

PUBLIC OPINION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE MILITARY PLANNER

3 March 1950

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION--Brigadier General J. L. Holman, USA, Deputy Commandant for Education, ICAF	1
SPEAKER--Major General Floyd L. Parks, USA, Chief of the Public Information Division, Office, Chief of Staff, U. S. Army.....	1
GENERAL DISCUSSION.....	13

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GENERAL HOLMAN: Gentlemen, to those of us in the military service the estimate of the situation is almost a thing of second nature. We know that it is an important way to arrive at proper decisions and to take proper action. It is a connecting link between thinking and doing. In order to make a proper estimate, it is necessary to have accurate and intelligent information. Now, the man on the street, the man in private life, is up against very much the same situation. He is continuously making a running estimate, and it is important to him in his personal relations, in his business, and in the discharge of his civic responsibilities. He too needs accurate and intelligent information, and he wants to come up with the right answers. Very high on his list in this day and age is national security. He wants to be informed on that. He wants to do his own thinking about matters which affect national security and his personal security, and he wants to have proper information. The military establishment, therefore, has a very firm obligation to the public. We must not only be prepared to provide this information, but we must be prepared to know or to estimate what the reaction from the public will be.

This morning the College is very much honored in having with us, to discuss the relationships of public opinion and military planning, Major General Floyd L. Parks, the Army's Chief of Information. General Parks has had a long and very distinguished career in the Army. He has attended, I think, almost all of our service schools. His experience ranges all the way from important assignments on the Staff to important assignments in combat operations and in command. I can assure you that he is very well informed on the subject of public opinion. It is a great pleasure to welcome to this platform General Parks.

GENERAL PARKS: Thank you, General Holman. I greet this audience with mixed emotions. I have sweated it out on this platform before. I feel however, that I know a little bit more about my subject than I used to when I was up here sweating it out before. At least I have been to the college of hard knocks in public information.

Gentlemen, my subject this morning is "Public Opinion and its Effect on Military Planning." I don't think I will have to sell that to you, because I am sure you all realize that it has a profound effect on all planning. What I would like to do today is to discuss this subject and see how we can cooperate, let us say, with public opinion.

Public opinion is often overlooked by the military man. That is quite a natural result. We all are prone to get interested in our jobs

RESTRICTED

and forget public opinion. I must say that I was just as bad as any of you, and I learned it the hard way. You can't do anything in the military service without public support. You are a servant of the people, and they are looking at you. They are going to evaluate you one way or the other. You must keep that in mind.

I say I learned it the hard way. They took me by the scruff of the neck when I was in Berlin on a very interesting job, one I would have liked to stay on, and they brought me back and put me in the Pentagon Building and said, "You are the Public Relations Officer for the War Department." I had never been a public relations officer of anything. When I look back on the early months, I shudder. It was terrific. As you may recall, in January of 1946 the announcement was made that we were going to slow down demobilization. I went into office four days after that historical announcement, just as the house was falling right down over my ears. We weathered it as best we could and learned a lot about the power of public opinion in the process. One vivid lesson came about. Two weeks after I got there an officer came down from the Logistics Section and said, "We want to go back on the pre-war footing and furnish travel and quarters overseas for dependents." He said, "Have you any comment? Do you want to concur in this action?" I said, "Sure. It is all right. We have done it for years before the war. There's nothing to it. Go ahead and announce it." So we got out the press release.

Hardly had the ink dried on the press release when the Legislative Liaison officer, General Persons, an old hand at the game and who had been on that job for a number of years, called me on the phone and said, "Floyd, did you have to put that release out?" I said, "Yes. We are going to do it, why not announce it? It is the law. Nobody will worry about that." "Well," he said, "you just wait till that hits the street." My, but he was so right!

As you recall, at that time the Caste system was being headlined and the "breas" was being played against the GI, and here was a perfect vehicle for an unfriendly press. Here was the Army planning to let the "brass's" wives and the "brass's" children travel at government expense overseas to join their husbands and fathers, but the GI was overlooked.

Well, there were four or five bills in the floor of Congress the next afternoon. You never heard so much row in you life. Some of you will remember it. Congress was going to pass bills that would let privates have quarters and they would have transportation. It was going to be just dandy. The hue and cry became so great in the press that General Eisenhower had to inject himself into the matter. He ordered that we take the families of privates and corporals overseas as well as officers and first three grades. Enlisted men and officers would be put on a priority list, based on length of service rather than rank. The man who had been over there longest would get his wife and children first and would get first call on quarters.

We started doing just that, and for five or six months we used to send them over in army transports. In the meantime, no bill was passed by Congress and we found ourselves doing something without a law to back it up. The commanding officers were signing certificates that there were no quarters available for the men who by law should have them, because they were filled with men not legally entitled to them. The certificates were not correct. It was evident we must do something and do it promptly. This time we were wary of the public reaction and adopted a program to prevent an unfavorable one.

Congress, by that time, was busy with the fall election campaign. Along in October you saw the statements about how tough it was to find quarters for the people overseas and about the large backlog of dependents who wanted to go overseas but couldn't. In fact, we played this so hard that the people overseas began to think that they never would get their dependents over, and we began to get a little backlash on that. So the day after the election we put an announcement in the papers that we were going to go back to the legal procedure for handling dependents, quarters, and transportation. Well, as you can imagine, the day after election the papers were rather full of other things. It got about an inch in the ad section, and we never heard of it afterward. I can't describe here the thousands of man-hours work this had caused the War Department, most of which could have been avoided, but that is what public opinion will do to you. I learned it the hard way. You can never disregard public opinion.

