefore, military censors could justify suppression of nearly any material they did not want printed, regardless of its strategic value.

Using this rule military censors often adopted rather strict policies. One Army General in Cairo in the summer of 1944 called in the correspondents in his area and delivered the following lecture to them:

My military censors are going to examine everything you write about this theater, whether it concerns politics or anything else. There will be nothing critical of this theater sent out of here by you gentlemen. If any of you think he may be inclined to write anything critical, he may as well leave now. And don't go complaining to the War Department. I don't intend to have any interference in my theater.⁸⁴

Some reporters attempted, by cable and by letter, to relay the General's remarks to friends and employers. These cables and letters were summarily stopped on the General's orders.

Another case of military censorship concerned the infamous soldier-slapping incident involving General George Patton. In August of 1943 General Patton visited a field

⁸³Koop, op. cit., p. 261.

⁸⁴Quoted in Eric Sevareid, "Censorship in the Saddle," Nation, April 14, 1945, p. 416.

hospital in Sicily where he came upon a soldier who was physically unhurt, but suffering from "nerves." Patton became enraged, called the soldier a "dirty no-good son of a bitch," a "coward," and "a disgrace to the Army."⁸⁵ Patton then slapped the soldier's face, telling him he would either be sent to the front lines to fight, or be shot by a firing squad of his fellow soldiers. News of the incident spread like wild-fire. General Eisenhower, in his book Crusade In Europe, states that no effort was made to suppress news of the incident.⁸⁶ However, it was some months after the incident before the American public read the story.⁸⁷

According to Theodore Koop, who was the Assistant Director of the Office of Censorship, military authorities tried to suppress the Patton incident even after it had reached the United States. Koop says the Office of Censorship declined to rule against publication and the story was printed.⁸⁸

Journalists in the United States also had to contend with military censors whose rulings were often difficult to comprehend. One such incident took place in 1942 when a group of correspondents were invited by the government to

⁸⁵Quoted in Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), pp. 299-300; see also Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story (New York: Popular Library, 1951), pp. 165-168.

⁸⁶Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade In Europe (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., 1948), p. 182.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Koop, op. cit.

make a tour of war plants. At one plant the reporters were allowed to view and later describe in detail a new fifty caliber machine gun then in production. However, when their stories were submitted to military censors all reference to the caliber of the ammunition for this gun was summarily blue-penciled!⁸⁹ The irate reporters also protested the fact that the censored information was passed intact in newspapers serving the general locality of the war plant. The military censors replied that because the reporters' newspapers had a wider circulation than the local papers censorship of the information in question was justified.⁹⁰

Incidents such as these were often the result of attempts by overzealous military censors to protect the war effort of the United States. Such stringent censorship motivated Byron Price to disavow the authority of some military censors. In late 1943 he issued the following statement to newspaper publishers:

I solicit your continued cooperation to see . . . that a dangerous psychology of overcensorship is not created throughout the land by the activities of a miscellany of volunteer firemen.⁹¹

Price was concerned that reporters and publishers might be censoring too much material at the request of military censors who had the "morale" of the Army in mind rather than

⁸⁹"Censorship Fantasia," Time, July 8, 1942, p. 64.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Quoted in Koop, op. cit., p. 264.

the strategic value of the material itself. There were many incidents of overzealous military censorship, some of which will be recounted in the chapter on voluntary censorship.

Compulsory censorship was the first line of defense in the war on words from 1942-1945. Censorship was a military weapon⁹² designed to deprive the enemy of information, friends, and commodities that he could use against the Allies; it was also used to collect intelligence that could be used against the enemy.⁹³ Perhaps this section on compulsory censorship can close on a humorous note. Censors had to keep a close watch on the possibility of enemy agents using carrier pigeons to transmit messages.⁹⁴ Research failed to turn up evidence of shotgun-carrying censors scanning the skies.

The next chapter deals with voluntary censorship of the American press and radio. This "delicate and explosive" task required less than one percent of the budget and personnel of the Office of Censorship.⁹⁵ It also required a tremendous amount of perserverance and patience from the people of the press, the radio, and the Office of Censorship.

⁹²Censorship Press Release No. 29, August 13, 1942,
p. 2.

⁹³Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 1.

⁹⁴Censorship officials were serious concerning this possibility; see Davis and Price, op. cit., p. 65.

⁹⁵Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

IV

VOLUNTARY CENSORSHIP:

THE SECOND LINE OF DEFENSE

The Voluntary Codes

When President Roosevelt chose Byron Price as the Director of the Office of Censorship, he instructed him to ". . . coordinate the voluntary effort of press and radio to withhold from circulation information which would aid the enemy in his prosecution of the war."¹ The Office of Censorship had to become a clearing house for information disseminated by thousands of radio stations, newspapers, and other journals throughout the country. It had to request that these publishers and broadcasters withhold, at the discretion of the government, any information that might prejudice the United States and Allied forces in their prosecution of the war; at the same time it had to guarantee the constitutional rights of free speech and a free press. This was, theoretically, an almost impossible position. According to Byron Price, there was one rule that had to be observed if voluntary censorship was to succeed: "Censorship of the dissemination of public information must hold unceasingly,

¹Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

day in and day out, to the single purpose of keeping dangerous information from the enemy."² The only alternative was, obviously, compulsory censorship. Nearly everyone loathed the idea of imposing compulsory censorship on the press and radio, and the Office of Censorship wasted little time in issuing voluntary censorship codes for these media.

The first voluntary codes, the Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters and the Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, were issued on January 15, 1942.³ It is worthwhile to describe these codes in depth. The Code for Broadcasters is divided into three basic parts:

- (1) News Programs
- (2) Ad-Lib Programs
- (3) Foreign Language Programs

In disseminating certain material broadcasters were advised to ask themselves "Would this material be of value to me if I were the enemy?"⁴ The code requested that the following elements of news programs be kept off the air unless that

²Historical Reports on War Administration, A Report on the Office of Censorship (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1945), p. 2; hereafter referred to as Report on the Office of Censorship.

³U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters, [Edition of January 15, 1942] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government [Printing Office]), [1942]; hereafter referred to as Code for Broadcasters (1-15-42); and U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, [Edition of January 15, 1942] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942; hereafter referred to as Code for the Press (1-15-42).

⁴Code for Broadcasters (1-15-42), p. 2.

information had been released by appropriate authority: weather reports, including temperature and barometer readings, wind directions, forecasts, and "all other data" relating to weather conditions; and the location, movement, identity, strength of, or information concerning troops, ships, planes, experiments, fortifications, industrial war production, casualty lists, selective service enrollments, or communications facilities.⁵

Radio broadcasters were cautioned not to give credence to unconfirmed reports of any kind. These included ship sinkings, enemy claims, and obvious fallacies.⁶ These reports were to be broadcast only after official confirmation by the Office of Censorship or other appropriate authority. A general provision requested that radio stations not disclose the new location of the National Archives, which had been moved, or movements of the President of the United States or of any military or diplomatic missions. The code also requested that broadcasters remove or seriously curtail the following types of ad-lib radio programs:

- (a) Request programs
- (b) Quiz programs
- (c) Forums and Interviews (ad lib)
- (d) Commentaries and descriptions (ad lib)⁷

⁵Ibid., pp. 2-3.

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

⁷Ibid., p. 4.

Radio stations were asked to suspend for the duration of the war the acceptance of telephoned or telegraphed requests for musical selections. It was feared these requests, if honored, could be used as open codes by enemy agents. Mail requests for musical selections could be accepted only if radio stations were careful not to play the selections on the day and time requested. Lost and found requests were to be honored only on written request, not by telephone. Quiz programs that involved audience participation were to be discontinued or carefully supervised, for it was felt that public accessibility to open microphones was dangerous, especially when there were no prior arrangements for investigating the background of the participants. This restriction was mainly directed to "man-in-the-street" interviews, but similar reasons were given for eliminating or restricting forums and commentaries.⁸

Broadcasters were requested to maintain full transcripts of all foreign language programs, and to guard against any deviation from these scripts by foreign language announcers and performers (any language other than English was considered a foreign language). Broadcasters were also ". . . advised to steer clear of dramatic programs which attempt to portray the horrors of combat" ⁹ It was felt that such dramatic programs might be too realistic and

⁸Ibid., pp. 5-6.

⁹Ibid., p. 7.

have an adverse effect on radio listeners.

This initial code for broadcasters could not foresee all future possibilities and therefore was not to be interpreted as containing all possible restrictions on the use of the domestic radio system. If broadcasters doubted any material being considered for programming they were advised to contact the Office of Censorship for clarification.

The Code for the Press, issued simultaneously with the Code for Broadcasters, superceded and consolidated a miscellany of requests previously made by various agencies of the Federal Government.¹⁰ This first press code generally repeated the same restrictions enumerated in the radio code of the same date. Information regarding troops, ships, planes, industrial war production, and the location of factories could not be reported in American newspapers unless that information had been released for publication by official authority.

Newspapers were asked to exclude weather forecasts and weather "round-up" reports unless they had been released by the Weather Bureau. Routine weather forecasts printed by any single newspaper could cover only the State in which the paper was printed, ". . . and not more than four adjoining States, portions of which lie within a radius of 150 miles from the point of publication."¹¹

¹⁰Code for the Press (1-15-42), p. 1.

¹¹Ibid., p. 3.

The exclusion of weather news would, according to the Office of Censorship, deprive the enemy of the ability to forecast weather conditions in parts of the United States. Enemy naval craft operating in the Atlantic carried experienced meteorologists as senior officers. Radio broadcasts of current weather reports from as few as three well-separated Western points could effectively provide these enemy meteorologists with enough information to forecast Eastern weather conditions. For example, ". . . a few drops of rain at El Paso, high winds at Kansas City, and a snowfall in Detroit will indicate to enemy ships which parts of the [East] coast will have rough weather or fog a day or two later."¹²

But it was difficult to use this line of reasoning to justify the exclusion of weather news in newspapers. An enemy agent who read a weather forecast in a newspaper would still have to communicate this information to his comrades at sea. In the case of a weather forecast by radio the communication would be nearly instantaneous, the need for the agent eliminated, and the exclusion of the forecast justified. Censorship regulations excluding weather news in newspapers was recognized as illogical by many publishers and received, at best, half-hearted compliance.

¹²Director of the Office of Censorship, PR-36, [Press Release No. 36] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Office of Censorship, October 29, 1942), p. 6; hereafter these Censorship press releases shall be referred to as Censorship Press Release No. _____, (date).

This first press code contained a restriction against the publishing of pictures or maps that were related to those subjects excluded from publication.¹³ A general provision requested that there be no publication disclosing the location of the National Archives or the movements of the President of the United States or of military or diplomatic missions. Anytime a publisher suspected material being considered for publication he was directed to contact the Office of Censorship for clarification. Also, if a publisher doubted the authority of any official who requested the exclusion of any material being considered for publication, he was urged to contact the Office of Censorship at once.¹⁴

Following the issuance of these first two codes for the press and radio, Byron Price frequently emphasized the importance of complying with voluntary censorship. In April of 1942 Price appeared before the American Society of Newspaper Editors and made the following statement:

It is a happy circumstance that the President of the United States has put his confidence in your patriotism and your understanding, and has turned his back on those who agree that only compulsory censorship can be effective. It will be an unhappy day for all of us if it is found that that confidence was misplaced. I personally do not believe that such a day will come. Whether it does is up to you.¹⁵

¹³Code for the Press (1-15-42), p. 3.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 4.

¹⁵Quoted in Robert E. Summers (comp.), Wartime Censorship of Press and Radio (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1942), pp. 34-35.

A few weeks later Price stood before the Annual Convention of the National Association of Broadcasters and said:

. . . the success or failure of voluntary cooperation in broadcasting will depend upon the degree of control which patriotic broadcasters exercise over the operation of their stations.¹⁶

These emotional appeals, however, did not silence publishers and broadcasters. Criticism of censorship regulations and requests was frequent and often hard-hitting. Many editors felt that the government used official censorship to cover up mistakes and to mislead the American public.

War News Censored. News of the progression of the war was issued by the government and this allowed the government to issue or withhold news at its discretion. President Roosevelt, responding to a reporter's query as to whether or not the Office of Censorship should allow "bad" news to be printed in newspapers, replied:

Bad news should be passed out obviously just as much as good news, just as soon as it doesn't affect military operations. There is only one reason for withholding bad news and that is that it might affect military operations and cause more bad news¹⁷

Many editors and broadcasters charged the government with providing an inaccurate picture of the war by withholding "bad news" until it could be balanced with the simultaneous

¹⁶Censorship Press Release No. 18, May 11, 1942,
pp. 1-2.

