

Oral History Interview

with

J. Noel Macy

Assistant chief of international information division, Department of State, 1945-46, chief, international press and publications division, 1946-48; resigned from State Department, 1948.

Washington, D.C.

June 25, 1975

by Richard D. McKinzie

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[1]

MCKINZIE: Mr. Macy, I think historians would like to know why people go into Government service. You had a career as a newspaperman before World War II so what prompted you to go into Government?

MACY: Well, the Army had something to do with that. I was in the National Guard, and they said, "Out you go."

MCKINZIE: You were in the cavalry?

[2]

MACY: Yes, what used to be the horse cavalry. As a matter of fact, when I came to Washington I was still properly uniformed, wearing boots and breeches and spurs.

The War Department, believe it or not, had never had a real Bureau of Public Relations, and General [George C.] Marshall said, "We've got this big draft Army, and it's obviously necessary to tell the people, from whom these boys came, what it's all about." Marshall got General [Robert C., Jr.] Richardson, another cavalryman, and said, "All right, set something up.

Richardson apparently went to the American Newspaper Publishers' Association in New York and said, "Well, who should I get to go in on this thing from the newspaper game?"

And they said, "Why don't you take the newspapermen that are already in the Army, just go in on the National Guard?"

[3]

They gave him a list of four of them of whom I was one. I was ordered down and that was it. It was interesting because as a little Guard officer, I had never seen anything. I think I had seen two colonels and one major general in my life, and after a two or three-day course there, I was called in to see the General. The General said that he'd like to have me down there; how did I feel about it?

I said, "I've put in 18 years in one troop. I've recruited, and now I'm the captain. Frankly, I'd rather stay with my troop."

"Well," he said, "I can understand that." He reached over and put four, 8 x 10 pictures in front of me. He said, "That's what I left to come here." These were pictures of the First Cavalry Division on parade. He had been commander of the First Cavalry Division.

Well, what can you say after that? I came down and subsequently went to the Pentagon.

[4]

Nobody could get us out of there because we were assigned to the Office of the Secretary of War. No one was senior enough to order us out. As a fact, you couldn't get out if you wanted to.

MCKINZIE: You were under Henry Stimson's control?

MACY: Yes. So, I stayed there. Then, as I told you, I met [Herbert T.] Edwards, who told John Begg, who asked me if I wanted to come over. And I said, "Well, all right, but if you're in the Office of the Secretary of War, how are you going to do it?"

So, he got the letter from the Secretary of State to the Secretary of War, and I was moved to the State Department.

MCKINZIE: And this was in 1945, I take it?

MACY: I would think it was '45.

MCKINZIE: At the time you went over, there was no

[5]

information program in the State Department?

MACY: None whatever. It was just Begg, Kane, Edwards, and finally myself. We were supposed to work out and produce information about the United States with the idea of creating some type of perspective. So if somebody saw a movie, they wouldn't figure that everybody in the United States lived on Park Avenue, that sort of thing.

We were to operate in those areas in which the OWI [Office of War Information] and the coordinator did not operate.

MCKINZIE: Now, what areas did that leave you, parts of Africa?

MACY: Yes. A few countries in Africa and that was almost all. There might have been some in Asia.

So, we started to do that.

MCKINZIE: How did you set this up? Since you were responsible primarily for press and...

[6]

MACY: No, this was before that. Just the four of us had the whole kit and caboodle. First of all, we had to try to figure out what we should do and how we should do it. We never got as far as setting up a staff or doing anything. Then at one point in there, I got sent out to the UNO [United Nations Organization] Conference in San Francisco, with the idea of trying to see to it that foreigners saw something of the United States.

Well, I'm not the promotion kind of person. I don't think I did too well on that, but I did what could be done, sort of a liaison. If they wanted to go down to Hollywood and see the movies, why, I'd set up a tour with the motion picture guys and that sort of thing.