As you know, the end of the war changed all our problems. During the war you didn't have to consider public opinion particularly in your plans. You were on the crest of the wave. The military forces could have anything. They had first call on the money and the manpower. The policy was "everything for the military services." Now that the war is over, you have an entirely different picture. The military services are the instrument of war. It is distasteful for the public to go to war. The military services being the visible instrument of war, they get the blame for it. So you have an entirely different situation from what it is in wartime.

But we did learn during the war that you have to tell the people what you are doing. You must have good relations with them. You must create good will, let me say. So our job after the war became one of selling good will, letting the people know that they have a really hard-working servant of the Nation in the form of their military services. How are we going to go about it? How are we going to show ourselves to the people and let them see that they do have an efficient, patriotic group of people working for them?

It reminds me of a story Mr. Irving Allen at Chicago told me. He is an advertising man. He said that when Mr. Walter Chrysler wanted to

RESTRICTED

introduce the Plymouth car, which had just been designed--it was new and he thought it was pretty good--he called Mr. Allen in and said, "Can you sell the Plymouth car?" Mr. Allen said, "No, Mr. Chrysler, I can't sell the Plymouth car. But," he said, "I can get people to look at it, and if the Plymouth car is good, they will buy it." That is what happened. He got them in to look at the car. The car was good. As you know, it is now a very popular low-priced car.

The same thing applied to the Army. We in public information, or public relations, as I like to call it, because it is relations with people, can only get the people to look at the armed forces. If they are good, they will "buy" them. If they are not good, they will let you know about it.

Now, I would like to discuss some of the ways and some of the means by which we get the people to look at the armed forces. I like to say that public information is the window through which the public watches the military forces at work. It is sort of a sidewalk superintendent's stand where they can see what is going on. It is their military forces and they should see what makes them tick. That is our job.

I want to say that in order to make them like the military forces, we must have good conduct and sound projects. We have to be good. The public isn't going to accept anything second rate in the military forces. Gentlemen, that is a compliment to you. You should try to instill that idea in everybody that you have under you. They expect you to be tops. That is the reason that it's news when an Army officer or a Navy officer does something that perhaps would not be news for civilian conduct.

I would like you as future commanders and future planners to get just this if you don't get anything else out of this talk: The public opinion of the armed forces is but a reflection of what you do. That is all it is. Your public information officer or office is not a propaganda machine. A PIO can only show the military forces as they are. Many people think a public information officer is there to cover up for you, to put a good face on an ugly story or someone to whom you can say, "See that this doesn't get printed." You can't suppress news, whether it is news, whether it is good or bad, the newspapermen will get it.

Now, you can't put a good face on an ugly fact. And you can't call back a story once it is in print. It never catches up. You can explain it afterward all you want, but the first story is the one that goes. Gentlemen, in this business of working with the people of the press, with news media, radio, everything like that, you have to act promptly. Explanations never catch up with a story once it is in print.

I will tell you a story that illustrates my point in two ways. One is trying to suppress the story, and the other is not doing this promptly. You probably remember that about three years ago Drew Pearson came out on the radio with a story that the United States taxpayers were 900 million dollars short on marks in Germany, due to the Russians being able to print marks. That we were taking them in at 10 cents to the mark at our finance offices; and we had 900 billion marks, that is, nearly a billion dollars, of the taxpayers' money tied up in marks.

We had been queried on the dollar shortage on marks several weeks before the radio report. We had tried to get the story of what was actually the situation from the War Department Budget people. They said, "No comment to the press. We are short on marks over there, but it is nothing like that and we don't want you to say anything about it at this time. We are about to get this under control. Does the Chase National Bank tell its competitors what it is doing in its financial transactions?" and so forth. I said, "Gentlemen, all right, but this story is hot and we ought to have the facts on it." As a matter of fact, I felt so keenly about it that I put my request for the facts in writing, so I would be protected.

Well, when Pearson broke the thing, I went up to the Budget people the next morning and said, "Let us get this story out fast, because it has leaked already. Here it is in Pearson's column." They said, "No. We won't say anything other than--if you have to--to say that we are short, but we are doing something about it and have the matter in hand."

You can't put out a statement like that. The questions would come just a hundredfold more. You have to come clean with a story. So I said, "We will not comment."

Then Pearson came out again in his column on it, as you perhaps remember. I went back and said, "Come, let me have this story." "No, we are going to stay pat. Use that little statement we gave you before." We put it out. It meant nothing, and only excited more curiosity.

Well, by that time Congress had the story and one of its committees conducted a complete investigation. The Assistant Secretary of the Army had to go in person about two weeks later, and give a statement to the congressional committee on the whole story. He explained that we had never been more than about 165 million dollars short. We had reduced that to about 75 million dollars at that time by buying for marks articles, which could be sold to the soldiers, like gifts and souvenirs and post exchange supplies; and by the end of the year we were going to be even with it. But the congressional investigation had started and it ran its full course with thousands of man-hours required by the staff to furnish data. You remember all the hullabaloo about who gave the plates to whom to make the currency. It reached the upper level of politics which I won't discuss here.

RESTRICTED

The point I am trying to make is that people would ask me, "How did you all ever come out about the 900 million dollars that you were short on marks?" For six months after that the story never caught up with the original blast about the amount. The man on the street still thinks the Army got stuck for nearly a billion dollars, where in fact we lost nothing.

Another sequel to that--just to show you how you can save yourselves trouble--is that the Budget people had to spend nearly three weeks to get all the data and substantiating documents together. There was a file at least three feet high on it. They worked overtime several Saturdays and Sundays and got all the documents together for the committee of Congress. If the same statement that the Assistant Secretary made 10 days or 2 weeks later had been made when the story first broke, or better--before it broke, it would have saved all that trouble.