¹⁷From Franklin D. Roosevelt, Press Conference, May 22, 1942, in Samuel I. Rosenman (comp.), The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1942 vol. (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950), p. 251.

release of "good news."¹⁸ In February of 1942 the aircraft tender Langley was sunk by Japanese dive bombers near Java with the loss of seven hundred American lives and thirty-two airplanes that were on board the ship. News of the loss was not released until April, more than thirty days after the Langley had gone down.¹⁹

Time magazine also criticized the delays in reporting war news to the American public. The Navy waited sixty-five days to announce the loss of three American cruisers -- the Quincy, the Vincennes, and the Astoria -- while the Australian Government waited only ten days to announce the loss of their cruiser, the Canberra, sunk in the same action. The U. S. losses were announced by the American Government only later with the news of the sinking of six enemy ships in another action separated by both time and space from the U. S. losses. Time stated that ". . . long delays in announcing sinkings may not have always been justified by reasons of military security . . . ," and that these delays and carefully considered joint releases of "good" and "bad" news gave the American people the wrong impression of the progress of the United States in the war.²⁰

¹⁸"Robb Criticizes Censorship," New York Times, April 18, 1942, p. 13.

¹⁹News story from "Editor and Publisher," April 25, 1942, p. 86, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., pp. 185-188; see also James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), p. 223.

²⁰"What Price Secrecy?" Time, November 9, 1942, pp. 61-62.

In some cases news of American losses was denied immediate publication even when that news was common knowledge. Hundreds of persons living on the Atlantic coast of Florida near Palm Beach ". . . heard several explosions and saw flames at sea."²¹ Quite obviously, a sea battle was in progress, later known to be between a German U-boat and Allied ships. The battle began on a Saturday evening. By the next morning people were driving from miles away to view the upturned hulks of the incapacitated ships, and reporters were waiting to interview the Allied survivors as they scrambled ashore on the Florida beaches. The Navy refused to allow Florida papers to print any news or reference to the sinkings. Not until a full week after the first ship was sunk, and only after strong protests from editors and publishers, did the Navy release a news item covering the sinkings. In another case a British steamer was sunk by a German U-boat a few miles from Puerto Rico with the loss of many American lives. Even though the survivors were seen coming ashore at Puerto Rico, and even though the Canadian press reported the sinking, the U. S. Navy refused to allow publication of the story in the American press for more than two days, and only then after pressure was brought to bear on the Navy Department.²² The Navy later apologized for the

²¹ Arthur Robb, editorial in "Editor and Publisher," March 17, 1942, p. 36, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., p. 169.

²² Editorial in "Editor and Publisher," January 31, 1942, p. 22, reprinted in ibid., pp. 174-176.

"confusion" over the incident but included this admonition in its announcement;

No newspaper or news service should publish any report or information of ships sunk or damaged by enemy action until such information has been cleared for release . . . , even though the incident may be within the view of shore observers²³

The withholding of this and similar news items was justified, according to the Office of Censorship, because publication of a ship sinking, even though it is within sight of American beaches, would assist ". . . an attacking commander . . . to gauge the effect of his fire. Enemy commanders should not be aided in this task."²⁴ But this justification was difficult to accept in the face of further censorship efforts. Even when a fire broke out on an American ship in port in New York, with smoke ". . . billowing across Manhattan, to be seen by millions, . . ."²⁵ the Navy refused to allow pictures of the fire or the damaged ship to be taken, and delayed publication of the story until New York editors and publishers raised a storm of protest.²⁶ Many persons, including some members of Congress, began publicly protesting government efforts at news suppression, and the practice of "sugar-coating" bad

²³News story in "Editor and Publisher," January 31, 1942, p. 71, reprinted in ibid., pp. 177-178.

²⁴Censorship Press Release No. 36, October 29, 1942, p. 3.

²⁵Walter E. Schneider, news story in "Editor and Publisher," February 14, 1942, p. 9, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., p. 181.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 181-182.

news.²⁷ Others expressed an opinion, widely held, that the government was providing only one side of the war news, thereby obscuring the seriousness of the war and promoting complacency while at the same time chastising the public and the news media for being complacent and apathetic.²⁸ Much of this censorship bungling could be traced directly to the over-zealous efforts of military authorities. The Office of Censorship, under the leadership of Byron Price, often denied the requests of military officials to suppress news in the domestic press.²⁹

Not all military officials attempted to impose unwarranted censorship. Some, like General Douglas MacArthur, felt that it was ". . . essential that the public know the truth."³⁰ General Dwight Eisenhower, commenting on the censorship of war news in the United States said, "I do not believe that speculation by self-styled military analysts in the homelands, far removed from a theater of operations, is of any great benefit to the enemy."³¹

²⁷ "Sugar Coating Assailed," New York Times, February 24, 1942, p. 18; see also "Taft Urges Motto 'Military Action,'" New York Times, February 13, 1942, p. 14.

²⁸ Editorial in "New York Times," May 25, 1942, p. 14, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., pp. 225-227.

²⁹ News story in "United States News," February 6, 1942, p. 17, reprinted in ibid., p. 130.

³⁰ General Douglas MacArthur, statement made on March 23, 1942, quoted in ibid., p. 41.

³¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade In Europe (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1949), p. 169.

Racial conflicts censored. Eisenhower also related that military censors in England had denied correspondents the right to publish stories of racial conflicts between white and black American soldiers.³² The English, according to the General, most often accepted American Negro soldiers as equals, and Negro soldiers often dated white English girls. This, he said, often infuriated intolerant white American soldiers, and resulted in frequent brawls. The white G.I. was ". . . further bewildered when he found that the British press took a firm stand on the side of the Negro."³³ When Eisenhower revoked the censorship ban on stories of these racial brawls he found that most American correspondents favored retention of the ban in order to protect against "domestic dissension" in the United States.

Military censors in the United States also favored banning or, when this was not possible, playing down racial conflicts at home. On April 3, 1942, a race-riot broke out at Fort Dix, New Jersey. An argument between a white and a black soldier suddenly exploded into a small-scale battle. Nearly seventy-five soldiers, using rifles and pistols, conducted their own limited war for hours, resulting in three dead and several wounded.³⁴ The Army, with support from the Office of Censorship, refused to allow publication of the

³²Ibid., p. 58.

³³Ibid., p. 59.

³⁴"Army Board Sifts Fort Dix Shooting," New York Times, April 4, 1942, p. 14.

story by radio broadcast.³⁵ Newspapers began publishing news of the incident the following day,³⁶ and the riot was soon general public knowledge.³⁷ Emphasizing that Axis propagandists capitalized upon racial difficulties in the United States,³⁸ the Army described the race-riot as ". . . merely a brawl and without racial significance."³⁹ This "brawl" that was without racial significance motivated the Army to immediately confine to quarters an all-black regiment at Fort Dix until completion of an inquiry into the disturbance. Referring to a similar black-white incident at a camp in Louisiana some months earlier, the Office of Censorship claimed that the Army had not acted without precedent when it banned radio broadcast of the Fort Dix incident.⁴⁰

Norman Carlson, former Chief Postal Censor, justified the suppression of news of racial disturbances. Publicizing these disturbances aided the enemy, he said, by providing

³⁵News story in "Broadcasting," April 13, 1942, p. 48, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., pp. 194-195.

³⁶"Army Board Sifts Fort Dix Shooting," New York Times, op. cit.

³⁷Summers, op. cit.

³⁸Ibid., p. 195.

³⁹"Army Board Sifts Fort Dix Shooting," New York Times, op. cit.

⁴⁰Summers, op. cit., pp. 194-195. For additional information on the Fort Dix riot and other incidents of racial violence during the war years, see Burns, op. cit., p. 388, and Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," The Journal of American History, LVIII (December, 1971), 661-681.

them with ammunition for their propaganda weapons. In addition to suppressing news of racial disturbances, or riots, Carlson justified Censorship's practice of deleting from citizens' mail all statements that adversely described political or social conditions in the United States during the war. Such letters were either incised or impounded.⁴¹

It would appear that the Office of Censorship during World War II concentrated on covering up the symptoms or manifestations of racial turmoil rather than attacking the causes. Attempts to cover up these incidents merely provided fuel for Axis propagandists; if the government had done something to eliminate the causes of the turmoil there could have been less concern about enemy propaganda.

That the Office of Censorship concurred in the suppression of news of racial dissension may be indicated by another case a year after the Fort Dix disturbance. In April of 1943 British correspondent Alex Faulkner, in a cable from the United States to England, referred to Erskine Caldwell's novel, God's Little Acre. The reference was promptly deleted by cable censors, evoking this question from Faulkner: "To win the war is it necessary to make the people of England think that there are no depressed economic groups and no race problems in the United States?"⁴² The answer must have been

⁴¹Based on personal interview with Norman Carlson, January 11, 1972.

⁴²Alex Faulkner, "How Tough is American Censorship?" Harpers, April, 1943, pp. 502-509; quotation on p. 502.

"Yes," for his very question was eliminated from his cable by the censors! Faulkner also reported that in February of 1943 the following anecdote was deleted by censors from a journalist's story: "Washington tells a story . . . of a clerk who substituted for his own portrait on his War Department identity badge that of Adolf Hitler, and wore it unchallenged for a week."⁴³ Faulkner apparently felt that the Office of Censorship had not lived up to Byron Price's guarantee that "Nobody shall ever be censored, or censured, for attacking a censor."⁴⁴

Storm warnings. Other directives and regulations issued by the Office of Censorship raised additional storms of protest, especially those regulations restricting the reporting of weather news by the press and radio. The Office of Censorship had requested that newspaper editors print only those weather forecasts officially released by the Weather Bureau.⁴⁵ Even more restrictive was the request that radio stations carry no weather forecasts at all, except in cases of emergency.⁴⁶ Thus, if it was snowing outside, the local radio station would have to disregard it entirely, while local papers could report the snow only after receiving permission from the Weather Bureau or the Office of Censorship.

⁴³Ibid., p. 504.

⁴⁴Byron Price, quoted in ibid.

⁴⁵Code for the Press (1-15-42), p. 3.

⁴⁶Code for Broadcasters (1-15-42), p. 2.

These restrictions led to some rather ludicrous situations. On Easter Sunday in 1942 a serious snowstorm blanketed much of the Eastern United States. The snowfall in New York was heavy, but in Washington, D.C. it was even heavier. The New York Times published a story of a huge traffic tie-up in Washington due to the snowstorm there. Censorship regulations restricted weather news in any one paper to a radius of one hundred fifty miles of the city in which the paper was published.⁴⁷ Therefore, because the New York Times had printed a story related to the snowfall in Washington, D.C., it could not on the same day print any news about the snowfall in its own city. Some newspapers, with the approval of the Office of Censorship, published pictures of the snowfall without an explanatory by-line. Newspaper editors were even advised by Censorship officials not to print the traditional "groundhog" predictions of the coming of spring. One radio sportscaster, doing his best to abide by censorship regulations, announced, during a late autumn football game, that he could not see the players on the field. He judiciously withheld the reason and his listeners had to determine for themselves if it was rain, snow, or fog that was covering the playing field.⁴⁸ In March of 1942 the Office of Censorship withheld, for a number of hours, news of a serious tornado which

⁴⁷Code for the Press, (1-15-42), p. 3.

⁴⁸For weather stories see Theodore Koop, Weapon of Silence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), pp. 107-108.

extended over three southern states and claimed 125 lives.⁴⁹
 In some cases if a radio station located two hundred miles from the center of a storm received permission to report news of that storm, then the local radio station at the storm center could not report the storm to its listeners.⁵⁰ The reason given for these restrictions was to deny aid and comfort to the enemy, but there were those who felt that the phrase was being given ". . . an exaggerated meaning to hide incompetence."⁵¹

The phrase "aid and comfort" was used frequently to suppress news articles. One issue of Time required modification at the request of the Office of Censorship because it carried a story of the treatment of dysentery by a sulfa drug.⁵² The story was eliminated because the Office of Censorship felt it would give aid and comfort to the enemy.⁵³ Censorship was going to get worse before it got better.