MCKINZIE: Is that what a lot of the delegates wanted to do?

[7]

MACY: Oh, yes, many of them. They had other ideas of not having to go as far as Hollywood.

One of the most amusing things was that they had a picked MP battalion, all of whom, I guess, were over six feet two, with about three rows of ribbons -- well-trained and husky. They were guarding everything, including the elevator which went up to the brass hat officers upstairs -- security being that you had to show your pass and so on to go up.

[Vyacheslav] Molotov arrived. The first mess was that as he was coming in, his radio requested that all flights out of San Francisco Airport be closed down for 30 minutes, so he'd have no trouble coming in. They replied, "Never mind, you come in with anybody else."

When he had been there a day or so, he wanted to get into this place upstairs. He always moved behind the flying wedge of his own security men, and they got out of the car, went

[8]

down the hall, and headed for this elevator door. Just about the time they got there, these two big MP's got together like hockey backs and stopped the wedge; they all went on the floor, including Molotov.

When [Edward R.J Stettinius, who was waiting upstairs for Molotov, heard about this he said, "Oh, my God, now I don't know what's going to happen."

Stettinius said afterwards that Molotov got up there, and then he told the story. Molotov thought it was the funniest joke he had ever heard in his life; he was delighted. He said, "That's the way it ought to be handled. I didn't show my pass, and they did exactly the right thing."

MCKINZIE: It's a good thing he had a sense of humor.

MACY: Yes.

MCKINZIE: What could you do, in a case like the

[9]

San Francisco Conference, to put that into perspective? Did you write articles, or was most of the work dealing with the delegates?

MACY: Oh, the delegates. I was sort of trying to give them a view of the United States. It was a low-level protocol officer kind of thing. But I never did think it worked very well. I don't know whether that was lack of imagination on my part, or if they just weren't in the mood, and those weren't the contacts to do it with.

Then I came back here, in September, I guess it was. I read an article in the paper that the President had signed an order abolishing the OWI and coordinator's office and putting the information programs into the State Department. Well, there wasn't anyplace for them to go except Begg, Edwards, King, and myself. So, as I remember it, Begg got radio; Edwards got motion

[10]

pictures; and I got press and publications. All of which were in addition to the straight press office of the State Department which had always been there and handled the local press and everything that the normal press office would.

So, we started. I had 550 men, none of whom I had ever seen. I had no deputy; I had no secretary; and, I had no administrative officer. I had orders to cut 550 to 110 or 12 in six months and to prepare a budget, justify it, get it through, and get going, all like a one-armed paper hanger.

So, I was lucky enough to get a good clerk (who turned into an excellent secretary, ending up as one of [John Foster] Dulles' secretaries in Japan when he went over to work out the treaty), and an administrative officer who, as I say, was one of the few I've ever seen who could pull rabbits out of hats.

MCKINZIE: Where did he come from?

[11]

MACY: OWI in London. He came back, and, of course, there was no slot for him. They said that he was available and that I could have him. I said, "Give him to me."

MCKINZIE: Did you have any talks with the Under Secretary or anybody about what, in precise terms, you had ought to be doing, besides establishing this thing?

MACY: Let's see, I think they had a man by the name of Stone.

MCKINZIE: Yes, William Stone.

MACY.: He wasn't an Assistant Secretary. He was just the boss of the bureau or whatever it was. He didn't have experience and knowledge in any one of the professions. He was an awful nice guy, a sensible administrator, and so on, but, everybody was on his own.

You did the best you could to find out what

[12]

your program might be and draw up a budget for it. I knew I was stuck with the Russian magazine, the press reports, and so on and so forth, and I started going with that.

Just about that time, Bill [William B.] Benton came in as Assistant Secretary in charge of all this. I remember at that time there was the problem of getting the press associations to let us put out a ten thousand word bulletin every night, which was the only source of information to the subscribers or to the Embassies as to what was going on in the world. All of the other press associations in other countries had gone by the board during the war, but the Associated Press wouldn't play. They didn't think it was proper to have anything to do with the Government operation.