You have to establish a reputation for honesty with people who are dealing with news. I tell you gentlemen, those people are the smartest group I have ever worked with. Individually they are no smarter than any of you, but collectively they are smarter than any individual can be. The only role that you can adopt with them is one of complete honesty. If you can't tell them something, don't tell it to them, say you can't comment and if possible why, but never try to evade the issue. Very often they don't expect an answer to a query that involves genuine security. They just ask it to find out if somebody is dumb enough to answer, and they smile if you don't fall for their bait. But you must establish a reputation for honesty.

In that connection be sure to admit your error. The worst thing in the world is to try to bluff through something when you are out on a limb. You had better say "was wrong" and get right back to the trunk of the tree.

Let me give you a little illustration of that. You remember when the cyclotron that the Japanese had built was destroyed. It was dumped at sea. The public started to boil about that. Secretary Patterson said: "I ordered it destroyed. I made a mistake. I am sorry I did it." But that was the end of the cyclotron story.

You also remember the famous story about Blaze being flown on a plane across the country on a number one priority. That created a big stir. General Hal George, Commander of Air Transport Command went up to Congress and said, "We flew him over. It was a mistake. I have taken steps to see that it won't happen again." You didn't hear anything more about the Blaze story. But just remember, be honest. If you are wrong, admit it. We are all wrong occasionally.

RESTRICTED

There is another thing to remember about relations with newsmen and that is the matter of the exclusive story; I learned that early. There are certain ethical or professional procedures among the pressmen that are rather difficult for you to understand, and one of the most complicated is the exclusive story on spot news. The ambition of every journalist is to get an exclusive, in other words, to get a scoop.

The criticism that I heard when I went to the Public Information Division was that a man would get a lead on an exclusive story. He would come in and ask PID about it. PID would say, "We will look into this" and about an hour later out would come a press release. It made the correspondents furious, and rightly so. When a newspaperman by aggressive and industrious work has found a story, to him it is his just as much as if it has been copyrighted. So when a newsman comes in to you with a story, gentlemen, don't tell anybody about it. Give him the facts and let him get his exclusive.

I found that this was the thing that usually worried them most. So we established a standard operation procedure on how we would handle exclusives. We submitted a draft of it to them first to see if our plan was the way they wanted it handled. They said "O.K." So we put it into effect and we had no more trouble, because we lived up to our agreement.

I will give you a case in point. You remember the Garsson case. He was being investigated by Congress about some munitions deals. Jerry Green got a lead on the fact that Garsson's son had been tried by a court martial and that Congressman May had written a letter to Eisenhower in his behalf. Jerry called my office and said, "How about this story? Is it true?" Well, I immediately investigated and found that it was true. I told him all the facts and he said, "Now, this is my story." I said, "Sure it is. I will tell nobody else. You can handle it." Well, Jerry broke the story, and of course, it was a very sensational front-page article.

Immediately all the other news people covering the Department of the Army rushed in and said, "Give us the facts on this." I gave them the same facts and I said, "Did we handle this right?" They said, "Absolutely. If we had been in Jerry's shoes, that is the way we would want you to handle our story." So just remember two things. Protect the reporter's exclusive, and no matter if the story is a bad one and hurts you, you get the facts and give them to the reporter.

There was an article in yesterday afternoon's "Times-Herald" about one of our colonels, an exclusive story. As soon as the man broke it, of course we got dozens of queries about it. I was on the telephone all afternoon on that story. But it was an exclusive by the man in the "Times-Herald" yesterday afternoon.

RESTRICTED

As a matter of fact, Jerry Green knows that I treat him fairly, and ever since that time he has been on my team. I have never crossed him up and he has never crossed me up. Get a reputation for playing fair with them and you will have accomplished 70 percent of your job.

I can't emphasize too much the value of time in working with news media. I use the word "media" because newspapers are not all of it. You have radio and television, you have books and magazines, and you have word-of-mouth stories. Time to a newspaperman is of the essence. I am telling you gentlemen this because, although I don't expect you to be PIO's, you as commanders will be the PIO. You will have a fellow on your staff that you call the PIO, but he isn't. The commander is the PIO, whether he wants to be or not.

This fellow called the PIO is your assistant. He should be as close to you as your aide would be. You even work with him through your chief of staff. You must have that fellow in and talk to him personally all the time. He has to know what you are thinking.

As a matter of fact, in the news business, time as little as five minutes may mean a scoop. When a fellow gives you a question, you had better stir yourself to get the answer back to him, and then he will put your side in his story. If you don't get it to him before his edition deadline, he will file what he has. In that event you will never catch up with the story as it was first printed and your side of the story will be lost.

As I say, if you don't get the story back to him promptly and factually, he will print what he has. You will get something like General Collins did the other day. He was going to go out to Japan on his first trip, the one he was called back from. You may recall that at that time we were going through the throes of the final days of the Communist invasion in China. Chiang Kai-shek was just about out. It was a very delicate situation over there. Of course, we had nothing to do with India or anything down that way. General Collins was merely going out as the new Chief of Staff to see the troops and our own installations in Japan, Guam, Okinawa, Hawaii, and so forth. He had been planning to do this for some time. I said, "General, let us announce this now." He said, "All right. As soon as I am firm on it, I will let you have it." Then he became busy and didn't quite get his details worked out. The first thing we knew, we picked up the paper and we saw this:

"Will see Chiang. General Collins leaves soon for the Far East. General J. Lawton Collins, the Army's new Chief of Staff, is leaving next week for the Far East. His itinerary includes Japan, China, and India. He will confer with both United States and British authorities. In China Collins also plans to talk to

RESTRICTED

the national civilian and military chiefs, among them Chiang Kai-shek. The latter is still the dominant Nationalist leader, although State Department policy makers make no secret of their belief that Chiang is the principal obstacle to a much-needed reconstruction of Nationalist forces. The main purpose of General Collins' trip is a first-hand study of the measure that will be necessary to implement the new policy fixed by Secretary of State Acheson and Foreign Minister Bevin. Under this policy the United States will assume a number of British military obligations in the Far East, particularly as regards to India."