Total war: the "Official Secrets Bill." There were those persons, including journalists, who supported even

⁴⁹News story in "Variety," March 25, 1942, p. 25, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., pp. 197-199.

⁵⁰News story in "Variety," May 20, 1942, p. 37, reprinted in ibid., p. 199.

⁵¹Editorial by David Lawrence in "United States News," March 13, 1942, pp. 22-3, reprinted in ibid., pp. 215-216.

⁵²"Another Sulfa Drug," Time, May 4, 1942, p. 32; the story was eliminated from export editions of this issue.

⁵³"Time, Inc." (house organ), May 18, 1942, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., pp. 216-219.

stricter censorship, in peace as well as in war.⁵⁴ Noted journalist and writer William L. Shirer advocated the suppression of the American fascist press because he felt its philosophy was a hazard to freedom.⁵⁵ The Director of the Office of Facts and Figures, Archibald MacLeish, criticized a "minority" of newspaper editors for their "defeatist" attitudes toward the war policies of the administration.⁵⁶ He said that the fascist press, and others, engaged in "defeatist propaganda" rather than "democratic criticism."⁵⁷ "Fascist" and "defeatist" were phrases frequently used during the war to describe newspapers, magazines -- and people -- that were critical of the Roosevelt administrations.

In April of 1941 President Roosevelt offered this public statement concerning censorship:

Suppression of opinion and censorship of news are among the mortal weapons that dictatorships direct against their own people and against the world. As far as I am concerned there will be no government control of news unless it be of vital military information.⁵⁸

Roosevelt's public statements, however, were not always the same as his private ones. In a private letter to Winston

⁵⁴Report on the Office of Censorship, pp. 32-33.

⁵⁵William Shirer, "Poison Pen," Atlantic, May, 1942, pp. 548-552; an opposing view is D. Pontius, "Freedom for the fascist press?" New Republic, September 7, 1942, p. 287.

⁵⁶"Defeatist Press," New York Times, April 18, 1942, p. 13.

⁵⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸Quoted in Koop, op. cit., p. 163.

Churchill a year later he said that ". . . that delightful god . . . the freedom of the Press . . . ," did not always make him happy.⁵⁹ He told Churchill he felt he was being ". . . menaced by . . . so-called interpretive comment by a handful or two of gentlemen who cannot get politics out of their heads in the worst crisis, who have little background and less knowledge, and who undertake to lead public opinion on that basis." The President was understandably concerned with the war and the ever-changeable world situation, and he complained that "My own press -- the worst of it -- are persistently magnifying relatively unimportant domestic matters" ⁶⁰

Perhaps Roosevelt's sentiments were best expressed early in 1942 when an administration-backed "War Secrets Bill" was presented to Congress. The bill was prepared in the Department of Justice and introduced by Democratic Representative Hatton W. Summers of Texas.⁶¹ The proposed bill would have made it a criminal offense to ". . . communicate, divulge or publish to any person, in whole or in part, copies of the contents, substance, purport, effect, or meaning of any file, instrument, letter, memorandum, book, pamphlet,

⁵⁹ Quoted in "Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, Vol. IV, The Hinge of Fate (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), p. 200.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Byron Price to writer, December 20, 1971; see also David Hinshaw, The Home Front (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1943), p. 133.

paper, document, manuscript, map, picture, plan, record or other writing . . ." declared secret or confidential by any department of the government.⁶²

The attempt by the administration, through Attorney General Francis Biddle, to push through this bill elicited immediate and heated protest from the press. The War Secrets Bill was felt by many to be an effort to suppress any information that any government official considered confidential. A war measure aimed at spies, the bill was, nevertheless, in permanent form. Hatton Summers, then Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee said, when he introduced the bill,

I want to protect essential secrets from being disclosed to the enemy, but I want also to protect the people of this democracy in the opportunity to know the things they ought to know in order to govern it.⁶³

Some felt the administration was trying to shift to compulsory and unlimited (either in scope or time) censorship. One news magazine cautioned that the bill would protect the military from civilian advice, supervision, and criticism. "This is censorship at the source," said the article. "It means that part of the truth is withheld."⁶⁴ One paper called the proposed bill "Gestapo legislation."⁶⁵ Another

⁶²"Gag Bill," Time, March 2, 1942, pp. 38-39.

⁶³Quoted in Hinshaw, op. cit.

⁶⁴"Threat to Freedom of Press?" United States News, March 6, 1942, pp. 13-14.

⁶⁵"Official Secrets Bill: Widespread Press Opposition," United States News, March 6, 1942, p. 21.

said the bill ". . . would give every bureau and bureaucrat in Washington blanket authority to conceal from the public any bit of information it or he deemed it inexpedient for the public to have." "It would permit the Executive Department to suppress public controversy about its acts."⁶⁶ Attorney General Biddle sought a formal opinion from Byron Price. The Director of the Office of Censorship replied that he did not like the wording of the bill, which, he felt, was aimed partly at publication. He felt the bill amounted to compulsory censorship and an end to voluntary censorship.⁶⁷ Price wrote Biddle that ". . . passage of the bill in its present form would not be in the national interest."⁶⁸ The Director of Censorship must have let his sentiments be known because Time reported that Price ". . . to his credit . . . liked the bill as little as anybody."⁶⁹

After scathing criticism by the press the Administration disavowed its support -- even its knowledge -- of the bill.⁷⁰ The "Official Secrets Bill," or "War Secrets Bill," as it was variously called, ". . . was allowed to die peacefully in committee."⁷¹

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Byron Price to writer, December 20, 1971.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹"Gag Bill," Time, March 2, 1942, p. 38.

⁷⁰"Official Secrets Bill: Widespread Press Opposition," United States News, March 6, 1942, p. 21.

⁷¹Byron Price to writer, December 20, 1971.

Limited war: administrative censorship. If the Administration could not legislate compulsory censorship,⁷² it could suppress criticism and unpopular opinions by other legal means. Byron Price, in his capacity as Director of the Office of Censorship, stated that his office would not attempt to censor the government.⁷³ Under the concept of "appropriate authority" any government official could release information without first consulting the Office of Censorship. This concept of "appropriate authority" also applied to members of Congress. Congressmen and Senators, when speaking on the floor of either chamber, were immune from censorship regulations and their remarks were printed regularly in the Congressional Record. The solons did not always limit their remarks to the floor of Congress, however. In fact, they spoke so freely, and in what many felt to be in violation of censorship regulations, that they became known as the "531 holes in Byron's Code."⁷⁴

Although the Office of Censorship did not propose to censor the government, the government intended to censor itself. Before the war many Federal agencies provided printed information as a service to any and all who requested that information. In June, 1942, President Roosevelt issued

⁷²It should be remembered that the Office of Censorship did not have the power of legislation, but functioned by Executive Order.

⁷³Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 32.

⁷⁴Robert Humphreys, "How Your News is Censored," Saturday Evening Post, September 26, 1942, p. 114.

an Executive Order that authorized the Office of War Information⁷⁵ ". . . to require the curtailment or elimination of any Federal information service, program, or release . . . not directly related to the prosecution of the war effort."⁷⁶ By October of 1942 the Office of War Information had withdrawn from or drastically reduced the circulation of more than five hundred government publications, which represented a previous circulation of more than 1,100,000.⁷⁷ Elmer Davis, then Director of the Office of War Information, said that his office did not want to censor any government official. But the wording of Davis's statement certainly gives some indication of how the Administration felt about federal officials talking to reporters:

If some official disagrees with a policy that has been agreed on and adopted, there is nothing to prevent him from expressing such disagreement to reporters -- nothing except his judgment and sense of propriety.⁷⁸

There was ". . . no law requiring compliance with the requests of the Office of Censorship, and there [was] no

⁷⁵Established by Executive Order 9182 on June 13, 1942, the Office of War Information consolidated and replaced the Office of Facts and Figures, the Office of Government Reports, the Coordinator of Information, and the Division of the Emergency Management Office (7FR4468-69).

⁷⁶Elmer Davis and Byron Price, War Information and Censorship (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Public Affairs, [1943]), p. 17.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 25.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 24.

penalty for violations"79 However, when an editor or broadcaster refused to heed the requests of the Office of Censorship, that editor or broadcaster might receive a letter from the Office of Censorship calling attention to his "error." A flagrant violation of censorship regulations or requests might elicit a public statement from the Office of Censorship naming the radio station or newspaper in violation. An editor or broadcaster who persisted in violating voluntary censorship guidelines could be prosecuted under the Espionage Act of 1917 or the Trading with the Enemy Act of 1918.

The Federal Government could rely on various ways for punishing editors who disregarded the requests of the voluntary codes. Washington correspondents might have their welcome withdrawn at official press conferences, or receive a cold shoulder when they sought official information. Government agencies could "neglect" to send press releases to certain publications, or even resort to public condemnation of a paper defying the code. Wide publicity of such public condemnation would not set well with competitors, advertisers, or readers.⁸⁰ Finally, there was one other threatening aspect always held in abeyance -- compulsory censorship if voluntary censorship proved ineffective.⁸¹

⁷⁹Censorship Press Release No. 43, March 20, 1943, p. 2.

⁸⁰Zechariah Chafee, Jr., Government and Mass Communications, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 459.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 460.

The government could also use its own departments to punish those who opposed administration policies. The most favored method was to instruct the Post Office Department to suspend the mailing privileges of uncooperative publications. In regards to radio stations, ". . . the Federal Communications Commission had the power of license" ⁸² John Fetzner, formerly Chief Radio Censor in the Office of Censorship, stated that he did ". . . not recall that any station was removed from the air" ⁸³ Byron Price, however, admitted that a "couple of broadcasters" were removed from the air for ". . . openly spreading subversion" ⁸⁴ Koop reported that in two cases Price contacted radio station managers and requested that certain foreign-language broadcasters, one German and one Italian, be removed from the air for questionable activities; the request was complied with. ⁸⁵

A case of social justice. The government was most active when silencing critical newspapers or writers. One free-lance writer was convicted of violating the Espionage Act of 1917 for his written attacks on President Roosevelt, the English, and the Jews, and for advocating a German victory in World War II. ⁸⁶ There were a number of similar

⁸² Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

⁸³ John Fetzner to writer, November 18, 1971.

⁸⁴ Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

⁸⁵ Koop, op. cit., p. 184.

⁸⁶ Chafee, op. cit., pp. 450-451.

cases.⁸⁷ Very early in the war the Post Office delayed an entire issue of the Townsend National Weekly because of an anti-government editorial.⁸⁸

The most notable instance of official suppression of editorial opinion occurred in early 1942 when the Federal Government, through the Post Office and Justice Departments, cracked down upon the newspaper Social Justice. Social Justice, a weekly newspaper, first appeared on March 13, 1936. It was utilized by Father Charles Coughlin, the "radio priest," for his anti-government campaigns. Severely anti-Roosevelt, Social Justice, in its October 21, 1940 issue, advocated the impeachment of the President because of his transfer of military aircraft to Great Britain, and because of his friendship toward Russia.⁸⁹ Coughlin, an Irish Catholic priest, had little love for the British, and accused Roosevelt of ". . . loving Great Britain more than the United States."⁹⁰

In March of 1941 the Army banned Social Justice from its military posts. The Army offered no official explanation for its action. Social Justice, in its Anglophobic and anti-Semitic wrath, responded by saying Americans were becoming

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 450, n. 15.

⁸⁸Editorial in "Editor and Publisher," January 24, 1942, p. 26, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., p. 164.

⁸⁹Charles J. Tull, Father Coughlin and the New Deal (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1965), p. 225.

⁹⁰Quoted in ibid., p. 226.

". . . a mesmerized people -- mesmerized by British gold and Jewish propaganda."⁹¹

Social Justice characterized Roosevelt as a radical, a crack-pot, and an un-American dictator. The anti-Semitic nature of Social Justice was certainly not disguised. In September of 1941 the paper showed its racial hatred when it commented on what it felt to be the large number of pro-war Jews in the Roosevelt Administration:

The Jew should retire from the field of politics and government. He has no more business in that sphere than has a pig in a china shop.⁹²

Social Justice blamed Roosevelt for the Pearl Harbor attack even more than it blamed Japan, and in March of 1942 the paper accused the Jews of starting World War II.⁹³

President Roosevelt read Social Justice with mounting irritation. He often sent samples of the paper to Attorney General Francis Biddle with comments like, "What are you doing to stop this?"⁹⁴ In April of 1942 Biddle, at the urging of the President, began the crack-down on Social Justice. Biddle first directed Postmaster General Frank Walker to "suspend or revoke" the second-class mailing privileges of the paper under the authority of the Espionage Act of 1917. The Attorney general then sent an emissary to

⁹¹Quoted in ibid., p. 228.

