Property of the Library
INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE
ARMED FORCES

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

Dr. Bernard C. Cohen

NOTICE

This lecture has not been edited by the speaker. It has been reproduced directly from the reporter's notes for the students and faculty for reference and study purposes.

No direct quotations are to be made either in written reports or in oral presentations based on this unedited copy.

Reviewed by: Colonel Thomas C. Keach, USAF

Date: 27 October 1960

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

WASHINGTON, D. C.

1960-1961

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

7 October 1960

CONTENTS

Page

INTRODUCTION--Colonel Thomas C. Keach, USAF, Member of the Faculty, Industrial College of the Armed Forces..... 1

SPEAKER--Dr. Bernard C. Cohen, Associate Professor of Political Science, University of Wisconsin..... 2

GENERAL DISCUSSION..... 23

This lecture has not been edited by the speaker it has been reproduced directly from the reporter's notes for the students and faculty for reference and study purpose.

No direct quotations are to be made either in written report or in oral presentations based on this unedited copy.

Reviewed By: Col Thomas C. Keach USAF Date 27 Oct 1960

Reporter: Ralph W. Bennett

Property of the Library
INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE
ARMED FORCES

PUBLICATION No. L61-43

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES

Washington, D. C.

THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY

7 October 1960

COL. KEACH: General Harrold, General Houseman, Gentlemen of the two Colleges: May I first say that we are very happy to welcome you people from the National War College back to this auditorium.

How does public opinion influence the formulation and implementation of our national security policy? I suspect that all of us would agree that there is no final answer to this question in our society, where so many interest groups are competing for attention. However, in practice the American people make themselves heard when they speak out at the elections every four years.

Tonight on television we will have the opportunity to join the millions of people who will be watching our two Presidential candidates as they discuss foreign policy as a means of influencing public opinion in the forthcoming election.

To guide our thinking on this subject, "The American Public and National Security Policy," we have as our speaker this morning Dr. Bernard C. Cohen, who is Associate Professor of Political Science at Wisconsin University.

Dr. Cohen has been a student in this important area of decision making for many years. He is the author of several articles in professional journals, and I am sure that many of you in this audience have read his book titled "The Political Process in Foreign Policy."

Dr. Cohen, it is a pleasure for me to welcome you to this auditorium

and to introduce you to the combined classes of our two colleges.

DR. COHEN: General Harrold, General Houseman: It's an unexpected pleasure for me to be able to talk to both the Industrial College of the Armed Forces and the National War College at the same time.

The problem of the American public in national security policy is one which has intrigued me for a long time. As I pondered the problem of the kind of approach for this audience, I didn't know whether to spend more time with the American public or with the problems of national security policy. I decided to split the difference and weave them together. What I would like to do, then, is to try to see how public opinion is involved in bringing issues and interests to bear on those who are charged with the formulation and determination of national security policy.

Now, first I'd like to make two kinds of clarifications: one, what I mean by the American public; and, second, some characteristics of national security policy.

By the American public or public opinion, however one wishes to talk about this bushel of eels, I mean the attitudes and preferences of significant and generally articulate individuals or groups of people in the population who are outside of the formal governmental mechanism, machinery, for the making of national policy.

Now, there are different ways of approaching this, different ways of looking at it. I would like to distinguish here what one might call an amorphous climate of opinion, organized interest groups, the media of communication. These are standard shapes of public opinion. I would

like to add to these the Congress, which is kind of an addition of my own to public opinion, but I will explain as I go along what I mean; and also outside specialists, who I think are particularly important in the field of national security policy today.

Before I try to explore the impact or the influence of each one of these groups in the making of policy, I would like to spend just a few minutes talking about some of the characteristics of national security policy.

By national security policy I mean that congeries of courses of action and choices which are normally subsumed under the heading of foreign policy and military policy and even domestic policy as it overlaps and impinges upon these two. What we are trying to do, presumably, by means of national security policy is to protect and advance American interests in a highly competitive world.

Now, there are four essential characteristics of national security policy in the age that we live in. The first is that this is exceedingly complex. We deal with an enemy that we can't really pin down. We think that we have a fix on him and he turns out to do something different or to be something different. We don't quite know how to cope with him no matter how hard we try. At the same time we are dealing with a technology which is increasingly hard to understand.

The debate which takes place in public now on national security policy is exceedingly technical. One has to know distinctions between first strike and second strike, distinctions between preventive war and preemptive war. The notions of hardening become very important. The relationships of megatonnage with respect to warheads and the circular error probability

of the missile becomes all-important with respect to how able you are to defend yourself.