Well, we could have gotten out the right story a week before that. We got out the right story the next day, but I don't know whether we accomplished anything by it or not. The thing is, as soon as you have some news, let it go. Don't wait, like most General Staff officers want to, until the whole parcel is tied up with a ribbon and passed out. You have to break many things while they are in the planning stage, while they are still news.

This brings me to my pet subject--and this is where it affects you, I think--preventive planning in public relations. In other words let us do something to this public opinion, just like we would do something about an operation of any kind. Let us have a plan for it. I call it "preventive maintenance." Let us say "Preventive public relations." Very often it is not what you get in the papers that counts; it is what you don't get in the papers. But let us be sure that which is published is right.

Now, the planning on the public relations, on presenting something to the people, has to start at the same time that you start planning the operation itself. You need to have what we call a public relations program. This applies to everything, from an event as big as the Bikini test on down to an announcement that you are going to close the gate of some through street on a post.

The Bikini test was one of the best illustrations I have ever seen. Admiral Blandy organized his public relations task force at the same time that he organized his operations task force. He gave it just as much attention as he did the other. He had a very fine staff of the three services, headed up by Captain Fitzhugh Lee USN. I think that whole program went off as smoothly, so far as public relations are concerned, as anything I have ever seen. The only hitch, as I recall, and a minor one at that, was that mechanical failure in a broadcast on the first drop. But the point is, they were always thinking ahead. They had a plan. They took care of hundreds of correspondents. They took care of filing thousands of words of copy coming back. It all worked out fine.

Another operation that the Army did was a very good job. That was in the repatriation of the war dead. We started a year in advance planning

RESTRICTED

our public relations program operation. As you perhaps know, it is practically completed now. We haven't had a major unpleasant incident. There have been one or two minor things in which something went wrong, but in an operation as big as that you are bound to have something go astray. We had the usual stories of grandma being buried with full military honors instead of Major General So-and-So, but that story has appeared in every war since 1812! The point is, the public relations program on the repatriation of the dead was a year old before a body was moved, or the program was tested and tried for flaws. We had had dry runs on it. We had schools for the people who were escorting these bodies, and so forth. The program has gone very well and has been a credit to the Army.

Now, one quite recent program didn't have a public relations plan. You may recall it. I picked up the paper on 24 December 1949 and there was a story that said:

"Reserve officers' head hits Army bungling in cuts in paid drills. The Army's inept budgetary planning is undermining the effectiveness and morale of its reserve forces, President John B. Bracken of the Reserve Officers Association charged last night. The Department announced Thursday that paid drills and training for reservists would be curtailed sharply starting January first because of a lack of funds. Branding the Army's action 'bungling' that endangered our national security at a time when every effort should be bent to strengthen it, Mr. Bracken pointed out that the cut in training pay affected some 2800 reserve units" and so forth.

Well, we started getting busy then, but by this time the fire was burning. This order was issued without PID's knowing anything about it, although it was going to affect the pay of 78,000 Reserve officers--most of whom would read it first in the papers. We could have helped them a lot on this. The man handling this, thought it was just another routine matter and was necessary in order to keep from obligating money which we did not have; so he just put out the order. True, he was right; but we could have eased the shock. We could have prepared the way for it with advance releases. We did the best we could to get this back on the trolley. We got the reserve people together with the Reserve Officers Association and we prepared a program which includes a plan for informing the public--a document entitled, "The Organized Reserve Corps Program." We have a team that is now in the field going to each army headquarters and explaining the program as it has been approved by the President, Secretary Johnson, and so forth.

The public relations aspect of that document is the thing that pleases me. There is a Public Relations Annex in it, showing just how the document is going to be presented. It will be presented about the first of April. We will have a month to orient everybody in the country--all the staffs, all the Reserve officers, and the officers charged with

RESTRICTED

reserve affairs. About the first of April we plan to make a news release and to put on a program which will introduce this new directive to the Reserve officers themselves and the people, and we hope that it will go through smoothly.

One of the things we are trying to do is to get a public relations paragraph in every order that is issued. It is very gratifying to see that we are beginning to get it. Occasionally we are considered, but sometimes not very wisely. The other day we discovered a paper which had been in the War Department for about three weeks; and when we finally got hold of it, found that a staff officer had put at the bottom: "No public relations aspects." Yet the thing they were talking about in that paper was whether or not Blanchard and Davis then national football heroes should play in the charity football game.

We have to watch that, and on a relatively low level sometimes. ("Low level" is a good British term that we got from the war! I don't know what we would do without these "levels" of command and staff!) For instance, a quartermaster officer put out a routine directive that hereafter the Army was going to purchase only Grade 2 beef. Well, it didn't mean anything to him other than a routine order. In Washington it would make no news at all but it was big news to cattlemen. The first I heard about it was from General Lutes down in Texas. This announcement meant that the Army wasn't going to take any more range-fattened beef. So the Texas cattlemen were right on General Lutes' neck down there within a matter of hours. He called me and wanted to know what it was all about. Before it was over I had quite a job clearing up the story with the western papers.

We have to watch staff officers who take administrative action to be sure they know that many of their deeds do have an effect out in the field; then the field commanders cut PID in.