⁹²Ibid., p. 229.

⁹³Ibid., pp. 230-233.

⁹⁴Quoted in ibid., p. 234.

Archbishop Mooney of Detroit, who ordered Father Coughlin to divorce himself from all relationship to Social Justice, and to ". . . cease all public pronouncements for the duration of the war under penalty of defrockment." Father Coughlin complied completely, choosing the priesthood over a secular career.⁹⁵

Roosevelt was "delighted" with the way Biddle had handled the affair.⁹⁶ But this did not stop postal authorities from continuing the crack-down until Social Justice, its mailing privileges revoked, its public sale and distribution denied, and its owners threatened with prosecution for sedition, folded, never to be printed again.⁹⁷ Three other publications were subsequently denied mailing privileges for criticizing the administration, aligning themselves with Axis opinion, criticizing Great Britain, creating racial hatred, or reprinting articles from Social Justice.⁹⁸

According to New Republic, by October of 1942 nearly forty magazines had their mailing privileges revoked by the Post Office Department.⁹⁹ One New York newspaper which contained racing information (which the government felt could be

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 234-235.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 236.

⁹⁷Chafee, op. cit., p. 320.

⁹⁸News story in "Editor and Publisher," May 9, 1942, p. 6, reprinted in Summers, op. cit., pp. 165-166. These three publications were the (Philadelphia) Herold, the (Muncie) X-Ray, and the (Wichita) Publicity.

⁹⁹Chafee, op. cit.

an open code) was taken off the streets on the advice of the Office of Censorship.

No evidence is yet available that would indicate the total number of publications that were suppressed by the government during the war. The reference above says there were forty such incidents before the war was a year old. Byron Price said he would not have thought there had been that many.¹⁰⁰ Probably the majority of these suppressions was handled by the Post Office Department under its regulations against the mailing of seditious material. "In some cases Censorship was consulted, in others it was not."¹⁰¹ Byron Price said that the Office of Censorship ". . . never interfered in any manner with editorial opinion and it was a cardinal policy never to take notice of criticism of the government."¹⁰²

The Molotov story. As explained above, one of the ways in which the Office of Censorship could punish a paper for non-compliance with censorship requests was to publicly identify and criticize that paper for its disobedience.

In late May of 1942 the Office of Censorship was informed that Russian Foreign Commissar V. M. Molotov would soon visit the United States. The State Department wanted to insure that there would be no advance reporting of this

¹⁰⁰ Byron Price to writer, December 20, 1971.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

diplomatic visit. The Office of Censorship assured the State Department that the censorship codes requested that editors and broadcasters withhold news of any diplomatic mission until specific permission to publish such information was received from appropriate authority.¹⁰³

The Office of Censorship notified editors and broadcasters that a "Russian Diplomat" would visit the United States very soon, and they were to refrain from mentioning this upcoming visit.¹⁰⁴ All radio stations and newspapers complied with this request -- except one. During Molotov's visit to the United States¹⁰⁵ the Philadelphia Daily News printed, ". . . in a chatty column on page 12 . . .,"¹⁰⁶ a single sentence which read:

The talk in official Russian circles here is that V. M. Molotov of Soviet Russia is in this country on a secret mission of vast importance.¹⁰⁷

The revealed item went largely unnoticed and Molotov ended his "secret" twelve-day visit on June 11, 1942. On June 12 Byron Price released a report of the visit to the radio and the press. In this release he congratulated the cooperative

¹⁰³Code for Broadcasters (1-15-42), p. 4; see also Code for the Press (1-15-42), p. 4.

¹⁰⁴Koop, op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁰⁵Molotov arrived at the White House on May 29; see Burns, op. cit., p. 232.

¹⁰⁶Koop, op. cit.

¹⁰⁷Quoted in "What Sense Censorship?" Time, June 22, 1942, pp. 58-60; quotation on p. 60.

media for withholding news of Molotov's visit. The Philadelphia Daily News was not going to be ignored, however, and Price concluded his press release with this paragraph:

The one newspaper in which the story was published was the Philadelphia Daily News [sic]. The publisher of the Daily News [sic] has assured us that the Code was not violated intentionally, but so far he has made no satisfactory explanation of the manner in which the error occurred.¹⁰⁸

By publicly naming the paper that "violated" the code, Price tried to bring odium upon the Philadelphia Daily News as punishment.

But this publisher's "error" had not received national coverage and, as it turned out, the Office of Censorship had little cause to worry about the indiscretion of the paper. At the same time that Molotov was visiting the White House the Duke and Duchess of Windsor dropped in for a visit with the President. Time magazine reported that ". . . while photographers waited at the White House to catch the Duke and Duchess, . . . Molotov strolled slowly past them and not a camera clicked."¹⁰⁹ This Time article went further and criticized the press blackout of the Molotov visit. The blackout was, said Time, made at the request of the Russian Government in order to keep secret from the American people the fact an agreement between the U. S. and the U. S. S. R. was pending.

¹⁰⁸Censorship Press Release No. 23, June 12, 1942.

¹⁰⁹"What Sense Censorship?" Time, June 22, 1942, p. 60.

This, said Time, ". . . was a case of political, not military, censorship."¹¹⁰ Time thus dulled the edge of Censorship's blade in this battle of the war on words.

Reinforcements: The Revised Codes

On June 15, 1942 the voluntary censorship codes for the press and radio were revised and reissued.¹¹¹ These new editions were expanded and revised to meet the needs of censorship that had arisen since the first codes had been issued in January. Most sections of the new codes were strengthened or made more restrictive.

In the Code for Broadcasters the restrictions on weather data were made almost all-inclusive. Radio stations were requested to keep off the air "all weather data, either forecasts, summaries, recapitulations, or any details of weather conditions."¹¹² The only exceptions involved emergency announcements, such as floods, but even these emergency announcements could ". . . contain no reference to weather conditions."¹¹³ Byron Price, anticipating evasion of

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters, Edition of June 15, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942; hereafter referred to as Code for Broadcasters (6-15-42); see also U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, Edition of June 15, 1942 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1942; hereafter referred to as Code for the Press (6-15-42).

¹¹² Code for Broadcasters (6-15-42), p. 2.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 3.

these rules, said that these weather restrictions also applied to the "wisecracking announcer" who says, on a rainy morning, "Where is that record 'Get Out Your Old Umbrella.'" This revelation, according to Price, constituted a "dangerous disclosure."¹¹⁴

Other sections covering troops, ships, fortifications, industrial production, communications, and unconfirmed reports or rumors were restated and clarified. This new edition of the radio code included a newly expanded section covering restrictions on radio coverage of air attacks on the United States.¹¹⁵ Before an air raid began broadcasters (and publishers) were asked to give no warning of the impending raid unless authorized by the Army Defense Command. After a raid began broadcasters (and publishers) were asked to give no information beyond the bare fact that a raid had begun and that local defense forces had gone into action. After a raid was over broadcasters (and publishers) could release stories about the raid if they did not include

- (1) horror or sensationalism,
- (2) unconfirmed versions or reports,
- (3) any estimate of the number of planes involved or the number of bombs dropped,
- (4) reference to damage,

¹¹⁴Censorship Press Release No. 46, April 28, 1943,
p. 2.

¹¹⁵Code for Broadcasters (6-15-42), p. 4. These same restrictions were restated in the Code for the Press (6-15-42), p. 3.

- (5) information as to the exact routes
taken by enemy planes, or
- (6) counter-measures of defense.¹¹⁶

The caveat concludes that "Nothing in this request is intended to prevent or curtail constructive reporting . . . of such matters as feats of heroism, incidents of personal courage, or response to duty by the military or civilian defense workers."¹¹⁷ Any reporter trying to describe an air attack under these restrictions would be putting his journalistic ability to the acid test. Broadcasters were to give no information, even after an attack, concerning damage, the area attacked, or the number of planes involved. One editor asked if the enemy would not know how many planes it had sent!¹¹⁸ Concerning the restriction against describing the routes of planes in the attack, Price suggested that something similar to "over the Los Angeles area" be used.¹¹⁹ All radio stations in the area of the attack would ". . . operate or not operate at the direction of the Army Defense Command."¹²⁰ Apparently the Army would be in the best position to determine what information would or would not aid the enemy in the event of an air attack. According to Byron

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid.

¹¹⁸Koop, op. cit., p. 198.

¹¹⁹Censorship Press Release No. 8, February 25, 1942.

¹²⁰Censorship Press Release No. 19, May 13, 1942,

Price, "It could even be argued with force that the broadcasting of time signals might give information to the enemy. All his clocks and watches might have stopped!"¹²¹

Balloons and bombs. The air attacks provided for in this edition of the codes never came. But there were attacks on the continental United States, both by sea and by air. The first of these attacks came on February 22, 1942, when a Japanese submarine surfaced off the coast of Santa Barbara, California, and shelled a ranch, with no casualties and little damage.¹²²

In late 1944 the Japanese began launching bomb-carrying paper balloons towards the United States. These balloons, about thirty feet in diameter and carrying a thirty pound explosive device, were launched from Japan to ride on natural air currents to the United States where the changes in air temperature and current over land would allow the balloons, with their small bombs attached, to descend. The first of these floating bombs was found at San Pedro, California on November 11, 1944.¹²³ Other bomb-laden balloons were found in Montana, Canada, Wyoming, Washington, Oregon,

¹²¹Censorship Press Release No. 18, May 11, 1942.

¹²²Burns, op. cit., p. 213. Koop says the date was February 23, and that the shells hit an oil field; see Koop, op. cit., p. 196.

¹²³Koop, op. cit., pp. 198-199; see also Richard R. Lingeman, Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1970), pp. 54-55.

and as far East as Michigan.¹²⁴ In each discovery the government, either through the F. B. I., the Office of Censorship, or through military authorities, tried to suppress news of these balloon-bomb landings. Some newspapers serving areas where balloon-bombs were discovered, however, were able to print some short-lived stories of the bombs, which caused some short-lived excitement. Byron Price subsequently designated the War Department as appropriate authority for the release of information of these "enemy attacks." The Office of Censorship requested that editors and publishers not aid the enemy by printing news stories about the balloons.

On May 5, 1945, a group of Sunday School children on a church picnic in Oregon found a "white object" on the ground. One of the children picked up the object and it exploded. Five children and one adult woman were killed. The "white object" turned out to be one of the bombs carried by a Japanese balloon. The news of these deaths, the only ones ever reported resulting from these bomb-laden balloons, spread rapidly among Oregonians. The press clamored for permission to release the story. A consultation between Censorship and military authorities determined that release of the story would cause panic in the United States, and give aid and information to Japan, possibly bringing more balloons. The media were directed to withhold all reference to bombs, balloons, Japan, or military interest in the Oregon deaths,

¹²⁴ At least one of these balloons may have drifted as far East as Maryland; see Lingeman, op. cit., p. 54.

which were then reported as caused by an ". . . explosion from an undetermined cause"125

However, Oregon officials and others warned that school children would soon be going into the woods as summer was rapidly approaching. Something had to be done to protect these children. The Army decided that it would begin an educational campaign in the schools West of the Mississippi. Very soon primary school children were admonished not to go near any unusual objects in the woods or on the beaches, and not to touch any white or brightly colored "balloons" they might find. This program created much confusion and some panic. Many parents wanted to know what their children were being warned about. And the newspapers wanted to know why they could not print information that thirty million school children were in possession of. As a result of this confusion, the press and radio were allowed to print or broadcast information concerning the balloons from Japan as long as they withheld strategic information concerning injuries, location of explosions, and frequency of balloon landings.¹²⁶

With the end of the war the radio and press were allowed to offer detailed stories about the Japanese balloon-bombs. Military authorities tried, unsuccessfully, to continue the news blackout on the balloons.¹²⁷ But they could

¹²⁵Koop, op. cit., p. 201.

¹²⁶Ibid., p. 200.

¹²⁷Ibid., pp. 203-204.

not show that this information was still dangerous. Intelligence information obtained after the war revealed that the Japanese launched approximately ten thousand of these bomb-laden balloons at a cost of more than \$1,000,000. Fewer than ten percent of the balloons launched landed on the United States.¹²⁸ Byron Price, to his credit, was able to mediate the justifiable desires of broadcasters and publishers with the (sometimes) justifiable demands of the Army.