Secondly, there is the characteristic of uncertainty. There are a lot of things we just cannot know. And some of the more important things we cannot know. Change is constant in this field, and the calculations one has to make are very difficult to make.

Militarily, there is the question: What is the real extent of American vulnerability? This, I suspect, is the crux of the debate on military policy, and yet nobody can really say--when I say "nobody" I don't mean nobody; I mean most people--if we're concerned with the problem of public opinion in those groups who have no access to the top secret information, it's rather difficult to know what the state of American vulnerability is if one doesn't know, for instance, what kind of pictures are taken by the U-2. Are we or are we not in fact vulnerable to the kind of attack at the moment which would take out American rataliatory capability?

Economically there is uncertainty too. We don't know, despite all the words that are spilled on the subject, we still don't know really what the consequences are of large doses of foreign aid. We think we have a good idea of what the consequences would be of eliminating foreign aid in certain circumstances. But if anybody had to pin his reputation on a precise political consequence growing out of a precise injection of foreign aid, either military or economic, he would have, I think, a very hard time doing it.

Politically there is uncertainty. All one has to do, I think, is to look at the situation in Africa today in order to understand the kinds of

political uncertainty. If you have to make forecasts of what happens in the future, it's very difficult to do so.

All right, then. The first was complexity; the second uncertainty; the third, risks. The dangers inherent in this situation, the dangers of the environment, are very great, as you all know. I don't need to spend a great deal of time on this.

The dangers of a misstep are exceedingly great. I would say that they are so great as to inhibit decision making. When you are in a situation where the consequences of a mistake may be absolutely irretrievable, there are enormous pressures to avoid taking the kinds of steps which may in fact be a mistake. And, since you can't know whether or not it's a mistake until you've done it, the inhibitions are great. And so, I might add, are the discouragement to irresponsibility. There is great pressure to be responsible in a world where you may be the one to cut your own throat as well as someone else's. One has to be informed in this area. If you're not informed, you're likely to make serious blunders.

The fourth characteristic is the cost. To do half of what seems to be required both military and economically is to call for the kinds of sacrifices which no one has yet asked this country to make. It's hard to say whether or not, if put to it, we would do it. I suspect we would, but one has to be put to the test. One has to be asked. Sacrifices are unavoidable in any case. But this gives some framework for the dimensions of the problem.

Well, then, let me ask: What are the implications of this for policy

making? What are the implications of these characteristics? And here I would like to raise the theme which I will pursue in my discussion of the persons of public opinion.

The difficulties, I think, in the making of national security policy are generally recognized. They are widely conceded. The public is very cautious and uncertain, and the consequence of this is that the people who know, that is to say, largely the executive departments and agencies of the National Government, have a great deal of latitude in the shaping of policy in this area. And they have concomitantly a great responsibility to do it in a way, in a situation where they are to some extent cut off from their audience.

Now, I'd like to be specific in pursuit of the impact in this environment of particular parts of public opinion. And I would like in turn to take up those shapes of public opinion that I mentioned earlier.

Let me say at the beginning that this is a hard thing to pin down. The evidence for the real impact of public opinion or public groups on public policy is scanty. There is evidence, but to be able to make the kinds of generalizations that you are confident about is very hard to do.

First let me take up what we might call general public opinion, which is the amorphous, undifferentiated population, the kind that registers its opinions with respect to large areas of policy, let's say, at election time in a kind of faceless, nonindividuated form. The characteristics of this level of opinion, I think, are easy to spell out. Its implicity is obvious. It responds more to mood than to anything else. It lacks a great deal of interest. It lacks information. And there is a relationship between these two. It

lacks intellectual structure.

And as a consequence of this, its utility to the policy maker is very, very slim. There isn't much he can do with it, because it's not on the same wave length that he's on. It serves, I think, as just the roughest gauge of general acceptability of policy development in the long run. But its utility in the short run is rather slim. It's subject to manipulation, really, at the short run, in response to external events, to crises, to the way in which external events are portrayed. It has no important role in the short run.

Opinion at this level, I think, is likely to be overwhelmed by the complexity of national security policy. By way of illustrating this I would point to a couple of things.

The Berlin crisis, when it came up nearly two years ago, was the subject of a canvass by the New York Times of general opinion in widely scattered cities around the United States. And it was rather surprising to discover that--I have forgotten some of the precise figures--but very large percentages of the American population didn't even know that Berlin was in Eastern Germany. More than that, they had no idea what the characteristics of the problem were. And they had no real desire to contribute to the solution of the problem.

The general reaction was, to the policy maker: "This is your problem. This is what we hired you for. Don't bring your troubles to me. You take care of them."