We took that all the way up to a meeting of the board. Benton and I went along carrying the bag of the AP [Associated Press], and

[13]

they turned it down again. The UP [United Press] -- of whom, of course, I had known from the days I was a publisher -- said " No." They thought that it would interfere with the development of their own international business. Bailey, who was the head of it, and I argued about it. I said, "Don't you think you have a responsibility to get this thing going? Otherwise, the new Agence France press and everybody else will take over, because they'll sell much cheaper than you will, and you'll be cut out of, let's say, Syria and other places. We want to be able to serve papers and what not there, and we'll agree that, when, as, and if you can sell in there, we'll pull out."

He said, "No, I don't think that would work too well." He said, "I feel my responsibility is to do what is in the best interest of the United Press. Out!"

So then I went to INS [International News

[14]

Service], Seymour Ferguson was head of that, and he was all for it, but everybody else was against it. There was tremendous AP pressure on him not to play. Finally, he instituted to go out to see Mr. [William Randolph] Hearst in California. So, he went out to see him and told him what the problem was. Ferguson thought it was a good idea, but the AP and the UP wouldn't do it. He told Hearst that he wanted to go ahead and do it, and Mr. Hearst looked at him and said, "Go ahead. I'd be very proud to be of service to the country."

So, INS was the only one that would serve us. They went on until it wasn't necessary any more -- because they built up their own services finally, and we pulled out.

MCKINZIE: When Benton came in that must have been an encouraging sign to you, because I understand that he was very enthusiastic about this kind of thing?

[15]

MACY: Right, very enthusiastic, a very hard hitter, and very difficult to work for. You had to get his attention in the first 30 seconds, or you might as well stop talking. On the other hand, he was

extraordinary. I remember one time he had gotten out some kind of a memorandum of a proposed action. He called all of the division chiefs in to talk about it and explain what he'd want and so forth. So he said, "All right, now let's see what you all think."

Well, I happened to be sitting on the end of the line, so he hit me first and he said, "Well, what do you think about it?"

"I think it's rotten."

He said, "Why?"

So, I explained why. He said, "Huh, I guess you're right." He threw it in the waste basket and said, "Now, let's start over again." He went very fast and hard.

When we went up to see the Associated Press --

[16]

I'd been turned down for the third time by them -- we came back on the train. All the way back on the train, he was dictating a telegram he wanted to send as a follow-up to the board of the AP. Well, I was exhausted; I don't know why he wasn't.

There was a telegraph strike on, at that time, and when he got to a stop he said, "All right, take it to the railroad station telegraph and send it out from there." He was still in there fighting all the time.

MCKINZIE: In this period in 1945, when you were in there trying to set the thing up, when you had 550 employees and no program yet, and you were having to cut back to a hundred and some odd people, did this preclude you bringing in anyone fresh from the outside? You must have had numerous contacts in the newspaper world that you could have brought in to do special tasks.

MACY: Well, I didn't do it. I don't think I ever

[17]

saw any need for it. The pay rate was far below what it would be in a newspaper office, and you had a lot of men who had gone in during the war as a public service and would stay on because they figured the hot war had gone to a cold war. So if I could just hold them and get rid of some of the deadbeats who had survived from the 1930s, why, I was adequately staffed. I did succeed in doing that, thanks to Mr. Frasier. I never had to go out and look for any legmen; the only man I did get was a guy who came up for a deputy. He started out with two strikes because he was sent up by a Congressman -- that always made me suspicious. But this guy was a newspaperman, from Texas -- excellent. I took him on, and he remained my deputy as long as I was there and succeeded me as chief when I left. But I think that's the only new man I took in, as I can remember.

MCKINZIE: Did you personally involve yourself in

[18]

the screening of those 550 people when you were paring it down, or did you leave that to your administrative assistant?