The diplomatic blackout. The code revisions of June 15, 1942, carried a new restriction on the "Premature disclosure of diplomatic negotiations or conversations."¹²⁹ This single-sentence revision of the codes brought widespread and immediate criticism from the press. When these complaints were raised the press code was amended to apply ". . . only to exchanges relating to the war" ¹³⁰ But even with this amendment many felt that censorship of diplomatic negotiations could be utilized to cover an almost unlimited field. Political censorship was not going to be taken lightly by the American press. The Federal Government retained sole authority in deciding which diplomatic exchanges were "war related." New Republic reported that the State Department had induced the Office of Censorship to

¹²⁸ Ibid., p. 204; see also Knight, op. cit., p. 83. Cost supplied by Byron Price to writer, December 20, 1971.

¹²⁹ Code for Broadcasters (6-15-42), p. 6, and Code for the Press (6-15-42), p. 6.

¹³⁰ Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

forbid public discussion of pending diplomatic relations.¹³¹

Diplomatic negotiations and the movements of the President of the United States were necessarily related. Roosevelt and many other government officials requested that news of their travels be withheld by the press and radio. In January of 1943 President Roosevelt prepared to travel to Casablanca for his now famous meeting with Winston Churchill. Many members of the press and radio knew of this impending visit but complied with requests from the Office of Censorship that this news be withheld until officially released by appropriate authority.

News of the President's domestic travels was also blacked out until after they had occurred. Not all editors approved of this practice, however. It was an odd situation for thousands of persons to see the President in their city and still deprive the local papers the right to mention it at all until they received permission. Even when the press cooperated, its representatives became angry when censorship regulations denied them the right to print a story in which they saw no danger. A situation like that occurred during Roosevelt's trip to Cairo in November of 1943. While the President was still in Cairo, the German radio network announced not only that he was there, but also that he would soon leave for Iran and a meeting with Stalin. American pub-

¹³¹"Bureaucratic Censorship," New Republic, October 26, 1942, pp. 531-532.

¹³²Koop, op. cit., p. 222.

lishers immediately requested permission to publish this news on November 30, a few hours before the Office of Censorship planned to release the information, and a few minutes after Germany already had. The Office of Censorship and the White House refused to release the information and American publishers were scooped by the German radio network.¹³³ Perhaps someone felt that premature release in the United States of the German radio announcement would give "aid and comfort" to the enemy!

Election year, 1944, proved to be particularly difficult for the Office of Censorship and for the American press. The President's political speaking trips received prior censorship. When Democratic workers in Chicago began distributing tickets to a speech by the President in that city, local Chicago papers requested permission to publish what everyone knew -- that the President would make a speech in Chicago. The Office of Censorship grudgingly relented -- partly. The papers were told they could say that it was "hoped" the President would speak in Chicago on a particular day!¹³⁴ On January 19, 1945, just one day before Roosevelt's fourth inauguration, the Office of Censorship tightened its restrictions on the publication of news about the Chief Executive's future meetings with Allied leaders. Broadcasters and editors were requested ". . . not to publish or

¹³³Ibid., pp. 226-227.

¹³⁴Ibid., p. 229.

broadcast any information or guesses . . ." concerning these future meetings.¹³⁵

Some members of the American press felt they were being scooped by European newspapers. While the loyal American press felt compelled to comply with censorship requests to suppress news of the President's whereabouts, the European press acted under no such restraints. Journalist Westbrook Pegler, angered by the restrictions and the European scoops, announced that he would definitely publish advance information of the President's next domestic trip, ". . . in defiance of the censorship which has no legal support."¹³⁶ Byron Price went immediately to Pegler's employer, King Features, and cautioned -- or warned -- that widespread defiance of voluntary censorship requests would inevitably lead to compulsory censorship. Pegler failed to report on the President's future domestic travels.¹³⁷

The State Department, although it denied such allegations, continued its manipulation of diplomatic news until the end of the war. Correspondent's stories dealing with diplomatic negotiations or with countries involved in diplomatic negotiations with the United States were carefully read by the State department. One war correspondent complained that ". . . despite [Secretary of State Hull's] protestations

¹³⁵Ibid.

¹³⁶Ibid., pp. 231-232.

¹³⁷Ibid., p. 232.

that his department imposed no political censorship, it has . . . specifically requested the Pentagon people to deliver up to it any dispatches by returning war correspondents which dealt with China."¹³⁸

On April 5, 1945 Russia denounced its non-aggression pact with Japan. Many editors felt the Russian action was a prelude to a declaration of war on Japan by the Soviet Union. Many believed this, but few could say so publicly, because the Office of Censorship ordered a ban on discussion of the subject in the American press. While the European press was allowed to export its newspapers to the United States with editorials speculating on the Russo-Japanese situation, American editors were prohibited even the right to reprint these imported editorials. Therefore, if one was to read the London Times in Washington he would learn of the diplomatic speculation, if he read the Washington Post in London, he would not. The Washington Post editorialized:

Well, as we were saying, Mr. Price, the Far Eastern situation is fraught with interest and, uh . . . eh . . . pregnant with possibilities and, so far as the home front is concerned, its the very devil of a job to publish a newspaper in the face of censorship inanities.¹³⁹

Byron Price said that speculation by the American press on the Russo-Japanese situation ". . . could possibly lead to a

¹³⁸Eric Sevareid, "Censorship in the Saddle," Nation, April 14, 1945, p. 416.

¹³⁹Quoted in "Well Uh, Mr. Price," Newsweek, April 16, 1945, pp. 84-85.

Japanese attack on Soviet Russia [and the] sacrifice of American lives"¹⁴⁰ The Office of Censorship was obviously acting under instructions from the State Department. Most persons could guess that when Germany was beaten Russia would then declare war on Japan. But what many persons did not know was that the United States, Great Britain, and Russia would meet soon in Germany.¹⁴¹ The Office of Censorship ban on speculation, at the behest of the Department of State, was issued in an effort to protect against premature disclosure of this meeting.

Just before the Allied invasion of Europe the Office of Censorship assumed a different position in regards to speculation by the press. The rationale in this case was that neither the people nor the press knew the exact place or time of the invasion, but everyone, including Germany, knew an invasion was forthcoming. A ban on invasion speculation could have been a dangerous strategy. A virtual blackout of speculation might have enabled Germany to more accurately predict the invasion date.¹⁴²

So the diplomatic blackout, which included news of the President's travels, was, according to the Office of Censorship and the State Department, designed to protect the Allied war effort. It also, if not be design, then by

¹⁴⁰Quoted in ibid.

¹⁴¹The Potsdam Conference.

¹⁴²Koop, op. cit., pp. 236-237.

circumstance, deprived the American people of important news of the Allied war effort, the release of which many editors felt would not have hindered that effort.

Further Revisions and Military Maneuvers

On February 1, 1943 the voluntary codes for the press and radio were revised and reissued for the second time. Each of these new codes carried a "Special Note" to editors and broadcasters which stated:

You are reminded that whenever anyone else, in any part of the country, makes a request which appears unreasonable or out of harmony with the Code, you are at liberty to appeal at once to the Office of Censorship. Much confusion would be avoided if such appeals were more frequent.¹⁴³

This note was apparently included because of the efforts of military censors, which often conflicted with policies and decisions of the Office of Censorship. An important addition to these codes was directly related to the conflict between journalists and military censors. A journalist would, in return for permission to tour militarily restricted areas, agree, in writing, to submit his material to military censors before publication. The codes cautioned that in these cases

¹⁴³U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters, Edition of February 1, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1943); "Special Note" carried on unnumbered page preceding page 1 (hereafter referred to as Code for Broadcasters (2-1-43)); see also U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, Edition of February 1, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1943); "Special Note" on p. ii (hereafter referred to as Code for the Press (2-1-43)).

where journalists had made a written agreement with military authorities, those military authorities retained censorship control from which there could be no appeal to the Office of Censorship.¹⁴⁴

Byron Price, guided by the principles of voluntary censorship rather than military desires, adopted a British tenet of censorship that said, "What does not concern the war does not concern Censorship."¹⁴⁵ But military authorities acted as though anything that happened in a country at war necessarily concerned the war and was therefore subject to military censorship. The Office of Censorship often had to compromise its principles in the face of government-supported military censorship. At one time the Office of Censorship, apparently acting at the request of military authorities working through the administration, required that all stories about Alaska destined for publication in the United States had to first be cleared by its office. The government required prior submission of all news stories from Alaska because of Japanese military activity in the Aleutian Islands. Time took the Office of Censorship and the government to task for this blanket censorship. The magazine pointed out that the "blue-penciling" of such stories, rather than depriving the enemy of information (the Japanese apparently knew where they were), successfully kept important news out of print in

¹⁴⁴ Code for Broadcasters (2-1-43), p. 4; see also Code for the Press (2-1-43), p. 4.

¹⁴⁵ Koop, op. cit., p. 21.

the United States.¹⁴⁶

This was not the only time the government was charged with holding back information on the grounds it would help the enemy when in reality it did so to keep information from the American public. Journalist Arthur Krock was sharply critical of military authorities who, with government consent, withheld the news that U. S. forces were blockaded on Bataan by the Japanese. He said that editors -- and the Japanese -- knew of the blockade, but the American people did not, because the press was not allowed to tell them.¹⁴⁷ In a similar case Tokyo Radio broadcast that the Japanese had captured four flyers from General Doolittle's raiders, but the United States Government waited six months before releasing the same information.¹⁴⁸ The United States Government's delay in this instance succeeded only in keeping the information from the American people.

In 1943 the U. S. Navy impounded the manuscripts and proofs of four new books on the submarine service. The books, which had been cleared by the Office of Censorship, were designed to draw men into the short-handed submarine service. The Navy decided the books contained information important to the enemy, even though the publisher pointed out that the

¹⁴⁶"What Sense Censorship?" Time, June 22, 1942, pp. 58-60.

¹⁴⁷Arthur Krock, "Why Our Newspapers Can't Tell the Truth," Readers Digest, November, 1942, pp. 75-76.

¹⁴⁸"What Price Secrecy?" Time, November 9, 1942, pp. 61-62.

same information was carried in national daily newspapers without official objection.¹⁴⁹

Blanket censorship by the government and military authorities became increasingly bold in 1943. At the first important conference of the United Nations held on American soil,¹⁵⁰ soldiers carrying rifles with fixed bayonets barred the press from the proceedings.¹⁵¹

Bernard DeVoto, a frequent administration critic, excoriated the government for withholding and delaying news of the war. He charged that ". . . nine months after the raid on Tokyo¹⁵² we still have not been told the story. Valuable information might be given the enemy if we are told?"¹⁵³ The government felt it would deprive the enemy of valuable information by withholding details of the air raids. But there were probably few Japanese in Tokyo who did not

¹⁴⁹"Censorship: Silenced Service," Time, August 23, 1943, pp. 56-57.

¹⁵⁰The U. N. Conference on Food and Agriculture, held at Hot Springs, Virginia, May 18 to June 3, 1943; see Richard B. Morris (ed.), Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1965), p. 388.

¹⁵¹"Is Policy of Suppressing the News Gaining Top Hand in Washington?" Newsweek, February 19, 1945, pp. 40-42.

¹⁵²General Doolittle's first air raid on Tokyo was on April 18, 1942. Miscalculations on fuel consumption prevented some planes from reaching friendly bases in China, causing them to land in Japanese-held territory; see Charles Van Doren and others (eds.), Webster's Guide to American History (Springfield, Massachusetts: G. & C. Merriam Company, Publishers, 1971), pp. 487-488.

¹⁵³Bernard DeVoto, "Tell the people the truth," Harpers, April, 1943, pp. 541-544; quotation on p. 543.

know about the raids once they began. The withholding of information to avoid aiding the enemy was almost always done at the expense of the uninformed public. DeVoto, paraphrasing the government, said the "American Joe" is told to ". . . stick to his job, pay his taxes, buy bonds, and let the government run the war without interference, criticism, or even inquiry." He further argued that ". . . an informed public is worth more than a deceived enemy" ¹⁵⁴

Sabotage is secret. The edition of the codes issued on February 1, 1943, requested that nothing be said about sabotage. Publishers and broadcasters were requested to refrain from mentioning any efforts at sabotage by enemy agents. Even when reporting accidents, they were advised that ". . . no mention of sabotage should be made except on . . . appropriate authority" ¹⁵⁵ This was, according to Time magazine, the first time in any United States war that sabotage was classified as a military secret. ¹⁵⁶ The news magazine cogently pointed out that this restriction created the erroneous impression that sabotage or saboteurs were non-existent in the United States. The criticism was timely, for one month later, on August 8, 1942, six young Nazi saboteurs captured in the United States were electro-

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 543-544.