It seems to me that in this respect we have gone almost full circle--not quite--from the situation that existed before the First World War,

where the determination of national policy in these respects was in the hands of a few. We have seen a long, steady fight--"fight" I suppose is not the proper word for it--a steady democratization of the making of national policy in the years since then; and now, with increasing complexity, it seems to be getting tossed back into the hands of those with official responsibility.

I think the overwhelming nature of policy is evident today in the Congo. I think it's evident in the debates on national security policy and military policy. I think one finds this scattered throughout this field.

Let's move now, then, to a discussion of organized groups. The opinions of organized groups are differentiated from those of what we might call the general public by the fact that they take on substance and structure; and they tend to be more easily articulated. There is form. There is logic in the presentation of argument, clarity with respect to the values involved, to the preferences for policy solutions, and so on.

Now, there are many, many, many thousands of groups in this country which one can legitimately call organized interest groups, which have some interest in foreign affairs; and to make generalizations about them is exceedingly risky. I will mention a few types of organizations and say just a word about some of their characteristic concerns. But I admit in advance that I am grossly oversimplifying.

There are obviously economic interest groups which in the field of security policy are interested in such things as tariffs, special preferences to keep industry going, certain branches of industry with war-potential utility, and so on. You can work all the way up from the narrowest

of special interests all the way up to the broadest of general interests on the part of groups with an economic base.

Then there are civic and educational groups, which are concerned generally with the broad outlines of national policy and with the principles which underlie it--principles such as the degree of international involvement; the degree of, let's say, commitment to foreign aid as an instrument of American policy. This is what I mean by the pursuit of general principles with respect to policy.

Then there are ethnic groups, which are concerned with policy toward particular countries, with American policy in particular parts of the world.

Religious groups--and one might include in here organizations with a religious bent--pacifist groups, for example--these are concerned generally with the ethical component in national policy, and it may take them in all kinds of policy wherever they regard an ethical or moral problem as rising.

It happens most often in the field of military policy, where there is a lot of pressure for disarmament.

There are a lot of other groups--labor organizations, veterans, Army, Navy associations, Air Force Association. These you probably know a great deal more about than I do--the latter ones.

To group all of them together, I would say that sometimes they are very well informed and sometimes they are not. If you examine their participation in debates on national issues, you will find something very interesting. That is to say, there is a tendency for them to participate in a

debate on the level of principle and not on the level of detail. They do not ordinarily engage in detailed comment and criticism of policy unless they themselves stand to gain, unless it is a policy which they have been urging, have been pushing, over the years.

Now, with respect to their impact or influence: Here it is risky, but I will make the generalization nevertheless, that most of the time those groups which are interested in American foreign policy and American military policy tend to support the official lines of policy.

Now, the consequence of this is that, I think, what they tend to do is to strengthen the official line of policy, the official direction. They give it support. They make it clear that those people who are responsible for the making of policy can do so because they have someone behind them. When there are differences with policy at the hands of organized interest groups, it tends to be rather specific in nature most of the time.

Now, I would say that if it is easy and reasonable to satisfy a group's legitimate interests in public policy, then it may be done. Of course a great deal depends on what one means by "legitimate." It turns out, for instance, that when policy makers are looking at particular problems, they don't regard the League of Women Voters, say, as being legitimately interested in reciprocal trade agreements acts. They do regard business firms as being legitimately interested, for reasons which I think are obvious.

But very often it is simply not possible to satisfy the demands or the desires of particular groups without doing damage in some respects to conceptions of national policy. And the impact here tends to be zero,

that is to say, these groups just get ignored. Even when they are the kinds of groups that we would regard in the abstract as being important--they may have their day in court; they may have their say--but the amount of attention that they get, the amount of direct influence on the shaping of policy, is more likely to be minimal than anything else.

I am inclined to think that the most important groups with respect to a real impact on policy are economic groups and ethnic groups. I say this with a certain amount of trepidation. The reason why I come to this conclusion is that this is the kind of evidence that one has to work with. I'm not sure that, let's say, this may be the case because this is where scholars have placed their attention in the past. This is the kind of thing that has gotten their attention; so these are the cases which have been written up. This is what one can read about. I may be really wrong here. There may be other lines of influence which are consistently more efficacious, which simply don't reach the light of day in a manner which is obvious enough or persistent enough to be identified as such.

Economic groups--I don't mean to be an economic determinist. I am certainly not one. I believe in the primacy of politics rather than the primacy of economics. Again I say that when it is possible to satisfy them without hurting anybody and their own interests are involved, it may be done. Foreign bondholders, for instance--one can protect them at times without injuring anyone else. I suspect that the airplane manufacturers got a good hearing in 1947 and '48. But this is a case where there were clear arguments to the effect that the national interest was

also served by what may have been also a private interest.