I would like to emphasize again the point that I made about the commanding officer's being the public relations officer; that it can't be delegated to someone else; that you can't be helped unless you have a man closely associated with you. I think one of the best illustrations of that is a tribute by Mr. Ed Partridge of the "New York Herald Tribune," who covered Europe, to General Clay. He has this to say about General Clay, who, as you know, was over there on the hot spot so long:

"How many of you have read one line in almost any American newspaper or magazine that is essentially hostile and personally critical of General Clay? I haven't, and, believe me, it is my job to read about those things. His policies have occasionally been criticized or subject to question, but then only on a lofty

RESTRICTED

and impersonal level. He had to do some pretty tough things. Yet General Clay has lived in the midst of American and Allied reporters for two years. I think he has registered the most outstanding success in personal public relations of any general in the American Army, and that goes for Eisenhower too.

"The reasons are simple and can be taken to heart by every officer. First, he is available to the press both for regular conferences and for personal meetings. He is not aloof. So long as any newspaperman doesn't come in with trivialities of abuses in his off-the-record conferences, he is welcomed back again and again. Certainly General Clay knows how to handle the press."

By the way, this Partridge is one of the best newspapermen I know, and he is tough. I was surprised that he would praise a man like that. I know him quite well.

"He gives an honest answer to an honest question. Obviously he can't reveal all his top secrets, and we don't expect that. But we never get the impression that he is trying to dodge or pass off a phony on us. The basic trust he enjoys is a tremendous asset, and General Clay has never frittered it away.

"Thirdly, he has set an example that even the French and the British don't follow. He as military governor and commander of the American troops allows the press, the American, Allied, and German, to have regular conferences with him in Berlin and Frankfurt. In effect he is answerable to the press for his policies and practices, and this can be compared to an occupation parliament. Four years off and on I covered the White House press conferences of President Roosevelt, who was an acknowledged master of this trick art. I venture to say that General Clay is the second best man I have ever encountered when you consider his record over there. Not only has he earned the deep respect and friendship of the press, but he has made for my money the outstanding personal contribution to teaching intelligent Germans that our democracy is something more than a loosely used phrase."

Now, I think that the armed forces at the present time are being held in the highest opinion by the public that they have ever been held in time of peace. But we are not going to be held in the high opinion unless we continue to merit it by our actions and unless we insure that we have factual and prompt reporting. That is up to us. We have to see to it that we meet the press halfway.

I would like to impress that on you with an extract from a talk which Gordon Gray, Secretary of the Army, made at West Point last summer. Secretary Gray is one of our outstanding public servants. It has been

RESTRICTED

the greatest pleasure to work with him. I think, coming from a man who was a publisher before becoming Secretary of the Army, this is something that we should all give great heed to. Secretary Gray said;

"If the past two wars proved anything, they proved that the dividing line between the soldier and civilian is growing less and less capable of definition. In modern war the nation becomes an army, led by professional soldiers and occupied with an almost infinite gradation of military and semi-military tasks, from the fighting line right back to the defense factory or local bond drive. This fact imposes upon the professional soldier a completely new awareness of an old responsibility, the responsibility of understanding the civilian, and, what is more important, the responsibility of allowing the civilian to understand him, the soldier. That is a process which must be initiated by you, the soldier. You must always take the first step, because you will always be just what you are now-- instruments of the civilian public of the United States. You, not the civilian members of the public, have the responsibility of creating public understanding of your profession."

QUESTION: Would you please talk for a moment about Drew Pearson-- how he gets away with some of his truths and half truths?

GENERAL PARKS: Well, I could talk for more than just a few minutes about Drew. I have had very satisfactory contractual contacts with him. He has retracted several things that I have pointed out to him. He used to have a man named Donovan to cover the Department of the Army, and Donovan used to check five or six things a week with us, many of which, when we showed him the facts, he didn't use. I just saw him the other day about a story that, if he had checked with us, I think perhaps he wouldn't have used. I had him on the griddle the other day because he was still referring to the Air Force as part of the Army. He says "Army and Navy controversy" when we are just bystanders in some of them.

He capitalizes on the love of gossip that is inherent in people. Very often in getting a story while it is still hot, while it is still news, he doesn't check the source and he doesn't check his facts. As I say, he has retracted several things. Of course, when he does, he generally puts it down in his "Capital Chall" in one line, and unless you have your glasses on, you miss it.

But I think that Drew Pearson does have a salutary effect on the military services. How many of you have not heard at least 10 times a month somebody say: "You had better not do that. Drew Pearson will have it in his column tomorrow." That is a fact now. You hear that all the time.

RESTRICTED

How he gets these things I don't know. He once told me he never paid anybody other than a legitimate newspaperman a nickel for anything that he got. I don't know. I know he has a big staff of investigators of his own. They run down anonymous tips of which he must get thousands a month. I do know that he has checked many, many stories with us, and, as I say, he has not used some of them. He has checked many stories and I have substantiated them.

QUESTION: You pointed out this morning very well and aptly the integrity of the press and also that you never catch up with a story. How do you deal with this minority of the press members to whom you give a very definite statement only to find that words have been left out or added which completely change the meaning?

Let me give you an example. A number of aircraft plants that had been used during the war were placed after the war under certain commands to be maintained only as stand-by plants. I remember that a member of one of the wire services came to this command and asked what was being done about the Boeing plants in Wichita and Chicago, the Martin plant in Omaha, and the Douglas plant in Tulsa. This member was given the story that a maintenance crew was being placed in those buildings purely for maintenance, to maintain them on a stand-by status in the event of any future emergency. In releasing this story, this man stated that a crew had been thrown into all these aircraft plants to put them in immediate readiness for war production. You can imagine the impact that this would have had in the United States had it hit the wires. Luckily a radio concern in Chicago called long distance to have the story verified, because it was afraid of the impact such report would have on the United States, and the story was killed. How do you deal with a member like that?

