

FINAL PROBLEM ORIENTATION

13 February 1957

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COLONEL BARRETT: General Hollis, members of the class of 1957: As you know, when a faculty member appears before you, we don't provide him with an introducer. We let the cowering and apprehensive soul get up here on his own and perform his own introduction. Well, in trying to plan how to start out with you this morning I thought I couldn't do better than to follow the formula that we use here for an introduction--cover the points of Why this subject, at this time, by this speaker?

My subject, as you know, is a briefing on the final problem. We hope that we have made it clear in writing it out. But we do know from past experience that, however clear you try to make things of this sort when you issue them, you always run up against various interpretations and reactions that you hadn't expected. So it seems advisable early in the process to discuss the problem with the class, so that you will come to your work on it with reasonably unanimous understandings of the concepts behind it and of what is expected and the objectives of the work.

On this matter of problems and the explanations of problems, I think there's a story that is applicable. There was a psychologist

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whose favorite method of instruction was to pose problems to his classes. One year he was fortunate enough to have in his coeducational class three very charming young women--a Spanish girl, an Italian girl, and a French girl. He called them together and he said: "I'm going to give you a problem. Now, this is the problem: Think of yourself, each one individually, as cast away on a desert island, and with you are two men. They are young, handsome, charming, and vigorous. There is no hope for your rescue for many years. You are going to be with these two men on the island for years. Now, there's your problem. What would you do?"

He turned to the Spanish girl and said, "Senorita, what would you do?" She said, "Well, I'd stab one of the two men."

He made voluminous notes, then turned to the Italian girl and said, "Signorina, what would you do?" She said, "Well, I'd poison one of the two men."

He turned to the French girl and he said, "Mademoiselle, what would you do?" She wrinkled up her brows and said: "Well, would you please go over that again, because I didn't understand the problem."

That's why this subject.

Continuing with the formula, why at this time? You are all accustomed to branch chiefs briefing you or orienting you on their units at the beginning of the unit. Why are we doing it so far in advance?

JG

Well, I'm sure in reading over the problem, you've come to the conclusion that it's a rather weighty assignment. The time allotted for your work will be the period from the 29th of April, when you return from your field trip, until the 11th of June, the day before you graduate. During this period you will have no other academic assignments. Your term papers will have been completed, your individual OP's will have been completed, and there will be no concurrent units going along with the final problem.

However, I think it's obvious that the assignment is such that you will need all of the time available and could well use more. Therefore it's desirable that on the 29th, when you come back from your field trip, you be reasonably settled down and be prepared to get right to work on the problem and reduce the preliminary organizational matters and discussions just as much as possible.

Also if you know what the problem is well in advance, you have a chance to turn it over in your minds and I think perhaps it will help bring the remainder of your work into focus for you.

Then there's the final factor that if you have read the problem early, have given it some thought, it will facilitate your getting the maximum benefit out of various lectures that you will have between now and the 29th of April, when you start your work on the problem.

We are still following the formula. Why this speaker? That's not quite so clear. I'll try to illustrate that with a story too.

There was a social worker once who decided to perform some original research by interviewing the occupants of a house of ill repute and try to determine why it was they had gone into their chosen occupation. She interviewed the girls in a large establishment and she found out, as she had anticipated, that their family background was deplorable, that their early lives had been one of hardship and poverty, and that their education had been terribly fragmentary. This made it fairly obvious why these people had chosen their ancient although not honorable profession.

The last girl she interviewed was a puzzle. This girl told her that she had been brought up in a lovely New York suburb, she had a devoted family, and a happy and well-adjusted childhood. Everything seemed very smooth. So the social worker thought: "Well, perhaps the answer is that this poor girl's education was neglected." She said to the girl, "Did you have any education?" The girl said: "Oh, yes. Yes. As a matter of fact, I graduated from Vassar with high honors."

The social worker looked at her and said: "Well, how is it then that you are doing what you are doing?" The girl said, "Well, I guess I'm just lucky." So that's why the speaker.

The remainder of the briefing will be primarily concerned with how we will organize the work in the unit; and then rather briefly, even more briefly than I had anticipated before I heard Admiral Radford, some of the philosophy behind our selection of this particular problem.

Now, as to how the unit will be operated: The entire class will work on the same problem; and in order to do so, will be divided into eight committees of about eighteen people each, with an even distribution in each committee between the services, and with an even representation, or as close as we can get to it, of civilian students. Each committee will work out its own solution to the problem and will submit a written report on the 11th of June.