MACY: I left it to my assistant. There was just too much going on; you can tell from the records. He knew them. He had been in the same kind of game, and he could figure out how he could get rid of those we didn't necessarily want and did so. There was too much going on to get involved in personal interviews with 550 people. Many of these people were in San Francisco and New Orleans because the OWI and CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] had branch staffs over there.

MCKINZIE: The CIA continued after the OWI was disbanded?

MACY: Yes, but their information program came over to us.

MCKINZIE: Did you feel at all compelled to continue

[19]

the kinds of things that they were doing?

MACY: Yes. Nobody had any better ideas. It was a question of putting out publications, magazines, and press reports when it was necessary and available.

Then we also took on a 7,000 word nightly report to the embassies. It portrayed the Government position in quotations and so forth -- stuff that nobody but the New York Times would run -- long, verbatim statements on something or other.

That got to be quite fun because it had to hit at 6 o'clock at night. It was scattercast all over the world, and all the embassies had their own wireless operators to pick it up, so it had to go out then. That didn't give us a chance to clear quotations with the necessary authorities, and I was always wondering when the axe was going to descend.

[20]

I remember [Henry A.] Wallace made some kind of statement that everybody disliked -- were we going to carry it or weren't we going to carry it? Well, we stuck our necks out and carried it. We got away with it, but it was always a very nervous end of the day.

MCKINZIE: How did you determine what publications should be authorized: Did you have the final say on that?

MACY: These weren't publications in terms of a magazine or something like that. These were what one might call pamphlets. There was one branch that did that. If there were any questions, they would ask me. But they all knew their business.

MCKINZIE: It wasn't necessary for you to be in on all phases of its production?

MACY: No, I couldn't have done it. I wouldn't have

[21]

done it if I could have because I learned about that earlier in the newspaper business. I had an editor who always wanted to proofread the editorial page. The result was there was a lot of mistakes in it because the proofreaders wouldn't bother reading it since the editor was going to read it anyhow, and he didn't catch them all. And I learned that.

At one point when I was in the Army, I was shuffled over to the Press Branch of the Bureau. They turned out the casualty lists every day, and there had been several errors in names which caused serious problems. So, after several warnings, General Marshall got disturbed. He sent down word to fire the chief of the Press Branch.

So, he went out. I came back from lunch, and got the word that I was to take over the Press Branch. I went over and tried to find out what it was all about, and they came in with

[22]

big sheets of mimeograph paper to proofread. I said, "Hey, I'm not reading proof."

They said, "Phil Newton always read proof on it."

I said, "Well, maybe he did, but I'm not. It's your job to read proof on that, and if you miss something, it's yours; you can't say I was looking over your shoulder, and you counted on me to catch it." And there weren't any more errors. So, this same principle applied. As I say, I wouldn't have checked into every detail of all these pamphlets and things if I could have.

MCKINZIE: How did you find Congress in that very early period? In 1945, when you were setting this up, you were talking about having to go to the Bureau of the Budget with a plan of operation. Ultimately, that gets down to where Congress has some questions.

[23]

MACY: Yes, I had a very extraordinarily easy time. I don't think I lost a dollar out of any requests. I had an exceptionally easy time because I had definite things you could see: press, pamphlets, and so forth. When I went in I laid out all of the materials that we were turning out, and I said, "Gentlemen, here is the staff that is necessary to turn these publications out, I hope

you will depend upon my professional experience to say what staff is necessary to do this. If you want to cut the budget, just tell me which one of these publications you don't want to go out, and I'll tell you how many staff you can save by doing that."

Faced with things that they could see, I didn't lose anything. It worked very nicely.

MCKINZIE: The controversy really came with the radio operations, didn't it?