¹⁵⁵ Code for Broadcasters (2-1-43), pp. 4-5; see also Code for the Press (2-1-43), p. 5.

¹⁵⁶ "Expanding Don'ts," Time, July 6, 1942, p. 40.

cuted in the nation's capitol.¹⁵⁷ In addition to the rules on sabotage these revised codes warned that "The Spread of rumors in such a way that they will be accepted as facts will render aid and comfort to the enemy."¹⁵⁸ Some critics replied that this censorship request was in reality another attempt by the government to squelch speculation in the press. Hinting that the aim of this restriction was the suppression of facts rather than rumors, Time suggested that the best remedy for rumors were facts.¹⁵⁹ Such criticism must have been effective, for in the next edition of the radio and press codes (December 1, 1943) the restriction on rumors was noticeably absent.

Were the restrictions on the reporting of sabotage justified? For a long while sabotage was secret. The government did not want the public to panic as a result of lurid sabotage stories in the domestic press.¹⁶⁰ Nor, as in the case of the captured Nazi saboteurs, did the government want Germany to know it had captured their agents.¹⁶¹ In

¹⁵⁷Burns, op. cit., p. 255. Burns reports that President Roosevelt's ". . . only regret about the six who died was that they had not been hanged."

¹⁵⁸Code for Broadcasters (2-1-43), p. 5; see also Code for the Press (2-1-43), p. 5.

¹⁵⁹"Expanding Don'ts," Time, July 6, 1942, p. 40.

¹⁶⁰In an effort to avoid potential panic the Justice Department, in the Fall of 1942, issued a statement that no major acts of sabotage or espionage had been uncovered; see Lingeman, op. cit., pp. 183, 194.

¹⁶¹See "Espionage: 7 Generals vs. 8 Saboteurs," Time, July 20, 1942, p. 15.

this respect the censorship restrictions might have been justified. However, in light of the extremely small number of saboteurs apprehended in the United States during the war, the restrictions were probably unjustified. Research failed to turn up more than a dozen actual Axis saboteurs in the United States during the entire war. The most celebrated case was the apprehension of eight young Nazis who had been landed on the shores of Long Island and Florida by a German U-boat in 1942.¹⁶² All of these men were caught quickly (four of them had barely gotten off the beaches before they were apprehended) and six were later executed.

Before the voluntary codes for radio and the press were reissued, the Office of Censorship published, on March 1, 1943, a special code that regulated the use of nonmilitary radio services.¹⁶³ In addition to the 925 commercial radio stations in the United States there were more than ten thousand private radio transmitters used by law enforcement, civilian defense, harbor, weather, and forestry services, and other municipal services and facilities.¹⁶⁴ The Office of Censorship stated that the philosophy of regulating these

¹⁶²See "War of Nerves: Mission from Berlin," Time, July 6, 1942, pp. 13-14.

¹⁶³U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for Nonmilitary Radio Services, Edition of March 1, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1943; hereafter referred to as Code for Nonmilitary Radio (3-1-43).

¹⁶⁴Koop, op. cit., p. 185. The activities of amateur radio operators -- "Hams" -- had been suspended for the duration of the war.

municipal radio services fell somewhere between the compulsory and voluntary concepts.¹⁶⁵ The restrictions on the broadcasting of certain information generally paralleled those of the voluntary radio code. However, nonmilitary municipal radio services were required to abandon all unnecessary use of radio facilities. This special code warned that "The unnecessary use of facilities which discloses information of value to the enemy is a total loss to our war effort."¹⁶⁶ The code for municipal radio services was essentially noncontroversial and it remained in force without criticism or modification until May 15, 1945, when it was combined in another code.

On December 1, 1943, the Office of Censorship reissued the codes for the press and radio.¹⁶⁷ This third revision of the press and radio codes showed little modification in comparison with the previous edition, but merely restated the provisions of the previous edition. This new edition of the codes failed to generate significant critical comment. But the American press would soon be at war with censorship as a result of election year politics, soldiers votes, and military censors.

¹⁶⁵Code for Nonmilitary Radio (3-1-43), p. 1.

¹⁶⁶Ibid., p. 2.

¹⁶⁷U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters, Edition of December 1, 1943, and Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, Edition of December 1, 1943 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1943.

Soldiers' Suffrage. In January of 1944 President Roosevelt called upon Congress to pass a Soldier's Vote Bill that would provide a single absentee voting law for eleven million servicemen on active duty.¹⁶⁸ The President claimed that the vast majority of these soldiers and sailors, unable to comply with forty-eight different absentee voting laws in as many states, failed to vote in past elections.

The President's message ran into stiff opposition in Congress. Republicans charged that the President, in an election year, was trying to line up soldiers to vote for his fourth term. Southern Democrats feared that the proposed law would enable Negro soldiers in the South to vote.¹⁶⁹ The bill nevertheless passed Congress and the Soldiers Vote Act of 1944 became law. However, an amendment by Republican Senator Robert Taft to another law¹⁷⁰ forbid circulation by military authorities of any matter containing "political argument or political propaganda of any kind designed or calculated to affect the result of any election" for federal office.¹⁷¹ This law, the result of an ". . . Unholy Alliance of Republicans and reactionary Southern Democrats . . .",¹⁷²

¹⁶⁸ Burns, op. cit., p. 430.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ The Hatch Act of 1939.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Charles G. Bolte, "The War Fronts: Soldiers Aren't Supposed to Think," Nation, July 22, 1944, pp. 90-91.

¹⁷² "Dewey and Soldiers Vote," New Republic, July 24, 1944, p. 92.

provided military authorities with a censorship weapon unprecedented in American history.

Army officials began barring various publications and periodicals from post exchanges and libraries on the grounds these materials contained "political propaganda." Army authorities justified their actions on the basis of the Taft amendment, which protected military voters from political influence.

In one case the Army forbid circulation on its bases of Charles A. Beard's book, The Republic, on the grounds it was political propaganda.¹⁷³ One magazine reported that the Army prohibited liberal or pro-New Deal periodicals from being sold at post exchanges, accepting instead only conservative or pro-Republican ones.¹⁷⁴ Another contemporary periodical contained three letters from soldiers who charged that their superiors forbid the availability of such magazines as Nation, New Republic, Harpers, and Atlantic.¹⁷⁵ One of these soldiers complained that a packet of Nation back issues, mailed to him by his mother, was rejected by Army officials as "controversial." Reactionary Army authorities were having a field day. The movie "Wilson" was banned from post theaters, and a biography of Oliver Wendell Holmes from

¹⁷³"Dangerous Army Censorship," New Republic, July 24, 1944, p. 92.

¹⁷⁴Ibid.

¹⁷⁵"Letters to the Editors," Nation, August 19, 1944, p. 223.

Army library lists because they were considered politically propagandistic in content. Army officials, in one sweep, ordered 142 American newspapers removed from soldier's service clubs.¹⁷⁶

Perhaps the most blatant and ridiculous abuse of authority by military officials came when an edition of the instruction book, the "Official Guide to the Army Air Forces" was removed from Army library lists because it bore a picture of President Franklin Roosevelt over the caption "Commander-In-Chief of the Army and Navy." Other editions of the instruction book which did not carry Roosevelt's picture were retained on the library lists.¹⁷⁷

This was but another infamous incident in a long list of Army abuses of the power of censorship.¹⁷⁸ According to Zechariah Chafee, "Military censorship has always tended to exceed its bounds and go into political censorship."¹⁷⁹ Military censorship in World War II, like the Office of Censorship, served an important and vital function. They both kept vital information from reaching the enemy. But, unlike the Office of Censorship, military authorities fed greedily upon their censorship powers. They continually tried to

¹⁷⁶"Idea Blackout," Newsweek, August 21, 1944, pp. 40-42.

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Newsweek reported that the Navy had ordered no censorship of literature or entertainment; ibid.

¹⁷⁹Chafee, op. cit., p. 465.

strengthen and expand their influence over American society. Denying soldiers access to political argumentation perverted a fundamental part of the political process. The heart of any election contest is debate and disagreement; when controversy is censored and eliminated elections become meaningless and needless. Even with the cessation of official government censorship at the end of the war, military authorities continued to impose their own brand of censorship on the American press. A reporter and a photographer were detained by military police and part of their equipment confiscated when, more than a week after the war was over, they tried to collect interviews and pictures aboard a troop train.¹⁸⁰ Capricious censorship by military authorities was a burden on the Office of Censorship, and on the country, during World War II.

Secret weapon: the atomic bomb blackout. Protecting the security of the atomic bomb project was ". . . the censors' most exciting assignment" ¹⁸¹ From the spring of 1943, when the atomic bomb project began, until President Truman's announcement on August 6, 1945, that the bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, hardly a day went by that the Office of Censorship did not have to issue a confidential warning concerning accidental allusion to the secret project. Thousands of persons in the United States knew of the secret

¹⁸⁰ Koop, op. cit., p. 270.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p. 272.

atomic experiments. Thousands more could have made accurate guesses about the importance of the project simply by referring to Censorship's admonitions. The Office of Censorship warned against broadcasting or publishing any information at all concerning atom smashing, atomic energy, atomic fission, atom splitting, radium, radioactive materials, heavy water, high voltage discharge equipment, cyclotrons, polonium, uranium, ytterbium, hafnium, protactinium, thonium, thorium, or deuterium.¹⁸² The list seemed endless.

Add to this the fact that the atomic bomb project (known under the code name "Manhattan Project") required the use of over one-half million acres of land and the virtual isolation of nearly one hundred thousand workers¹⁸³ and their families, and the extent of Censorship's job can begin to be realized. Reference to atomic power or its long list of related subjects had to be deleted from all types of publications -- even comic books. One Superman issue showed that comic strip hero withstanding a bombardment of electrons from a cyclotron. At the request of the Office of Censorship the story was rearranged and future issues of Superman avoided mentioning anything related to atomic power.¹⁸⁴ Fictional accounts of the use of atomic power had to be modified or deleted when they came too close to the truth.

¹⁸²Ibid., pp. 274-275.

¹⁸³Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁸⁴Ibid., p. 277.

After the bomb had been dropped on Japan, editors and broadcasters were released from their promise to omit discussion of the weapon, much to the dismay of military authorities. Of the secrecy surrounding the Manhattan Project, Byron Price said:

Been a newspaperman all my life and the only thing I could do about the greatest story of the age, or any age, was pray nobody would print it.¹⁸⁵

When the atomic bomb was dropped on Japan, one of the biggest -- and last -- jobs of the Office of Censorship was finished. The success of the atomic bomb project was due, in a very large part, to the efforts of the Office of Censorship and the American press and radio.

Voluntary censorship provided a second line of defense in the war on words. The rapport and cooperation that existed between the Office of Censorship and the American Press and radio was a significant contribution to the Allied victory in World War II. That victory not only secured the right of freedom for millions of people throughout the world, it also helped secure the right of a free press to exist in the United States during a very difficult time of war.

¹⁸⁵Quoted in "Intercepts," New Yorker, May 11, 1946, p. 22.

VICTORY, DEATH, AND FREEDOM

Relaxed Vigilance: The Final Edition of the Codes

On May 15, 1945, the Office of Censorship issued the final edition of the voluntary censorship codes.¹ Although four separate media are included -- the press, domestic and nonmilitary radio, and, for the first time, television -- this combined code covers less than three printed pages. Many previous restrictions were absent from this new edition, most notably those that dealt with weather and sabotage. The remaining requests were greatly condensed. This was the last voluntary censorship code issued by the Office of Censorship; it remained in effect until the end of the war.

The End of Censorship

"The first and last principle to be remembered . . . is that censorship should come into being solely as an instrument of war."² Thus Byron Price, in his final report as

¹U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press and Radio, Edition of May 15, 1945 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office), 1945.

²Byron Price, quoted in Historical Reports on War Administration, A Report on the Office of Censorship (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1945), p. 1.