Ethnic groups I think are important, not as pressure groups in the general understanding of that term; they are important when they are strategic as voters. This has varied in American history depending upon geographical location, depending on the kinds of world problems, on the patterns of immigration. At times it was the Irish in Boston. At other times it was the settlers of German stock in the Middle West. I am inclined to think that today the chief impact here is in the American Middle Eastern policy as a consequence not of Jewish interest groups, but of a large Jewish population in the cities.

My general conclusion here is twofold. Despite everything that has been said about the activity of interest groups, and despite the great amount of activity that in fact takes place, I would say that they are substantially without a great deal of influence, direct influence, on the shaping of national security policy. I would say quite the contrary--that where one regards interest groups as performing in American society the function of interest representation in general, I would argue that interest representation in the field of security policy takes place within the executive bureaucracy. The representatives of all the different points of view are there; and they are informed, interested, active, much more so than they are from the outside.

This is not to say that interest groups are without a role. I will have more to say in my concluding remarks, but I would say this very briefly: that one thing that interest groups do, and perhaps the most important in this area, they let the Government know how it's doing. It's a kind

of constant trendex report. It gives them an idea of who's listening, when they're making major errors, when they're not doing a good job, when they haven't made their case, and so on.

Well, then, let me turn to the media of communication, which are the most continuously informed and articulate organs outside of the official policy-making structure.

The role of the press I would regard as that which is immediately available to policy makers on issues. What that means is that there is a peculiar prestige press in the United States, which is comprised of the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Washington Star, the New York Herald-Tribune, the Wall Street Journal, the Baltimore Sun, the Christian Science Monitor; and I would say that's about the list.

I think one ought to distinguish between the media as journals of opinion and as journals of information. As journals of opinion I am inclined to say that media are only occasionally and selectively important as direct influences on policy. It's a matter of common understanding, I think, that individuals tend to be persuaded by those with whom they are in basic sympathy or agreement to begin with. You would very rarely take an idea from somebody whom you don't agree with.

I have the decided impression, as a consequence of some interviewing I have done this summer here, that those people who take a liberal outlook on problems of foreign and security policy turn with eagerness to the editorials in the Washington Post, and those who have a more conservative outlook turn to the editorials in the New York Times; and never the

twain shall meet. I think they go for a kind of intellectual reinforcement, which is to say that the impact here may be the same as the impact that I referred to a few moments ago with respect to interest groups. You find out how you're doing. You find out among those people whose opinions you respect because they correspond most nearly to your own, whether you are in step with them. And that tends to be, I think, the significance of this kind of impact.

Now, as journals of information I have a different feeling. Here I think the media are continuously and generally important. And by media I tend to think mostly of the press here. I would regard not simply the newspapers I have mentioned. I would also regard the news tickers, which those of you in Washington know are immediately available and used by people in the State Department, the Department of Defense, Congress, and so on. These are read by everyone, and they are read for purposes of information.

They are also read for other purposes. They are read to find out how important something is, how important it is to those people whose professional task it is to decide how important it is as compared with everything else which has happened that day when you lay out the front pages of your newspaper. Those individuals who may read one day of events happening in the world, may read this on the news tickers, will still read the newspapers the next day to find out how important it is; to find out how important those people who put together the important newspapers think it is.

The media are important, then, not so much in the sense of

being shapers of specific policy--which they are only very rarely--but in the sense that I would regard as map makers, as creators of issues. The prevailing news values in the field of journalism tend to force policy makers to respond to issues which are reported. Lots of things happen every day, but they don't all get reported and they don't all get front page headline treatment. Those things which do, those things which are elevated by the journalists themselves to front-page and headline prominence, acquire a greater prominence in the minds of those people who have to deal with these issues thean they would have in the absence of this kind of treatment.

There are other impacts here of news values which are not really relevant, I suppose, to this argument; but I may mention them very briefly. By "news values" I mean those things which a reporter carries in his head which tell him: "This is important. This is not important. This is what people want to read. This is what they don't want to read." The impact of this is that security policy in general tends to be highly discontinuous in the public mind. It's only when an issue breaks through the kind of inertia, the general prevailing expectation that people aren't interested in these things and hence will read not very much about them--for something to break through that crust and end up on the front page of the paper, it has to be something big and significant. So what happens is that these things pop up here and there, with no historical precedent. They have no past; they have no future.

I think that this is one reason why American journalists write the way they do, which is to say that every time they write a story, they write

it de novo, so to speak. They write it as if nobody ever knew anything about it before. And if you follow an issue for two weeks, if it should happen to be in the press that long, every time you read the story, you get it recapitulated from the beginning, in part because the newsman, as a consequence of his own activity, must make the assumption that you are in fact uninformed as to the past. The consequence is that we tend to skim from peak to peak of crises. We live in a foreign policy and security policy world that has, as far as the public mind is concerned, not a great deal of depth. It's rather shallow.