MACY: They had a terrible time. I know there was

[24]

one Congressman who insisted on getting a transcript of every damn broadcast, every day. (I think he came from Nebraska.) In one of them he thought they had said something that was a little unpleasant about the State of Nebraska, so he wanted to be sure it didn't happen again. But can you imagine writing a radio script which then has to go down and get okayed by a Congressman everyday? Oh, they had a terrible time!"

MCKINZIE: But this didn't then spill over on your operations, so far as you could tell?

MACY: No. I had no trouble with the Congress at all. One time I had to do a little judging. I've forgotten whether it was the Congress or the Bureau of the Budget, but one had decided the way to cut down on the size of the staff was to do away with all supervisory personnel. So I was left with "x" number of legmen -- reporters off the street --

[25]

and no copyreaders. I juggled that around a little bit, but I was still awful short of copyreaders for a while.

MCKINZIE: Did anybody ever in the Department come around and say that you've got to do a pamphlet on this or that subject?

MACY: No, never to me. Somebody might have suggested to a branch chief, but I don't think they ever did. We did have a sort of planning group within the service which would come up with some ideas and might well have come along and suggested that. But that was from inside the service itself. It was sort of a political branch or economic branch within the service. But they weren't necessarily orders; they usually were very good suggestions.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any ideas or aspirations that you couldn't implement?

[26]

MACY: Of my own, you mean?

MCKINZIE: Yes.

MACY: No. I suppose it's too much newspaper training. We were dealing with things that happened and not going out to see how we could make them happen.

MCKINZIE: You were writing for a different audience than you'd be writing for if you were publishing a newspaper in Connecticut or somewhere in upstate New York. There's a question of propaganda versus information -- not that propaganda has necessarily a bad connotation. Did you issue some directives through which you tried to establish a tone for these things?

MACY: No. I mean, these were all newsmen. They naturally put everything out on an objective basis -- as far as was humanly possible, which isn't always the case. But I would say that in

[27]

editing from a propaganda standpoint, you would exercise that in terms of your selection of material that you sent out or that you didn't send out.

Not just anybody would say, "Well, you don't necessarily put out a long review of *Grapes of Wrath*." Is that propaganda not to send that out or what? But the great emphasis, always, was to stick to the truth and put it out, so that you could have some credibility in the world.

MCKINZIE: How much was the operation cut back when you finally got your staff down to a hundred people?

MACY: I don't really remember, but I wouldn't think too much. There were a lot of other things which they used to do which we didn't do, like your branch offices in New Orleans and San Francisco -- sort of the public relations, glad-hand operations which we didn't go in for.

[28]

MCKINZIE: How was the relationship between your office and the Office of Public Affairs, which was Francis Russell's outfit?

MACY : They were completely separated. We thought of them as a little more academic than we were. But we weren't as far removed as, apparently, this last report suggests they are now; they were just two different groups of people doing two different kinds of jobs.

MCKINZIE: You didn't feel compelled to emphasize the same things that they might be emphasizing at all?

MACY: Oh, no, not at all.

MCKINZIE: Sounds like it was a very autonomous operation the way you describe it.

MACY: It was. As I say, the guidances and so on that you got were from this political planning

[29]

group within the service itself. But the service itself, I would say, was quite autonomous. As a matter of fact, I finally was sent overseas in '47, and at that time it was quite a question in most Foreign Service officer's minds, in the Embassy, as to whether the Information Service was part of the State Department or not.

MCKINZIE: Well, now that's the other difficult question I was going to bring up. John Begg told me one time that some Ambassador, maybe in the Netherlands, told him that he didn't have anything to do with the Information Service and, in fact, refused to receive or to authorize something that was necessary for the operation of the information office there. Is it fair to say that most of the professional Foreign Service officers didn't want to get into that kind of thing?

MACY: I would think so, probably. In the only embassy

[30]

I worked in, that wasn't the case; I was very lucky. But I think that it was mostly a question of the headman and what his relationship with the Ambassador was. You know, a lot of times a lot of the problem was to get the Ambassador to listen to you as opposed to the local UP reporter or somebody else who happened to be in that country. You had to get in there and establish his confidence in you and what you were doing.