Director of the Office of Censorship, limited the use of censorship in a free society. On August 15, 1945, just one day after the victory over Japan, President Truman signed the following order to the Director of the Office of Censorship:

In accordance with the recommendation submitted by him on June 27, 1945, the Director of Censorship shall on August 15, 1945:

1. Declare voluntary censorship of the press and radio at an end.
2. Direct that the Office of Censorship cease at once the censorship of all international communications.
3. Give 30 days notice to all employees of the Office of Censorship, except for a small group needed for liquidation of the Agency.³

The Office of Censorship was out of business. It had operated for forty-four months. Employing, at the peak of its operations, 14,462 persons,⁴ the Office of Censorship spent approximately \$90,000,000.⁵ According to Byron Price, if results could be measured in dollars and cents, the funds provided for voluntary censorship would represent the best investment in security ever made by the United States.⁶

On the same day that President Truman ordered the demobilization of the Office of Censorship, Byron Price notified the nation's editors and broadcasters that official

³Ibid., p. 18.

⁴Ibid., p. 8. The peak was in February of 1943.

⁵Ibid., p. 10.

⁶Theodore Koop, Weapon of Silence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 246.

ensorship had ceased, and that the Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press and Radio was cancelled.⁷

The American press and radio were an "army behind the army"⁸ that achieved victory over the enemies of freedom in the war on words. That victory was a welcome death bell that tolled the end of the Office of Censorship. That victory was also a freedom bell that rang in the restoration of a free press and radio in the United States.

⁷Director of the Office of Censorship, PR-65, [Press Release No. 65] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Office of Censorship), [August 15, 1945].

⁸U. S. Office of Censorship, Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters, [Edition of January 15, 1942] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government [Printing Office, 1942]), p. 7.

VI

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

The Office of Censorship: A Lack of Attention

The Office of Censorship has received an undeserved lack of attention from historians involved in scholarly research of World War II. The introductory chapter of this paper gives two main reasons for that lack of attention: historians interested in the war years of 1942-1945 have tended to concentrate on the war itself, leaving the domestic picture largely undeveloped;¹ and the inaccessibility of government documents directly related to the Office of Censorship hinders a full or even adequate analysis of that office.

Because the Federal Government still refuses, at this late date, to release pertinent documentary evidence on the Office of Censorship, the historian is forced to rely upon secondary sources. The number of secondary sources dealing with the Office of Censorship is quite small. Fortunately, a number of people who were directly involved with Censorship activities during World War II, including the Director of the Office of Censorship, Byron Price, are still living. Some of

¹Jim F. Heath, "Domestic America during World War II: Research Opportunities for Historians," The Journal of American History, LVIII (September, 1971), 384.

these persons have willingly and eagerly offered their assistance, through correspondence and personal interviews, in this research project.

Compulsory Censorship: Planned Success

Compulsory censorship was a planned success. It had to work, for there were no alternatives. Submission to compulsory regulations was mandatory, with stiff penalties for noncompliance or disobedience. Compulsory censorship was often ruthless and almost always arbitrary.² The ultimate objective of compulsory censorship, or, for that matter, all censorship, was to deprive the enemy of aid and comfort and information that would help him kill Americans.³ It was necessary to keep a watch on the borders of the United States to see that valuable information was not allowed to escape and fall into the hands of the enemy. For example, a clerk who, unwittingly or intentionally, included shipping dates and routes in his cables could easily assist a submarine commander in aiming his torpedos.

Compulsory censorship also had to protect valuable commodities essential to the Allied prosecution of the war. There were within the United States during the war a small

²Director of the Office of Censorship, PR-29, [Press Release No. 29] (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Office of Censorship, August 13, 1942), p. 1. These Censorship press releases hereafter referred to as Censorship Press Release No. _____, (date).

³Censorship Press Release No. 36, October 29, 1942, p. 1.

number of Axis spies and trained agents. An important part of the job of compulsory censorship dealt with putting these spies and agents out of business. One former Censorship employee has claimed that 189 spies were caught and convicted in the United States during the war.⁴ This paper retells two of those spy stories.

But compulsory censorship was not always used for its intended purpose. There were persons in the Federal Government who were willing to use censorship regulations to stifle criticism of the government. The Kellems story was the most infamous of these cases. Byron Price was probably innocent of any malfeasance in the Kellems incident, but there is no substantial evidence currently available to allow an adequate assessment of the guilt or innocence of any one person in this case. However, based on the evidence that is available, investigation of the Kellems case should begin near the top of government echelons rather than the bottom.

Compulsory censorship was used well and abused badly. Its use provided for a planned success in the war on words; its abuse remains a warning sign to those who must direct, or be directed by, future censorship programs.

Voluntary Censorship: Strategic Success

Censorship was the main weapon used in the war on words, and that weapon had to be aimed where the words were.

⁴Mary Knight, "The Secret War of Censors vs. Spies," Readers Digest, March, 1946, p. 79.

It had to be aimed at those who held dear the free and unlimited use of words -- the American press and radio.

The Director of the Office of Censorship was under instructions from the President to ". . . coordinate the voluntary effort of press and radio to withhold from circulation information which would aid the enemy in his prosecution of the war."⁵ The Office of Censorship, under the able leadership of Byron Price, constructed and issued the voluntary censorship codes that were used to regulate the use of free speech by the press and radio. Any regulation of free speech produces an immediate reaction in a society that reveres and deifies that freedom. The regulation and restriction of free speech was based on a quasi-military strategy. When planning a battle strategists must assess the necessary sacrifices that will enable the army to win the battle. In the war on words the limits of free speech had to be narrowed. The soldiers themselves -- broadcasters and editors -- had to accept this measured sacrifice if the war was to be won. Newspapers and radio had to limit their traditional tendencies to speculate, advise, and criticize. Failure to do this, in some cases, might have aided the enemy. The American press and radio were sometimes recalcitrant, but most often cooperative. They realized that refusal to cooperate under a system of voluntary censorship, regardless of how stringent the regulations sometimes were, could have

⁵Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

resulted in reversion to a system of complete compulsion.

And the country was not lacking for proponents of complete compulsion. They existed in the highest government offices and in the nation's newsrooms. The efforts of the Roosevelt administration to make the "Official Secrets Bill" the law of the land provides support for this statement. Fortunately for the country the Office of Censorship was headed by a man who believed that the war on words could be won without complete abrogation of freedom of speech. To achieve this the voluntary censorship codes were reviewed every six months and modified and reissued whenever the need was indicated. Not all material considered for publication was submitted to the Office of Censorship for clearance. Editors and broadcasters submitted only those items that were doubtful in nature. Daily newspapers also received frequent directives from the Office of Censorship automatically, thus further eliminating the need to submit much material. By referring to the voluntary codes many decisions could be made within the editorial offices of a newspaper.

The item that provided the most difficulty was the publication of unit identifications and ship names and addresses for soldiers and sailors. A notice in a home town paper that Joe Doaks was stationed in England with the First Armored Division could easily assist the enemy in assessing Allied troop strength. This problem was most frequent with the small weeklies, church bulletins, and home town news columns that merely wanted their readers to have some news of

their friends and neighbors. To combat this problem the Office of Censorship offered the best advice it could:

If you know what ship a sailor is on, or what company or regiment a soldier is with overseas, then you know a military secret.⁶

This warning was usually effective.

Most of the personnel of the Office of Censorship tried to do the best job they could. But mistakes were made -- and expected. Sometimes these mistakes resulted from a momentary lack of foresight, and other times they were the direct result of government interference. Byron Price stated that the Office of Censorship ". . . was almost completely free of instructions or interference under two Presidents."⁷ But the freedom of speech was not always free from interference by government officials -- including Presidents. The case of Social Justice -- the organ for Father Charles Coughlin, the "radio priest" -- provides an example of this kind of interference. The Office of Censorship could also bring down its own brand of wrath upon a newspaper that failed to comply with Censorship requests. The Molotov visit and the Philadelphia Daily News story was a case in point.

A large part of Censorship's job was protecting military secrets. Vital information about ships, planes, and troops had to be withheld. Plans for the invasion of Europe

⁶Theodore Koop, Weapon of Silence (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1946), p. 238.

⁷Byron Price to writer, November 8, 1971.

had to be protected from premature disclosure. Weapons development and related experiments were known by many editors and broadcasters, but they withheld publication of this information. Byron Price felt the atomic bomb project was the best kept secret of the war.⁸ This secret became "the censors' most exciting assignment."⁹

"For the most part, the program of voluntary compliance was a complete success."¹⁰ But, according to Byron Price, ". . . if the experiment of voluntary compliance had failed, advocates of compulsion were ready to take the field without a moments delay."¹¹ The threat of compulsion provided the impetus for compliance with the voluntary codes, making voluntary censorship ". . . an iron fist in a velvet glove."¹²

The program of voluntary censorship of the American press and radio was a strategic success -- in spite of the Army. That the program was a success is proved by the fact that the proponents of compulsory censorship failed to gain the upper hand. And they tried. And they had support. They had the statistical support of a frightening majority of the

⁸"Out of Office: Gone, the Blue Pencil," Newsweek, August 27, 1945, pp. 78-79.

⁹Koop, op. cit., p. 272.

¹⁰John Fetzer to writer, November 18, 1971.

¹¹Censorship Press Release No. 68, August 30, 1945.

¹²Sherman H. Dryer, Radio In Wartime (New York: Greenberg, Publisher, Inc., 1942), p. 24.

American people. One study made during the first week of the war revealed that eighty-five percent of the American people approved of governmental delay in providing news of the attack on Pearl Harbor. Only one person in ten felt censorship was too strict, twenty percent felt it was too lax, and, throughout the war, two-thirds of the people felt they were being told as much as the government could tell them.¹³

In the first year of the war with Japan the United States came out second-best. Thousands of American sailors suffered violent deaths at the hands of a momentarily superior Japanese navy. The United States Government pleaded that such graphic war news would adversely affect public morale, and much of this news was delayed or withheld. But a survey held by the Office of War Information in 1943 revealed that a plurality of the American people approved of printing news stories and pictures "showing how American soldiers are suffering and dying."¹⁴

These were the forces with which Byron Price had to wrestle in the war on words -- the proponents of compulsion and an apathetic populace with a latent appetite for gore!

Military Censorship: Threat to Success

Military censorship threatened freedom of speech more than any other form of censorship used in the war on words.

¹³Daniel Katz, et. al., Public Opinion and Propaganda (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954), p. 43.

¹⁴Ibid.

Military censorship was ubiquitous; it permeated the entire range of the compulsory and voluntary censorship programs. Army officials tested their censoring strength not only in the realm of free speech, but also in the realm of free thought. Overzealous and reactionary Army officials, interpreting law to satisfy their own whims, tried to regulate the printed material read by American servicemen. When President Roosevelt allowed the Soldiers Vote Bill to become law,¹⁵ he gave his military opponents a censorship weapon they never dreamed they would get. This law, with its related amendment, allowed Army officials to classify anything they did not like -- books, movies, newspapers, even a picture of the President of the United States -- as political propaganda.

The efforts of military myrmidons threatened the success of voluntary censorship and argues strongly in favor of civilian control of future censorship programs.

Byron Price: An Appraisal

Byron Price was fifty years old when President Roosevelt asked him to become the Director of the Office of Censorship. Half of his life had been spent as a newspaperman and freedom of the press was a major part of his life. He would

¹⁵Roosevelt was disappointed with the bill in its final form, especially when it was accompanied with the Taft amendment to the Hatch Act of 1939, which prohibited the transmission of political propaganda to servicemen on active duty. The President allowed the bill to become law without his signature; see James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), p. 431.

no more unquestioningly surrender that freedom than he would his life, for to surrender one would be tantamount to surrendering both. But Price believed ". . . there was nothing automatic about the establishment of free speech in the United States" ¹⁶ Price disliked censorship; it was almost automatic for any conscientious newspaperman to find censorship distasteful. The opposing concepts of censorship and free speech assume profound meaning when the job of administering one and preserving the other is placed in the hands of the same man. It was necessary for Price to convince his professional associates of the need to balance censorship and free speech, and to persuade them that voluntary censorship during wartime could work to preserve the freedoms of speech and the press. Most of these persons were moved by Price's persuasive ability. ¹⁷ Even as he persuaded broadcasters and editors to cooperate with the requests of voluntary censorship, Price reminded them that his remarks were made ". . . in justification of censorship, not in praise of it." ¹⁸ It would be redundant to state here the ways in which Price was able to balance the needs of wartime censorship against the preservation of free speech. It

¹⁶Censorship Press Release No. 68, August 30, 1945,
p. 2.