In addition, the findings of each committee, and its reasoning and support for the findings, will be presented to a board of faculty members by an oral presenter for each committee in a presentation of about one hour's duration. After having heard all of the eight oral presentations, the faculty board will select one or two, just possibly three, to be given again in this auditorium on two successive days, the 6th and 7th of June, before audiences consisting of the entire student body here, the National War College student body, and distinguished guests, high Government officials, prominent individuals outside Government, and officers of general and flag rank from the services.

To give you some idea of the quality of these audiences, last year our guests in attendance included--

three Assistant Secretaries of Defense,
two of the Assistant secretaries of the Army,
an Assistant Secretary of the Air Force,
an Assistant Secretary of Commerce,
the Deputy Administrators of FCDA and BDSA,
the Deputy Director of the Budget,
the Vice Chief of Staff of the Army,
the Vice Chief of Naval Operations,
the Chief of Marine Aviation,
the Director of Operations of the USAF,
top ODM and Interior officials,
the former Chief of Staff of the Air Force.

I haven't even with this cataloging exhausted the levels of two- and three-star rank. The one-star rank was so numerous that we began to fear it would have to lop over into the gallery seats. It was a most distinguished audience.

The assignment of the students to the various committees will be decided early in April, and the list of committee membership will be put out at that time. Then on the 12th of April, before your field trip, we will call you together for a preliminary organization meeting of

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your committees. At that organization meeting we will ask each committee to elect a chairman. We don't appoint chairmen. We will also ask the committees to either elect or empower the chairmen to appoint the other officers that the committees require--the spokesman, who will prepare and deliver the oral report; the editor for the written report; and such other vice chairmen and subcommittee chairmen as you may feel the committee should have. At this preliminary organization meeting on the 12th of April, the faculty adviser assigned to each committee will preside. After that, of course, the chairmen will preside.

After your officers are selected, the faculty adviser will work with you on your plans for organizing the committee work, getting that set up. For instance, you'll probably want to talk over whether you'll plan to set up task forces along the lines of the various agencies involved in this process of preparedness and emergency management of the economy; or whether, on the other hand, you prefer to organize functionally, along such lines as the manpower area, the rehabilitation area, the requirements area, and so on. Or you may evolve your own different organizations.

It isn't expected that you will settle all these problems in one meeting. The intent is to get you far enough into the matter on the

12th of April so that when you come back from your field trip, your time in planning your work will be materially shortened.

Now, as far as classification of the reports is concerned, we feel that this problem can be handled without your having to go into the top secret category for the body of your report and the body of your oral presentation. If you need top secret material, you can ordinarily handle it in appendixes. However, other than that, you are under no restriction. It's, of course, true that if you can keep your report and presentation unclassified, so much the better. The lower the classification, the easier it is for you to handle and to store material. But, as I said, it is up to you. You are not restricted.

Now, the formally scheduled academic activities during this final unit will represent a rather light load. We want to afford you the maximum possible time for the creative thinking, discussion, and research that is the most important part of the work that you will need to do to handle the problem. You see, this final problem is not a separate study in a particular circumscribed area with the function of providing you new information, as most of your other units have been. It is, rather, a synthesis of all of your year's work up to this point.

During the period of the final problem the process of putting out information is largely completed, the initiative passes over to you

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to use this information and to develop it and to interrelate and correlate it. This doesn't mean, of course, that there won't be gaps in your knowledge that will still need to be filled in, but we think you can do this best for yourselves. Therefore there will be only seven lectures scheduled during the period. They will all be scheduled during the first twelve to fifteen days of the unit. They won't be lectures primarily designed to provide new information for you. They will be lectures designed to present provocative points of view, controversial points of view, to stimulate your thinking, and to give you some outside points of view. They will fit in with your discussion rather than have your discussions have to wait until you hear what someone has to say.

Now, besides the lectures, we will also schedule a series of seminar meetings. None of these will be class seminars. Each one of them will deal with one aspect of the problem or with one agency working in the area. So the only people that will need to attend the seminar will be those individuals from the committee who are concerned in that area.

As a practical matter, we will ask each committee to send not less than two members to each seminar. We won't schedule any seminars during the first week after the 29th of April. We want you to have time to talk it over and to get your minds rolling on the problem before we ask people to come over here and discuss it with you and answer your questions.

The seminars will be primarily designed to let you ask questions, to probe into areas that you think are soft, and to try out on people with a knowledge of the subject some of the ideas that are starting to develop in your minds.