I am reminded that a lot of people in this country--I tried this out on various classes and so far I have yet to be dissuaded from my point of view--that the attempted assassination of Premier Verwoerd in the Union of South Africa last year captured the headlines, the front pages, and dramatized the problem of race relations in South Africa. This problem has been a serious one in South Africa for many, many years; but a lot of people became aware of it for the first time as a consequence of this act of violence, which didn't have, in fact, in the first instance at least, a great deal to do with the problems of apartheid there.

The media compete clearly and obviously with official sources of information, with those sources of information which come readily across the desk of a man here in Washington who has to deal with the issues as they arise. And yet they all read the press. They are all dependent upon it. It brings to every one of them a wider political world than that which he gets from the ordinary flow of information across his desk. He has to adjust his own thinking to this wider world which is brought to bear.

Now I'd like to justify my inclusion of Congress as part of public opinion. I include it here because many people in the Executive Branch of Government regard the Congress as the authentic and most important voice of public opinion. And I think that this is a corollary of their general tendency in this field to ignore other groups. They are alert and sensitive to public opinion; but they regard as the most effective, the most tried and true, the tested public opinion that which comes off through the electoral process, which comes to them through the Congress.

Now, there are two things I'd like to say about this. One is that Congress obviously is important in bringing interests and information and issues up and having some impact in the field of national security policy. On the other hand, most Congressmen, I think, are deeply impressed by the complexity of national security policy. And I think they are also deeply impressed by the responsibility of those who have special kinds of skills, special kinds of information, and deal with this policy on a full-time basis. Criticism of this policy is plentiful in the halls of Congress; but I think if you look carefully, you will find that it's at the hands of comparatively few Members of Congress. Whenever there is a major crisis, there is a deep reluctance on the part of Congressmen to rock the boat, a deep reluctance to participate in a debate in which they recognize their limitations.

I would say that the substantial stability over the years of the military budget, of the whole national security budget, as presented to the Congress by the Executive Branch of Government, testifies to the predom-

inance of the Executive even as against the Congress, as against the whole public spectrum in the field of national security policy.

Now, there's another aspect of this which one can look at, which is to say, the role of public groups as brought to bear on the Congressmen in this whole field. Here I would say a couple of things: one, that clearly a man's constituency is important, a Congressman's constituency is very important. But, secondly, to a surprising degree, a Congressman too is quick to turn aside the plea of even a constituent if it happens to be an issue where he thinks the constituent is just not with him. I've seen it, I've read it, on many occasions where the amount of curtness, even rudeness, displayed in hearings, for instance, by Congressmen with respect to pleas that were, I grant you, a little off center--these things are just dismissed.

Now, what I have been saying here adds up to the increasingly specialized character of national security policy, and to the equally specialized character of the influence that is brought to bear on it. This leaves one other group to be mentioned--the individual specialist, the academic specialist, the journalist, the outside independent scholar, who I think have collectively created and then led, and still do--that ought to be qualified, I suppose--led the public debate on national security policy in the last five, six, or seven years--men who have achieved this position by the skill and the authority of their analyses. And here I would include people like--I'm sure that most of you have heard them--Herman Kahn, at Rand; Albert Wohlstedter, at Rand; Henry Kissinger, at Harvard.

There are many others. These are just some of the obvious few.

I think the debate is now a political one rather than just a public one. That's why I back-tracked when I said it was led by these people. It was led by them. It's now, I think, being led, as we will have occasion to see tonight, by the Presidential aspirants.

I would venture the generalization that a man like Herman Kahn has had more influence on thinking about civil defense policy in this country than all the cement companies put together. I think that this is kind of a capsule illustration of the irrelevance of lots of the arguments that are ordinarily made about the importance of interest groups in a kind of simple assumption that where there is money there is political power. It's not easy to acquire status in this area; but once it is acquired, I think that a great deal of influence may attend on it. And I think here that probably Henry Kissinger is an outstanding illustration.

Let me summarize and spell out two or three implications in just a couple of minutes by way of conclusion.

You people, above all, I should think, are aware that national security policy makers are generally wrestling with problems which are not yet in the public eye. My observation, which is limited, I grant you, has been that those problems which are the keenest at the top secret level don't become a matter of public concern until about six months later, widespread public concern; and then in a kind of simplified form. If I am wrong in this, I would welcome later some information on that score.