¹⁷Zechariah Chafee, Jr., Government and Mass Communications, Vol. I (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), p. 460.

¹⁸Censorship Press Release No. 43, March 20, 1943,
p. 7.

is enough to say he did it -- the feat speaks for itself.

During the war many persons criticized the Office of Censorship, Byron Price, the government, and the military excursion into censorship. After the war many persons continued to criticize the government and military censorship, but most had nothing but praise for Byron Price. Journalist Arthur Krock, in a scathing attack on censorship, was still able to say that the Office of Censorship was ". . . ably and intelligently administered."¹⁹ Professor Zechariah Chafee of the University of Chicago also praised Price's skill in administering the program of voluntary censorship.²⁰

The voluntary censorship program was not perfect; it could have been better. And it could have been worse. A very delicate balance was maintained between the rights of a free press and the necessities of wartime censorship. That delicate balance depended upon the ability of Censorship officials to recognize the value of free speech and the limits of censorship. Byron Price recognized those values and those limits. His singular ability enabled him to successfully administer the program of voluntary censorship. Voluntary censorship had been tried before and it had failed. Byron Price, and the members of the American press and radio, proved that such a program could work.

¹⁹ Arthur Krock in "Public Opinion Quarterly," Spring, 1942, pp. 24-26, reprinted in Robert E. Summers (comp.), Wartime Censorship of Press and Radio (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1942), p. 225.

²⁰ Chafee, op. cit.

Perhaps this paper's appraisal of the Director of the Office of Censorship is best summarized by quoting the man himself:

You've got to be unspeakably profane on the subject of censorship or you've no right to be a censor at all I had that right.²¹

Byron Price had had a full career in journalism behind him when he came to the Office of Censorship. When President Roosevelt summoned him to be Director of Censorship, Price was serving as Executive News Editor of the Associated Press, the foremost position in that organization. In 1944 Price was awarded a special Pulitzer citation for the creation and administration of the voluntary censorship codes.²² While the Office of Censorship was being demobilized in 1945, President Truman asked Price to go to Germany as his personal representative to make a study of the relations between the American occupation forces and the German people.²³ In 1946 President Truman awarded Price the Medal for Merit in recognition of his able administration of the Office of Censorship and for his unique skill at organizing the American press and radio within the system of voluntary censorship. In 1948 he was made an honorary Knight

²¹Byron Price, quoted in "Intercepts," New Yorker, May 11, 1946, p. 22.

²²Who's Who in America, XXIV (1946), p. 1906.

²³Historical Reports on War Administration, A Report on the Office of Censorship (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1945), p. 18; hereafter referred to as Report on the Office of Censorship.

Commander of the British Empire by George VI of England.²⁴

From 1947 to 1954 Byron Price served as an Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and was responsible for directing the construction of the buildings that house that organization today.²⁵ In 1954 Price retired to his home in Chestertown, Maryland, where he lives today.

The War on Words: Remaining Questions

This paper has probably raised more questions than it has answered. Who leaked the Kellems correspondence to Drew Pearson and John Coffee? Was the State Department the source? Was someone acting on instructions from President Roosevelt as Vivien Kellems charged? These correspondence "Intercepts" are lodged in the National Archives and cannot be opened except on order of the President of the United States.²⁶ Did the Roosevelt Administration attempt to subvert its public position on voluntary censorship by backing the so-called "Official Secrets Bill?" What influence did the Army exert in support of this bill for complete and compulsory censorship? The activities of Army officials in thwarting or impeding the circulation of liberal or pro-New Deal publications certainly indicates their approval of com-

²⁴Who's Who in America, XXVI, (1950), pp. 2215-2216.

²⁵Based on personal interview with Norman Carlson, January 11, 1972; see also "Where Are They Now?" Newsweek, October 2, 1961, p. 14.

²⁶Report on the Office of Censorship, p. 18.

plete and compulsory censorship. Many persons were convicted of evading censorship regulations, and they often received harsh punishment. Were these convictions always justified, or were the Federal courts sympathetic to Justice Department prosecutions? That civil liberties for select minorities were abandoned by the government during the war is, for many, a foregone conclusion. But what about Velvlee Dickinson's trial? Was she convicted on insufficient evidence? Was her case prejudiced because of her social relationships with persons of Japanese ancestry? Similar incidents of such racial jingoism were not unknown in the United States during World War II.

Censorship restrictions on radio programming were stringent and usually strictly enforced. Radio transmissions were instantaneous. Any radio message, whether intended for domestic listeners or, as the government feared, for enemy agents, could be easily monitored by enemy naval craft close by the shores of the United States. But because the radio waves were so well-monitored by the Federal Communications Commission, no such enemy transmissions were actually documented during the entire war. Indeed, one researcher has determined that there was but a single attempt at a radio transmission from a station in the United States to Nazi Germany. That radio transmitter was located in the German Embassy in Washington and it was immediately silenced.²⁷

²⁷David Kahn, The Codebreakers: The Story of Secret Writing (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1967), p. 527.

There is one remaining question that must be considered here. Does the United States Government maintain viable contingency plans for official censorship in the event of a future world war? According to Norman Carlson, former Chief Postal Censor, there remained after the war a censorship "shadow organization" that included a "Director-designate." Byron Price, after his retirement from the United Nations in 1954, became a consultant to the government on censorship planning. In effect, he was the Director-designate. At the time of the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 Price was again asked, this time by President Kennedy, to assume the responsibility of directing a censorship program in the event of war.

Following the Cuban missile crisis Price requested his release as Director-designate for censorship planning. He was then past seventy years of age; a new generation had succeeded to the news desks of the country and Price felt he no longer had the necessary contacts in Washington and elsewhere that would allow him to function effectively as the Director of future censorship programs. President Johnson eventually granted Price's request, choosing as his replacement Theodore Koop, who had been the Assistant Director of the Office of Censorship during World War II.²⁸ Koop was in turn released from this position by President Nixon.

²⁸ Information on future censorship planning based on personal interview with Norman Carlson, January 11, 1972, and Byron Price to writer, February 25, 1972.

The position of Director-designate was abolished on December 15, 1970. Censorship planning is now handled by the Office of Emergency Preparedness, and the old title "Office of Censorship" has been replaced with that of "Wartime Information Security Program."²⁹ Future wartime censorship problems are being considered even now. Sophisticated communications systems spawned by the world-wide technological revolution are constantly being analyzed in relation to the government's ability to censor them. Television, communications satellites, interplanetary communications, even the possibility of transmitting messages by a laser beam that cannot be interrupted or broken, are just a few of the problems being worked on today by the Office of Emergency Preparedness.

In an address before the Georgia Press Institute in 1944, Byron Price listed the principles he felt should be adhered to in the event censorship should again become necessary.³⁰ These principles generally paralleled the provisions of the voluntary censorship codes used in World War II. Each of these principles could also be interpreted as individual indictments of either military or governmental suppression of free speech. Price, as did many others, recognized the potential danger of governmental suppression

²⁹Eugene J. Quindlen, Assistant Director for Government Preparedness, to writer, March 15, 1972.

³⁰Censorship Press Release No. 54, February 19, 1944, p. 4.

of opinion and criticism. The reactionary rhetoric of Social Justice was easily discernable, but would government suppression of a newspaper, even if it was of the same ilk as Social Justice, be as easily accomplished and condoned today as it was in 1942? Probably not. The recent attempt of the Federal Government to impose prior restraint on those papers that published the so-called "Pentagon Papers" stands as proof that the government prefers some type of censorship. Price's principles take into account the efforts of the Army to impose repressive censorship during World War II. There is evidence today that the Army continues to use its own brand of censorship. Their efforts to cover up the "My Lai Massacre" and similar incidents, suggests that official censorship is in fact a reality.

In the event of a future global war, the conflict will be of such immense proportions that military superiority will undoubtedly assume primary importance. In the military mind this will include, if we are to recognize the lessons of history, the complete submission of a free press, and with it free speech, to the dictates of military rule. The American press, and the people, should prepare for that possibility, and protect themselves against it. For in that event, censorship will surely come. Even while reviewing the past from the advantageous perspective of the present one must admit that the withholding of some strategic information from public knowledge was necessary during World War II, and will be necessary in World War III.

During World War II Byron Price sought to expose unfounded rumors in order to prevent public panic. But rumors must be fought with facts, and all possible factual information must be made available to the people. The majority of the requests in the voluntary censorship codes during World War II were valid and justified. There were some mistakes. The seriousness of those mistakes is easily exaggerated, but they should not be unduly dismissed. An analysis of the conduct of federal and military officials in regards to censorship during the war demands that one condemn utilization of the "necessities of war" to silence valid criticism of a politically conscious administration. The realities of the period require that one recognize that the public probably supported the suppression of pro-fascist newspapers like Social Justice. But in the event of a future conflict we must insure that a journalist or newspaper has clearly and undeniably, in public trial, violated the Espionage Act before that newspaper or journalist is suppressed and silenced.

From 1942 to 1945 news of the war was often delayed and misrepresented, sometimes at the request of Army authorities, sometimes at the request of administration officials. The voluntary censorship system administered by Byron Price was undoubtedly better than the alternatives available in the war on words. No censorship at all in time of war is clearly unrealistic. But compulsory censorship of the free press and radio would have only served to provide the United

States with enemies in its own camp.

Censorship in wartime has been an historical reality. Voluntary systems were tried during the American Civil War and World War I. Both of these voluntary systems collapsed and were replaced by a form of compulsory censorship. Censorship of a free press and radio will be a reality in the next global conflict. That censorship system must be voluntary and under civilian control if a free press -- and free speech -- are to endure.

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I have relied heavily on documents from the U. S. Office of Censorship. A Report on the Office of Censorship was prepared in 1945 by Byron Price and his staff as part of the Historical Reports on War Administration. A disappointingly short report, it does contain valuable information on the organizational period of the Office of Censorship.

A collection of the wartime censorship codes is available at the library of the University of California at Berkeley. This collection includes the Code of Wartime Practices for American Broadcasters, the Code of Wartime Practices for the American Press, Rules for Operating Companies, U. S. Cable and Radio Censorship Regulations, and the U. S. Postal Censorship Regulations. Study of these codes was indispensable to the research.

Also in the University of California library is a small collection of press releases issued by the Director of the Office of Censorship from January, 1942, through August, 1945. Very incomplete (there are only fifty-eight press releases in this library-bound volume), these press releases supplement the various editions of the censorship codes; they also contain textual copies of addresses by Byron Price.

There has been only one book published on the Office of Censorship and it was used extensively in the writing of

this paper. Weapon of Silence, by Theodore Koop, documents a wide range of Censorship activities. Koop was the Assistant Director of the Office of Censorship, and while he was justifiably critical of military censorship, he did not always review government censorship with the same critical judiciousness.

Wartime Censorship of Press and Radio, by Robert E. Summers, is primarily a collection of articles reprinted from various newspapers and magazines, some now defunct, from 1941 to 1942. Summers generally upholds the necessity of wartime censorship as a defense against enemy propaganda. Published in August, 1942, the book is limited because it covers only the first few months of Censorship operations.

Charles Tull's book, Father Coughlin and the New Deal, has an excellent account of the relationship between President Roosevelt and the "Radio Priest." Tull denies the charge that Coughlin was a fascist, a charge the Roosevelt administration made when suppressing Social Justice.

David Kahn's The Codebreakers; The Story of Secret Writing, is a well-documented history of secret writing, codes, and cryptography. Kahn includes a short but relevant section on Censorship operations during World War II.

James MacGregor Burns' Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom, is one of the very few works available on the last Roosevelt administration. Burns includes essential information on the suppression of Social Justice and on the Soldiers Vote Act of 1944.

Concentrating on the domestic aspects of the United States during World War II, Don't You Know There's A War On? The American Home Front, 1941-1945, by Richard R. Lingeman, briefly reviews some of the activities of the Office of Censorship. The book is indispensable for those interested in the social history of the period.

War Information and Censorship is a small book co-authored by Elmer Davis and Byron Price who were, respectively, the Directors of the Offices of War Information and Censorship at the time the book was published. A propaganda document, the book is interesting for its occasionally specious justification of the functions of the two agencies. The section on Censorship, written by Byron Price, is decidedly the better half.

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