By the end of the third week the seminars will be completed. The remainder of the time will be available, practically without interruption, for you to do your discussion, your research, your thinking, and your writing. If we schedule the seminars properly, we think we can reduce or hopefully eliminate the necessity for your going over to other Government offices and agencies. I don't mean by that that we in any way discourage you from doing that, but we do know that these trips outside to other places take up a lot of time coming and going and arranging. And so we'll start off by bringing the mountain to Mohammed and hope Mohammed won't have to go back to the mountain later.

There's another part of the formal academic work of the final unit. Between now and the 29th of April or your spring field trip the college is scheduling lectures in areas that have not been very extensively covered or intensively covered during the work of your individual units, but which do have a definite bearing on your work in the final problem; for example the area of civil defense. During the next few weeks you will hear from the Federal Civil Defense Administrator; you will hear from Congressman Hollifield, who is the congressional authority in the field; you will

hear from a state Federal civil defense administrator; and you will also hear a series of presentations from a group of your classmates in the civil defense area. There will be similar lectures, which we will identify for you as they occur, in other areas.

This, then, is a rough outline of how the unit will be operated. We will issue a curriculum book in April, which will amplify and expand and repeat this academic and administrative detail. We will also provide you with a bibliography. And, as you might expect, we will set up reference shelves in the library with materials that will be useful to you.

In addition, for the first time this year we will be able to provide for each committee at least one copy of Plans C and D-minus.

To sum it up, your work on the final problem breaks down into three stages. The first is the getting familiar with the problem and getting the committee organized to work on it. The second is the carrying on of the research, the thinking, and the discussions that culminate the third stage, which is the actual preparation of your written report and the oral presentation.

The bulk of your time should be devoted to the second stage. This is the creative phase of your work, and it's the most important part of the assignment. Consequently we are trying, as I said before, by these preliminary meetings and activities to shorten the time in preparation;

and at the same time we counsel you not to jump into the actual production of your report and your OP prematurely, but complete your discussions and get your thoughts and your developments lined up first. The more time you spend on hammering out your solution before you start to actually produce the paper, the better the paper will be and the easier it will come along.

Now, I want to discuss with you for a few minutes the philosophy behind the selection of this particular problem for your final assignment.

I said that the academic function of the final problem is to bring together the instruction in the individual study areas of the resident course and synthesize them into an interrelated whole. I believe that this particular problem does perform that synthesis function, but I must admit that we could quite probably have chosen a simpler and less complicated problem that would perform the purely academic function equally as well. Let's face it. This is a complex problem. The question arises, Why should we have been so impossible when with a little effort we could have been just difficult? Why make it so complex? It requires you to prepare plans for preparedness and emergency management of the economy that will be adequate to deal with cold war, with limited war, and with nuclear war and that are at the same time economically and politically feasible.

JTF

Well, the reason the problem is so complex is this: The final problem here at the college is not in actuality simply an academic exercise. I described to you a little earlier the type of audience we had and that we have had in previous years at the final problem presentation. I think you can see that individuals of the type I have listed for you wouldn't come over here on a parent-teachers association basis. They didn't come over here to be amazed and delighted at how well the students have done with their studies. They came over to get ideas and proposals that would be a help to them in coping with their own professional problems. As evidence of the fact that they weren't disappointed, I think you will be interested to know that when we printed a transcript of the oral presentation last year, we made a run of 500 copies. The whole 500 was exhausted on requests coming to the college within a few days. We made a re-run of 450 more copies, and that's very nearly exhausted now.

The demand came from such agencies as the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Office of Defense Mobilization, the Office of the Secretary of Defense. In various portions of those agencies it was made required reading.

The same thing happened with the written report. After we have received the written reports, they are also reviewed and one or two

selected for reproduction and available for distribution. We had the same experience with the written reports that we published last year.

By the time you start work on your final problem, you will have been in this environment for almost a year. Collectively you represent a good, substantial slice of the talent, capability, and experience of the services and of the executive departments. During your academic year you have been absorbing new information from lectures, from reading, and from discussions with your classmates. Each new lecture, each new item read, each discussion doesn't always ring the bell; but taking the process as a whole, you get a tremendous amount of new data fed in.