What happens, it seems to me, is that when it does get in the public

eye, it gets in, as I said, in a kind of grossly oversimplified fashion. And it comes at a time when individual commitments and even national commitments of policy to strategy, to technology, have reached the point where it may be irreversible. Where you have of necessity a lead time of four to five years on the development of major weapon systems, your technology has your strategy by the tail, and your strategy has your policy by the tail; and the public debate becomes just that much "academic" in the general sense of the word.

The steadily increasing cost and risks of national security policy, I think, make increasingly unacceptable and irrelevant the special interests of lots of organized groups in this country. And also they make irrelevant and unacceptable the exceedingly oversimplified solutions offered by other groups. This is another way of saying what I said before--that it's the specialist, it's the man who can talk to the point on some of these problems, who gets the hearing; not the man who it's recognized has his heart in the right place, is interested in the same thing that everybody else is; but the translation of this into policy comes out in a way which has no operational utility.

The policy maker has to grope in the dark most of the time. He doesn't really know what he ought to be doing most of the time either. I mean this not as a reflection on the man or the men. I mean it as a reflection of the impossibility of the problems that we have been handed. The man that has real confidence that the solutions that he proposes with respect to the situation that confronts the United States today I think is a brave

man indeed. I've discovered that one can argue almost any position in this area cogently, with heartfelt warmth, and can turn around and undercut one's own position in five minutes and leave nothing but some shreds hanging in the air.

The policy makers have to hammer out their policy through an internal political process, through a governmental political process. I recommend that you read, if you have not done so, if it hasn't been suggested to you, an article by Samuel Huntington in "Foreign Affairs" of several issues ago called, I think: "Strategy and the Political Process" or something like that--"Strategic Planning and the Political Process"--something like that, where he makes the point that what we have within the Executive Branch is a legislative process, so to speak, a process of bargaining and compromise where policy is hammered out. And when it gets hammered out, as I say, it's rather hard to change.

Now, in this context the interested and articulate public, in all the forms that I discussed above, provides the policy maker with the audience. It helps to keep them honest, so to speak. It tells them, as I said before, how they are doing. Since the policy maker has to work cut off, so to speak, from a real knowledge of public wishes, since he knows he has to do the kinds of things the public doesn't understand and probably doesn't support because they don't realize what the real alternatives are, because they don't understand them--he's cut off from them, and he maintains a kind of contact just by finding out how he's doing. But that seems to me to be the most important kind of impact which exists back and forth

between these two.

The citizen, I am afraid, turns increasingly to his Government for information, for ideas, and for evaluation. He may be deeply concerned in not all of them, not even most of them, I suppose, but many are concerned with these problems. They are permissive with respect to the Government's handling of them; and in large I think they are almost completely dependent upon the policy maker both for initiative in these matters and also for political and substantive wisdom.

Thank you.

MR. MUNCY: Dr. Cohen is ready for your questions.

QUESTION: Dr. Cohen, in your remarks on the broad general mass of public opinion, you apparently agree that this is largely apathetic most of the time. Isn't there a danger that this apathy and lack of information and lack of interest can be misused by the opposition in making a wrong appeal to those people and having it reflected back to Congress?

DR. COHEN: To the extent that it is truly apathetic, that is to say, continuously, it can't really be appealed to by one side or the other.

I think you ought to differentiate between different levels of interest and attention. There are about, I'd say, 25 or 30 percent who are continuously disinterested. There are perhaps 15 or 20 percent who are fully or genuinely interested. And the rest kind of float in and out in the middle.

I am not disturbed by this. We recognize, I think, the utility of a division of labor in everything else that we do. There really is no reason why there can't be a division of labor in the making of public policy, which

is to say, not everybody participates.

True; I would agree with you that the possibilities for manipulation in time of crisis are always present. That is to say, whenever something happens which has, let us say, the characteristics that begin to invade the private sphere, the consequence is that these issues become more and more salient for more and more people. So the number of people who are interested in these issues becomes larger.

Now, I would say the logical implication here is that the "right side" ought to get its licks in first in a situation where there is a potential instability, where people are groping around for a response and don't quite know what it ought to be.

QUESTION: Would you care to comment on what might be called the function of leadership , that is to say, executive leadership, leadership in Congress, to enunciate or foster public opinion and public support for policies which they respectively believe are the right ones?

DR. COHEN: I am inclined to believe that this is the most important and the central issue. The most important source of leadership comes from chiefly the Executive Branch. This is leadership over the Congress as well as over the rest of it. If there is no leadership there, there is likely to be competition for leadership position elsewhere. There is the impression of indecision, of drift, of lack of clear policy.