MCKINZIE: This was left to you, rather than coming down from someone?

MACY: It didn't come by order, no.

I got this job when I was sent to Cairo because the previous headman had left, and they couldn't find anybody who the Ambassador would accept. Finally, they came up with my name. His right-hand counselor, his second in command, was the brother of a man who had been in my troop for a great many years, Cecil

[31]

Lyons.

It seemed that the greatest asset one could have for public affairs officer in Egypt was to be able to play polo. Cecil asked me if I could play and I said, "Well, left-handed," which made it difficult. I only had a one goal handicap, but I at least knew what the game was all about. Anyhow, I got accepted.

I went over with Tippy [Somerville Pinkney, Jr.] Tuck, who was then Ambassador (an excellent gentleman), and we got along very well. As a matter of fact, in the six months I was there, I don't think I ever sent a dispatch back to the Department nor received an instruction from them. I just ran my own little show, which was extremely interesting.

MCKINZIE: I was going to say, what kind of a show could you run in a place like Cairo?

MACY: The same kind of thing of putting out pamphlet

[32]

materials and motion pictures.

It changed very quickly, very suddenly. I was there the first six months in '47. The first three months of that was the end of British occupation, and the last three months, no British.

Second, I was reading a paper one morning and read Mr. Truman's Palestine policy, and I got a little mad. I ran to the Embassy and burst into the Ambassador's office. I said, "Mr. Ambassador, how can I explain American policy to the Arabs when I read Mr. Truman's Palestine policy in the newspaper?"

"Well," he said, "I know how you feel, because I never heard about it before, either."

Here was one of the top Ambassadors in the country, whose second language was Arabic, because he had been born and brought up in Cairo when his father was the chief judge of the Joint Court, and he never heard about the Palestine policy, not even a discussion of it. So, that

[33]

kind of changed what you could do.

MCKINZIE: What did you do?

MACY: Well, the hardest time explaining policy was one night at a dinner, when I found myself sitting next to the secretary of the Arab League. He pointed out that nobody was against the Jews; it was the Zionists that they objected to. And he said, "I wish you would explain the Truman policy. In the first place, historically, it's no more Jewish than Arab. Everybody and his brother, from the Romans and up and down, have had that area; we've had it for the last 700 years. So there's not a historical reason, and we get along perfectly well with the Jews." As a matter of fact, the chief lady in waiting to the Queen of Egypt at that time was a Jewess. He said, "There are 600 thousand Jews living perfectly happily in the Arab countries, but we just don't want the Zionists in this incursion

[34]

of Jews. We're very sorry for, and thoroughly sympathetic to, the German Jews for the time they've had, and we've announced that we will take in as many Jewish refugees per capita of our population as any other country. We're not trying to hold them out, but we don't see why we should take 100 percent of them. What's the American approach to that?"

Well, I couldn't think of a good answer. As a matter of fact, I haven't yet. But fortunately, he was speaking in French, so I simply said, "Well, I'm sorry, sir, but I just don't understand that much French." I couldn't see how else to get out of it.

But that did change the picture quite a little. I was due to come back on the first of July, and in June I was told to fire 90 percent of the local employees and that all but two of the Americans would be transferred. So, "organize for that and leave in a week."

[35]

MCKINZIE: Whose decision was that?

MACY: I don't know. That came from the Department here somewhere; I guess the Budget came in on it. So, I can't say that we really did a very successful job those last few months, but I did learn a lot.

MCKINZIE: You mentioned that you could get out pamphlets and that you could make available motion pictures. One of the questions that always comes up is, what place did entertainment films play in the information program? I understand the value of documentaries, but were there certain entertainment films that the Information Service found valuable and wanted to have used?

MACY: Not that I know of. It was purely documentaries. One of the things that interest me was when I was showing documentaries one time, to some Egyptians, which had been done in Arabic.