Well, if you take the maturity and the capacity of this group when it comes here, and if you add the factor of an input of additional opinions, knowledge, and stimulation; and then if you add the further factor that for the year you have been relatively free of the restrictions of daily deadlines, of pressures from above, of pressures that you must exert below, the various distracting necessities of operational responsibility-- when you combine these three factors, of course it's perfectly obvious that, turned loose on the principal actual national security problem, you are bound to come up with ideas and with proposals that are a material contribution to the people who are actually working in the area. Therefore, as a matter of basic obligation, the college feels that it cannot

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waste this potential by giving you an artificially restricted problem that has an academic significance only.

Well, accepting the premise that we are obligated to give you a real problem, the question could still be raised as to why we feel that this inevitably requires a problem calling for the development of plans and programs to take into consideration cold war needs, limited war needs, and nuclear war needs. I knew exactly what I was going to say along these lines at nine o'clock this morning. I find that I am not in dispute with anything that Admiral Radford had to say. I would be a good deal bolder than I am if I admitted that. But, after all, when you've been hearing the 15-inch gun firing, you don't want to start listening to a popgun. You hardly notice it. So I have to modify--and, if you will bear with me, I am ad libbing a bit--but it seems to me that Admiral Radford's talk this morning disposed more than adequately of the point that we can deal in simple, limited alternatives in our planning. He emphasized to you again and again that the requirements of cold war for economic strength preclude any easy solution of just blind buildup to meet what we estimate to be maximum enemy capability. He was entirely definite on the possibilities or probability of limited war. Again and again it was emphasized as a very real probability for which we must plan. His remark that atomic weapons would inevitably be used

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in no way carried the implication that the fact they would inevitably be used involved an all-out holocaust.

I think you can see from the writeup of the problem that the distinction we have in mind between limited and all-out nuclear war rests on whether the war does or does not involve massive direct damage on the home bases of power of the two antagonists. This is what makes the difference in your planning.

In planning for a limited war you occasionally will hear the statement made that "We've been in that sort of thing before. We don't have to plan for it. We merely use our Korean experience and our World War II experience." I submit to you that the material that Admiral Radford was emphasizing this morning introduces a new dimension, or emphasizes, let me say, a new dimension in any planning that is now done for limited war; and that is the dimension that at any time in the process of conducting a limited war you may get a transition without warning into nuclear war. That dimension was not present in the two previous mobilizations in this country.

In the all-out nuclear war the Admiral specified that such a war would be settled within a short period of time with forces in being. Does this mean it's necessary to have plans for the management of the economy in such an event? I think not.

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Nuclear forces are looked upon, it seems to me, from two angles. The first is as a deterrent. Now, if you are going to use the capability of fighting a nuclear war as a deterrent, the use of your deterrent must be plausible to your enemy. Otherwise it will not deter, because he will not think you will use it no matter what. It seems to me that unless you are prepared to deal with the consequences of such an attack, by your plans for management of the economy after such an attack, you to that extent make the possibility that you would use such an instrument extremely implausible. Nations do not embark on courses of warfare with the objective of committing suicide. The opposition knows that as well as you do.

Consequently we do come to the point that the people actually dealing in this national security planning area must take into consideration all the eventualities. It's an old truism that if you attempt to be strong everywhere, you will be strong nowhere. That's certainly a valid statement. But it does not give planners license to disregard the various major eventualities. It merely forces them to use judgment, so that--and these are very nearly the Admiral's exact words--they can arrive at the best possible compromise solution to the complex problems with which they must deal.

It's an extremely complex world. It's an extremely messy world. That's why this problem is complex. It could be cleaned up to give you

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a job of planning for just one type of war, or it could be cleaned up to give each committee the job of planning in a separate compartment for a different kind of war. But it can be thus cleaned up only at the expense of making it unrealistic and artificial.

That about covers it for this morning. I know there will be quite a few questions develop as you read the problem, and you probably have some in your minds now. I am going to ask you, however, to hold your questions until you have the organization meeting with your faculty adviser and with the rest of your committee on the 12th of April, when you are a little closer to actually starting to work on the problem.

I believe you will find that this working on the final problem will be a stimulating and a satisfying experience. One of the factors of interest to you individually, I think, will be the realization that this work will bring to you of the total overall effect your academic year here at the college has had. You can estimate, I think, what the effect of this problem issued to you last August would have been and your different reaction to it now. And I think making that comparison will bring you to the agreement, probably already accepted, that there has been during the year a considerable widening and intensification of your knowledge; that your background has been broadened and your frame of reference expanded.

I repeat, I think you will find it stimulating and I think you will find it rewarding; and I know that your audiences who come here and the people who read your report will find your work on this final problem a very material contribution to the national security program.

Thank you.