The determination of what goes into the newspaper is not really accidental. The Executive Branch particularly can play a large role in deciding what it is that appears in the morning newspaper by the kinds of

things that it does, and by the things that it says about the things that it does. It can, in other words, structure the issues in the public mind and in terms of the public debate the way it wants to. They may not emerge from the process eventually the same way, this is to say, they may have to give it the fringes; but they have set the terms of the debate.

This is true constantly with respect to the Congress. The Administration sends a proposal over. It gets chewed, it gets nibbled away, at the fringes; but it's more recognizable than not when it emerges. I think that this is the center and ought to be recognized as such.

QUESTION: Dr. Cohen, several years ago , you indicated, the majority of the Washington foreign affairs correspondents were reluctant to be used as vehicles for the promulgation of ideas by Government officials. I wonder if you would expand on this.

DR. COHEN: I think I probably know more about the subject today than I did a few years ago. I would repeat what I said then and add on to it. I would say that if you asked most foreign affairs reporters in Washington any question on this, they will reject the notion that they are being used. They will fight it off. And yet in practice, by the terms of their own profession--this is what I would add to what I said earlier--they are in effect used all the time. They must be, because they are victims of their own conception of what is news; and news is that which somebody else--you know, as Time Magazine says, names make news this week. These names made this news. If an important official in any branch of Government says something, it's reported. It may be said for purposes

of advancement of a particular policy idea. It may be, and often is in the case of Congress, which is more intensely political, be for the advancement of a career, and it gets reported as news. So in this respect the press is being used all the time, even though , when it really comes down to it, they don't like the idea or would reject it.

I think the obvious illustration of this was the tremendous manipulation that Senator McCarthy displayed with respect to the press. He knew what the schedules were of various reporters. He knew what their deadlines were. He knew when to call the press conferences to make sure that his comments got in at the right time, which is to say, in the edition before his opponents would have a chance to reply. The newsmen were generally aware that they were in fact being used by him in the sense that he was setting the discussion; that they were serving him in the process of serving the public; that in the process of presenting the news they were serving him. The same thing happens in the field of policy, although it may be less dramatic.

QUESTION: Dr. Cohen, would you care to comment on the influence, so called, pundits, take specifically people like the Alsops? Do they really have a significant influence on the making of public policy?

DR. COHEN: I like the second way you formulated the question better than the first, which is to say, I suspect that their impact is greater upon those people in this community who read the Washington Post and the Herald-Trib and the other newspapers which carry them, and the

New York Times for Restin and Crock. It's more significant there than it is with respect to the broad newspaper-reading public, where you are kind of scattering pebbles out in the ocean. It does have an impact upon thinking people, people who want to get some knowledge of this kind.

But I think that the Alsops, Restin, Lippman, Crock, and two or three others, Hanson Baldwin, are read very carefully, daily, or as often as they print, because they are regarded as people with something to say. In effect it becomes part of the public discourse and public debate as it makes some sense to those people at the top who can understand the policy issues being discussed.

QUESTION: Dr. Cohen, I gather that you think a lot of the public apathy is due to the press. Do you have any suggestion as to how we could discipline the press without foregoing our constitutional freedom of the press rights?

DR. COHEN: I'm concerned with both problems here. I'm not at all sure that the press creates the apathy. I think it does at the margin, which is to say, by seeing more apathy, I think, than in fact exists. There is less of the kind of stimulus to interesting participation in the press.

What can be done about it? This is something which interests me very much. What intrigues me is the notion among so many newsmen--editors, publishers, reporters--that there is something objective in their community which sets a limit on interest in national security policy; the notion that people just won't buy any more and therefore they're not going to put any more in.

I think this is inherently impossible to prove. I would regard it as an evasion of responsibility, in the sense that there are clearly newspapers in the country which print more and are read; and therefore to print less and the fact that they're still read doesn't really say a great deal. One prominent reporter whom I interviewed a year ago put the issue rather strongly by saying that in his opinion most publishers of newspapers in this country would be running filling stations if they they thought that it was a better business; but they don't. In other words, that the amount of responsibility which is attached to the problem of putting out a newspaper is about the same as pumping gas in a car as far as the guy who's really responsible for the amount of coverage is concerned.

I think a great deal can be done, but I think the probem comes in trying to do something with the handful of people in this country whose opinions count to journalists, which is to say, other journalists. How one breaks into this circle is fun. I mean, it's a problem, but I hope to be able to do something about it. I happen to be working on a book on this subject right now.

QUESTION: Dr. Cohen, how much do you think public opinion is determinant in the U. S. negation concerning the admission of Red China to the U. N.? How would you guage that?