[36]

They said, "Well, most of that we couldn't understand, because it was a Syrian who was speaking Arabic, and Syrian Arabic is very different from Egyptian Arabic." As a matter of fact, it sounds so differently that even I -- and I know no Arabic -- before I got through, could spot what country a guy was coming from by the kind of Arabic he spoke -- just the sound of it. It's the only language I know which gets harsher the further south you go, unlike, say, from New England to the South. Syrian Arabic is the softest, and Saudi Arabian and Egyptian Arabic are the harshest.

MCKINZIE: So, the reception of your documentary would be, in part, determined by the...

MACY: Yes, by where you were going to show it. You might have to get somebody to use a more broadly accepted accent or something. And I've often wondered whether that extreme variation

[37]

isn't due to the fact that you cannot print Arabic in full, because there are too many ups and downs and aboves and below the lines and everything else. So when they are writing something or other, printing it, they will write " ht." Well, you've got to know from the content whether that's "hit," or "hot," or "hat," or what. Well, with the vowels all taken out, it can change your pronunciation so that you may not pronounce "hat" the same way that another guy pronounces "hat," and you only see "ht" anyhow. Whether that's the cause of this extreme variation, I don't know; it's just a theory.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any language specialists in your division?

MACY: Here in Washington?

MCKINZIE: Yes.

[38]

MACY: No. I mean, we didn't do any foreign language work here.

MCKINZIE: The reason I ask is that you said you were showing these documentary films in which the narration was in Arabic, and I just wondered if you had a consultant or someone?

MACY: No, this was when I was in Cairo.

MCKINZIE: Did you ever do any contract work while you were there? That is to say, did you contract to any private group to do a pamphlet or some other kind of publication?

MACY: No, I never did. There was the usual habit, you know, of obligating funds before the end of the fiscal year, and I know one of my predecessors had bought I don't know how many rolls of paper, just to use up his appropriations. And they were still stuck in caves in the mountains there in Cairo, so we could keep

[39]

them, you know, humid and cool and so on and so forth. Then I think I ended up by trading them to a newspaper for something or other they had that I wanted, but that's the only kind of contractual stuff, and that didn't go down on paper.

MCKINZIE: Did you have any feeling at the time that one of the reasons for the contraction of the Information Service in Egypt might have been that the policy was, in fact, very unexplainable and would have put the information people in a difficult position?

MACY: No, I don't think anybody over at this end realized that. I think the cut went all the way, all over. I was sort of the supervisor responsible for all of the Arab countries, and it certainly changed our picture there.

MCKINZIE: Would you say the policy was to maintain a lower profile, then?

[40]

MACY: Well, you just had to be a little more careful. You didn't get as good a reception. I can remember writing, early in the time I was there, that we ought to set up a more intense sort of forward screen, taking in, particularly, Syria, where the Commies were already establishing themselves in the Lepo. I could see that it was going to move down that way, and "let's do something about it."

I came up with a plan for staffing and so on. That was the last I heard of it until a couple of years after I was out, I guess. A fellow -- excellent man (his name was Houston, Hutton, or something like that, a professor of journalism from Oregon, sort of deputy here) -- called up one day and said, "I just thought you might be interested to know that that memorandum which you wrote on Syria and the first line of defense has suddenly come to light. We want to do it, but of course, it's too late now."

[41]

So, I don't think there was any real feeling of what the reaction of the Arabs would be and was. At the time the British went out, of course, they were low man on the totem pole, and we were up on top, so much so that I remember one day Mrs. Macy was in a store asking for something or other.

They said, "No, they didn't have it."

She said, "That's funny, because any department store in New York would have something like this."

They said, "Oh, are you American?"

She said, "Yes."

"Oh," he said, "I thought you were British. Sure we've got that. Here it is."

So then after the Truman policy, why, we went down with the British.