GENERAL PARKS: I will tell you how I deal with them. As I say, they are in the minority.

You have to remember when a reporter comes in that as a rule he doesn't know all your technical terms. That is one of the things that you have to watch as a military man. Don't talk in alphabet language. Don't use a military term that means one thing to you and means something else to the civilian. I have found that generally it is an honest mistake; that they didn't realize they were putting you in a hole.

The way I handle them when they do that is this: Instead of going to this fellow and saying, "You so-and-so, I am going to horsewhip you," I get him in and say, "Look, Bud, you want to be a big journalist some day. You want to work for the 'New York Times.'" If so, you have to establish a reputation for accuracy. Here are the facts and this is what you said." You can appeal to them that way. I straightened out three or four reporters that way very well.

To give you an illustration--Secretary Royall had a press conference about the Litchfield trial that was going on overseas. There was a defense lawyer who was trying to make a name for himself. This reporter said, "Mr. Royall, what is all the hollering about over there?" Mr. Royall had just been there and he said, "Defense lawyers always try to make a good case, for their clients," or words to that effect. Then Mr. Royall went ahead and said the Army was doing everything it could to insure a fair trial and was fully following the legal procedures. The reporter went out and wrote a story that Secretary Royall said this Litchfield trial was just a lot of hollering by lawyers, quoting him. Next day there was an editorial in the "Washington Post" about it, which said in effect that Mr. Royall was off base if he said that is "a lot of hollering by lawyers."

I got this fellow in. I said, "Look, here is the transcript." He said "Well, that is what he said." I said, "No, that isn't what he said. Read the whole thing." We had quite an argument and finally I convinced the reporter that he had got it wrong. That fellow is still over there and is covering the War Department very well, and I have never had another bad story out of him.

You have to remember also that when you get away from the big metropolitan papers and get out in the field, you will find that lots of papers are trying out youngsters, just kids, who are inexperienced. You have to help those fellows and be very patient with them. As I say, I have never had a reporter maliciously write a poor story that I know of.

QUESTION: May I add there, sir, that this man was a war correspondent in one of the major theaters all during the war and was well acquainted with all the military terms. Later on he went with the movies, where I think he belonged.

GENERAL PARKS: They are the rare exceptions. The thing, as I say, is that you have to keep on being patient. Remember that in this business it is much like a football game with them. They try to play you and try to tease you a little. They will write a story to make you react. Don't take it seriously if you have a little verbal tilt with them. They like it and they respect you if you stand up and enjoy it like they do.

QUESTION: Sir, you said at the beginning of your talk that you are not running a propaganda machine. Now, about two and a half years ago, I think it was, the then Army Ground Forces had one of the finest propaganda units that I have ever seen or heard about which they were using in an effort to convince the people of this country that something should be established that the people believed shouldn't be. That was the UMT experimental unit at Fort Knox. Do you think, sir that the Department of Defense has a responsibility to the people of the United States to put forth facts on problems of defense that they believe should be established?

RESTRICTED

GENERAL PARKS: Well, you are very flattering. I was in on that UMT experiment. I didn't know we had such a good propaganda organization! It wasn't propaganda, however.

The line between where propaganda leaves off and information begins or vice versa is a very hard one to define. A committee of Congress before which I appeared tried to define it, and I don't think they had any better luck than you or I would have. But we feel that it is the duty of the military services to make available information that the people want and should have about their services and about national defense and how to go about getting adequate national defense.

We call it information and we believe it is legitimate information. Where the line between what you call propaganda and information is I don't know. That Fort Knox experiment was an experiment to see how it might be done, and it was very valuable to us. We learned a lot of training lessons out of it, as you know. I wouldn't classify that as propaganda.

QUESTION: In 1945 public opinion forced the disintegration of the armed services rather than an orderly demobilization. Would you care to give us your ideas about how your preventive maintenance could be applied to a situation like that in the future?

GENERAL PARKS: Yes. I think we have a lot we can do in the future on it. To begin with, we had a lot of help from subversive elements in this hue and cry to bring the boys home. I think the thing that finally turned the tide was when we had a few near riots and mutinies and the people of the United States got scared to death. They had been so used to whipping the poor old military, kicking the dog around, and he had always been the faithful watchdog that they just took it as a matter of course that the armed forces were going to be in there and they could rely on them. When it looked as if the military were about to disintegrate, the public was genuinely alarmed.

I was here in Washington at the time. By George, you could see the tension and the fear and the apprehension on the part of the public and the newspapermen that I talked to. It was right from there that we began to get a better backing from the press, because the pressmen really started to think that, after all, they would have to do something about the military establishment.

Now, I think that right there you put your finger on something. I think the next time, if we have another war, more thought should be given to demobilization and how it is going to be done. Let us get some preparation, some background and backing of public sentiment. I don't think the program for World War II was as acceptable as it looked.

RESTRICTED

It looked awfully good on the surface, but it was pretty tough on the units trying to get them out of the theaters. I think a public relations annex in any demobilization plan is an absolute "must."

QUESTION: General, would you care to comment on the appropriateness of the "B Bag" column in the "Stars and Stripes"?

GENERAL PARKS: I think the "B Bag" column got well out of hand. I talked to General Eisenhower about this. He felt so keenly that he would like to have a soldier paper and keep his hands off and let them run it that he would bend over backward and not interfere. But he finally found that he had to, and the "B Bag" was brought under control.