DR. COHEN: Well, my feeling for a long time on this issue has been that the American opinion on the admission of Communist China was something which could be manipulated in a relatively short space of time, which is to say that the Administration's unwillingness to recognize or to

vote for the seating of Communist China in the U.N. is a political decision; and the assumption that it is dictated by public opinion I would regard as a reversal of reality and as a denial of the notion of the importance of responsibility of leadership in response to this question earlier.

This is quite apart from individual judgment as to whether or not this makes sense, whether it's something that we ought to do. What I am saying only in response to the question is that if the Administration wanted to do it and set out to do it, there would be no long-run obstacle in public opinion which would prevent them from doing it and still surviving, I think, the next election.

Now, this is risky ground when I say that. I admit it. It just depends upon the prevailing mood, which is very hard to calculate, as to whether or not it can be made an issue by the other side. It depends upon the roughness of the competition for election, and things like that. But I am inclined to think, particularly if this notion is discussed not at election time but after election time any year, any election, there are no long-run fundamental obstacles in the path.

QUESTION: In the present Presidential campaign the issue of national security is supposed to be one of the paramount issues. Is the American public apathetic to that issue? Or is it being responsive in this case?

DR. COHEN: The kind of information that I have suggests that when people are asked the open-ended question in public opinion polls: "What do you think are the most important issues in this campaign?" the problem of foreign policy, broadly put, comes out on top, but it comes out with about 30

to 35 percent of the responses.

I suspect two things about this: that--well, one thing. If anything, I'd say that's an inflation, in the sense that there are some things that people say because they think they're supposed to say it rather than because they genuinely believe it. But, on the other hand, that's not to say that, even though the others don't say it, it's not significant to them. It may be significant to them, but they don't realize it.

One can never in any case say what it is that a President is elected on, but he can say what his mandate is, particularly if the following is true: A, that the most important determinant of voting intention is a kind of emotional attachment to party irrespective of candidate; and, B, that the marginal or independent voter who is not addicted to one or the other by parentage or any other similar cause, doesn't always make his distinctions on on rational, intellectual, policy-oriented grounds. He makes his distinction perhaps on the basis of personality. And if you like one personality better than the other, you haven't given him a mandate to solve a security problem or foreign policy problem one way or the other. What we do is elect leaders and then give them the function of leading.

QUESTION: Doctor, to what degree do you think honesty and frankness of public officials or leaders or the President should be used in keeping the public informed? One writer has called this strategy versus ideology. In other words, are the public capable of understanding certain policies and making up their minds at the highest level?

DR. COHEN: In large numbers, I'd say No. I'd say that's implicit

in a lot that I've said so far. But I'm not sure that that disposes of the problem. It seems to me that creates the problem. The problem really is, Who is your public? Who is the relevant public with respect to national security policy?

It may be that in the first instance the two or three dozen people who go to the conferences, who write on this subject, who debate this subject in the public prints, the people who in turn are read by other people, by the professors when they have to teach their classes, and things like this.

The audience for national security policy is not an undifferentiated audience. It's rather selectively and narrowly determined by interest, by lots of things. It seems to me that the problem really is to reach and to be frank with, I think, those people who understand the issue. And then there's another problem, but that's not necessarily your problem. Your problem is to do something with this further on.

There's just one more point on this. This issue is so complex that I don't think that one can say, "O.K. I recognize that you're the boss." But apart from these, I don't think that one can give out too much information. We're buying a pig in a poke if we do. It would help somewhat if we knew if it were a large pig or a small one.

QUESTION: Sir, you mentioned that Congress by and large prefers not to rock the boat. At the same time, we have seen in the last few years a great deal of responsibility being taken on by the chairmen of certain of the committees. I wonder if you would care to comment on the role

of these static few individuals who really exercise power in Congress, and their relationship to the formation of national security policy.

DR. COHEN: Well, I think that when I said earlier that it's the few in Congress who participate, there's a specialization of labor there, a division of labor, a specialization of interest, which is as great as it is anywhere else. The names are, I think, salient to all of you.

I really suspect that you could probably answer the question better than I can, in the sense that I don't really know what goes through the mind of somebody in the State Department when Fullbright stands off or when Vinson says something. I think these people are important. I think in a sense that this is the State Department's public, this is the Defense Department's public. And it seems to me that they recognize that it's not everybody they have to satisfy; it's a few; and that if they can satisfy them, they have a reasonable assumption or expectation that the others will go along.

MR. MUNCY: Dr. Cohen, on a day when baseball looms so large in the background, I think the audience, for their rapt attention and their very sharp questions this morning, deserve thanks; and I give them to you. But the man who can hold the attention of a group of men here in this auditorium, and considering matters of serious state problems deserves the real accolade; and I give to you.

- - - - - - - - -