What they started doing was to put nothing but gripes in the "B Bag." In my opinion it had a very insidious effect. I was sure that a number of the papers we printed in the Pacific had a lot to do with the riots in Manila. The "Pacifcan" was terrible. General Richardson was the first man who had the courage over in Honolulu to fire some of those birds. One of them had printed a headline in the Army paper that the Secretary of War was public enemy number one. By that time General Richardson took the ball and fired these guys, and we were able to make it stick over here and get the responsible press behind it.

QUESTION: One of the things that keeps happening that embarrasses a commander in the field is where a policy affecting the services is noised around a little but the final plans are not ready to be broken and higher headquarters says, "Just keep everything tight until we get this finalized. We will let a release go out and it will be released all over the Nation." In the meantime some other government agency gets hold of it and breaks it here in Washington, and all this time the commander has been telling his local newspapermen, "Now, just wait and we will give you all a break at the same time." That has gone on as far back as I can remember, and I think it is still going on. How do you combat that problem?

GENERAL PARKS: I assure you that is one of the things that we at our headquarters, at our office, are most concerned about. It is awfully hard to lick. I have just come from the Pacific, where we were on the receiving end. We read the stuff in the newspapers and we looked silly because we didn't know what it was all about. That is one of the things I am trying my hardest to do in the Department of the Army--to keep the commanders in the field informed, so that they will know ahead of time and won't read the news affecting them in the press. But it is difficult to do. We have only 16 people in Public Information.

The newspapers are very quick on these things. As soon as a release is made here, it is in San Francisco in 10 minutes, and it is on the streets or on the radio in San Francisco in half an hour.

RESTRICTED

Only the day before yesterday we had this coal situation, where the six army commanders are to coordinate surplus coal and make it available to the governors to help protect life. I wanted to get 24 hours to notify the commanders. We had sent out the advance information before the decision had been made, and it was simultaneously announced in the Pentagon Building and sent to the governors, and we were supposed to send through our command channels the notices to the generals commanding. But you can't beat the press. They dispatch it out in 10 minutes; and in 20 minutes, or 30 at the most, it is on the radio. But the expediency was so great in this instance that they went ahead and sent it out. Then we telephoned to the army commanders to cut them in. We have done that several times by telephone when we couldn't get a 24-hour delay in the breaking of the news.

It is something that is very hard to do, but it is most important. I agree with you thoroughly that on something that is going to leak it is much better to put out a little release of what is going to happen than to have it leak out in a fragmentary form and be all wrong. That is something I have been trying to sell the Staff also. It helps a lot. It is one of the hard things to handle, because the press and the radio simply have better facilities than we have for getting the news out to the field.

QUESTION: I remember about three years ago hearing you argue on the stage with Hanson Baldwin about the censorship of the press in wartime. Hanson Baldwin was contending that the integrity of the press was not safe to rely on in wartime. What are the plans for wartime censorship?

GENERAL PARKS: I don't have anything to do with censorship, thank goodness. That is G-2.

Baldwin's contention is that we overclassify, and that is true. We overclassify things because it is easy to do so. You can stamp "Confidential" or "Secret" on a paper and then forget about it. You don't have to make a tough decision on whether this can go out or not.

But you ought to make that decision. I was just talking to Mr. Wiggins of the "Post." You use up your good will on trivial things in getting them to not use things when they know and you know that it doesn't make any difference whether the public knows it or not, and they should have it. Then when you come around to something that is really a military secret, they say, "Well, I don't know. The other thing you tried to get me to lay off wasn't secret; so maybe I had better dig this one out."

That is Baldwin's contention--that we overclassify; and we do. But, on the other hand, it is a prerogative that you must protect, because you can't leave that in the hands of the newspapermen. Baldwin would like to have you give him the dope and then let him decide what should be restricted or classified and what should not. But you can't let that go.

Talking about security, another thing is this: You can't put that off on you PIO, and don't you try it. That is a function of the fellow who has the job. A dozen times a month somebody will say to us in PID, "Now, you decide. You tell the pressmen that which they should know." Nothing doing--the job man is in charge of the activity or operation concerned. He has to know enough about it to know that which would, or would not, damage the Nation if it went out. We in PID are just agents to put out information. We can advise as to public reaction, but security policy is for the operating agencies to determine.

QUESTION: Are there any means of coordinating the activities of your office with other similar offices within the Department of Defense and with other government agencies?

GENERAL PARKS: Yes, Of course you get a very complex thing there, but it is done and it has to be done, particularly with the State Department in our occupation jobs.

Now, Secretary Voorhees, who has cognizance of our occupation and military government in Japan, is Secretary Johnson's representative on these occupation chores. He works very closely with the State Department. As a matter of fact, just this morning his deputy came in very much exercised because General ----- had made a speech yesterday on Japan and he was quoted as saying they would eventually have to have an army. So far as we can find out, it wasn't cleared with the State Department; and the State Department is not very happy about it.

QUESTION: Would you give us your evaluation of the participation by service personnel in quiz programs such as "Meet the Press," where there is a time limitation and also the muzzle of censorship?

GENERAL PARKS: You never get anywhere in a fight unless you get in the ring with a guy. Don't be afraid to get in there. But take this warning: Be sure you know who the forum is composed of. We think it is not a good plan for a military man to get in and debate with a Senator or a Congressman. There is no sense in taking the opposite side to a Senator or Congressman. That is bad business, in my opinion, if it is a national issue or some political one. It would be all right if you were talking about the good of the Red Cross or something like that. But pick your subject. Pick your forum. Don't get on a forum with a glib-tongued Commie or somebody like that.

On the otherhand, you never get anywhere if you let these forums go on and never have your side presented. We used to have Ted Curtis, ex-general of the Air Force, up here. He was one of the best men on the forums that I ever saw. He is now with Eastman Kodak, I think. We used to get him frequently to go down and get on these forums. But to get your active-duty officer on some of these forums is pretty bad. You have to pick your forum and your people, but it is good business to get out and talk.

RESTRICTED

QUESTION: Sir, I certainly agree with you as to the importance of public relations for the armed forces. I think you will agree with me when I say that the idea of reaching out to Berlin, taking an officer who likes his job out there and doesn't know anything about public information work, dragging him back to the Pentagon to learn public relations through the system of hard knocks, is "an inefficient way to run a railroad."

GENERAL PARKS: I thoroughly agree with you.

QUESTION: What are we doing to prevent such a thing happening again?

GENERAL PARKS: I don't know whether I understood you to say it was such a catastrophe. I think you are going to suspect me of planting that question.

We have a school out at Carlisle, an Armed Forces Information School. We have had that going on for four years now. We are sending officers of all grades up there on the course in public information. There is also a course in "Troop Information and Education." It is a splendid school. The curriculum includes addresses by outstanding men of the radio and journalism, very much like your lecture course here, as well as on the practical application of it. It is meeting the needs on the lower level. It will be some time before you find those graduates in the senior grades. In the meantime, you will just have to continue to pinch-hit with your old beat-up generals like me.

But we are trying to do something about it. As a matter of fact, this talk is in line with one of our programs for going around stressing the importance of public relations. I have talked at Fort Knox and Levenworth, talked down at the Third Army--we had a PID conference there--I am going down to Fort Benning, and I will talk at West Point, all to stress the importance of getting people thinking about the importance of good public relations.

Actually there is no mystery about public relations. It is just a lot of work and answering telephones late at night and knowing where to get answers. The city editor on the "Washington Post"--we were old pals--used to call me regularly between twelve thirty and one o'clock nearly every night. We have to do that. There is no mystery about it. Any officer can do it. It is just a matter of getting the experience behind him and learning the rules of the news media.

QUESTION: General, you have given us some very fine instruction on the care and feeding of journalists and how we bring the public in on all these military secrets. I wonder if anything is being contemplated for bringing military personnel in on these military secrets in the future. What I have specific reference to was something that happened less

RESTRICTED

than a year ago, where we had a top-secret document, still classified top-secret, and then it appeared in "Life Magazine." It is like the old saying about the Indian: It might be an accident, but it happened continuously. It would have no repercussions in these hallowed halls, but when you get down an echelon below that, it is having a good deal of effect on the security-mindedness of the personnel. It isn't peculiar to one branch, as you know. I wonder if anything is being done to tie those things together, to protect those who are trying to effect some security from getting the rug pulled out from under them.

GENERAL PARKS: Can you work the Air Force side? I am working the Army side on that very thing right now. I got away with two and a half years of public information over here, and then got a wonderful assignment in Hawaii. I was over there 11 months. The man that I replaced on this job was blown up in a boat over here. They called me on the phone and I am back in it again. So they are a little short on adequate help.

But when I returned I realized the lack of understanding that there is in the field of what is going on here. Everybody in the field wants to play on the team. They want to run with the play, but they don't know what the signal is. I would like to have some kind of policy guidance sent around to the field. The State Department people have an excellent service for that. They have policy guidance for their officers on practically any subject. They come over my desk and they are good. But we haven't anything comparable to that in the military services that I know of.

I am trying to do it on my level with the Public Information Bulletin. But that is issued only twice a month, and that is too slow. We are doing the best we can with it. But there should be a policy guidance letter or cable going out to the field. You know what the thought is. Let us call it a party line, if you want. We should see that the party line gets down to the field.

That is a crying need and one that I would like to see met. You can't turn it over to some CAF-5. It has to be handled by a very senior officer, one who is "in the know" on the policy making and can get the stuff out while it is still newsworthy and still worth something. You are 100 percent right. That is one of the things I am trying to lick, but it takes a lot of people. I have only 16. But the job is there and it has to be done sometime.

QUESTION: General, in your efforts and your desire to have the press cooperate with you--and obviously that is the intent of every public information officer--how far can you really go in off-the-record discussions with members of the press?

RESTRICTED

GENERAL PARKS: You have to evaluate you audience. You have to be sure of the man you are talking to or the group that you have. Some of them you cant trust with any thing. Others you wouldn't want to trust, because they wouldn't have enough background to know what you are talking about. I have never had one deliberately let me down.

I don't know whether that answers your question or not, but most of us would trust a columnist, a man writing a column, with a background like Constantine Brown or Walter Lippman. He knows more about it maybe than we do, and you can trust that type of person. But when you get down to the spot newsman and so forth, he isn't interested in that in the first place, and wouldn't have the background on many subjects in the second place.

The spot newsman doesn't want it off the record. A lot of them won't accept "I will talk to you off the record." They say, "We would rather you wouldn't," because if they pick it up outside later, they can't use it or you will say that they violated your confidence.

Just remember that you have to pick the group of people that you talk to. Then know them personally. I wouldn't mind telling Mark Watson anything because I know he has intelligence and will either use what I tell him to or not use it at all. And if it came to a matter of security, he wouldn't let me down. I think he addressed you all down here, or maybe it was the National War College. That is the kind of man who makes you very happy to be associated with. There are lots of them, hundreds of them.

COLONEL McKENZIE: The time has arrived when we will have to stop. General Parks, without any implication of your being older than we are, I would like to characterize your talk this morning as a father-to-son talk on the facts of life in public relations. I wish it were possible to take the other elements of economic mobilization and get them on such a practical working level as you have presented this subject this morning. Thank you very much, sir.

(14 Apr. 1950--375)S.

RESTRICTED