MCKINZIE: What difference did the Marshall plan make in your work? There was the announcement of

[42]

U.S. economic assistance, but not everywhere was getting it. I wonder if that created any difficulties for your operation in those areas where Marshall plan aid was not going to be available?

MACY: I don't remember having any repercussions in the Arab world on the subject of the Marshall plan. As a matter of fact, what would have hit them more directly would have been the Greek aid, and I didn't even hear about that.

MCKINZIE: On the whole, would you characterize that as a successful operation from, say, 1945 to 1948?

MACY: No, I don't think it was successful; it got completely overburdened. I mean this whole change in the Palestine thing. I don't care what you did, you didn't get anywhere in the Arab world. There wasn't anything you could have done.

[43]

This has nothing to do with that, but in terms of bureaucracy in the Department, we had set up a library. Everything was all fine, except we couldn't have any money to put in shelves in the bookcases. Now, what do you do with a library without shelves in the bookcases, I don't know. Of course, they were thinking you could go out and buy it locally. You can't buy lumber locally in Egypt or those areas. So, we had a little hassle on that.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Macy, why did you decide to leave Government service?

MACY: Well, there was one time when it was decided, as a matter of fact. In Truman's campaign, the papers up in Westchester had run a cartoon which was not very complimentary. Apparently the local Democratic guy up there sent a copy of it down to the White House, saying, "This is the kind of a guy that you've got working in

[44]

the State Department."

So, the President sent down word and fired me. Fortunately for me, Mr. Benton went to Dean Acheson, the Secretary, and explained that I hadn't had anything to do with the papers for five years since before the war, and it just didn't make sense.

Acheson agreed, and he went over to see Mr. Truman. Mr. Truman said, "Okay, withdraw the order and let him stay." So, that's one of the reasons why I went to Egypt, because they said, "All right, you're back, but don't stick your neck out; we'll just hide you some place." So, they sent me to Egypt.

Well, then when I came back, I was put in as assistant to Assistant Secretary [George V.] Allen, and, in the course of that, the Congress -- who, as I remember, at that time was Republican -- wanted to get private enterprise more into the information program. And the story came that

[45]

they couldn't do any more than that because of the non-convertibility of the currencies which they earned overseas. And I found the ringleader of it was Time. And so I was told, "Okay, you go to work on this." So, Time came in with their figures, and I studied them a little bit and I said, "Well, I don't see why the convertibility of francs into dollars is going to do Time any good, when they're using all the francs they're getting in Europe anyhow and sending five or ten thousand a month to the U.S. to boot."

Of course, the answer was, I suppose, Time could have played the market several ways, but it wouldn't have made any other difference. But, no, they had to go ahead and insist on having this thing, so they said, "All right, now you work up a budget as to what it would cost if we made foreign currencies convertible for private media." That included motion pictures, books, magazines, newspapers, and so on.

[46]

So, I said, "Oh, I don't like it. I mean if you're going to help this guy and not help that guy, what happens to freedom of the press?"

And they said, "Do it."

So, I went to work on it, and I forgot what it came up to, something like three or four million dollars. I said, "Well, it's one thing to say, 'All right, we'll back a known book.'" You could even do it through the magazine. " But what are you going to do about motion pictures in general? Even if you're then selecting, you're restricting the freedom of the press, and I don't like any part of it."

They said, "All right, well, this is what the Congress wants, and you go down and justify this three million dollar budget."

I said, "All right, orders are orders."

So, I went down to the Appropriations Committee and presented it. I had a little guy from the State Department right behind me all

[47]

the time. They said, "You mean to say the Department wants this?"

I said, "No, sir, the Department does not want this. This is at your direction that this budget is being presented. It is not the desire or the request of the Department."

Well, apparently, I got away with that point of view successfully to satisfy the Department and the little guy behind me. But they went ahead and passed the damn thing anyhow. And I got a call one night about 6 o'clock saying that they were working on this bill now and that this is what they say; does it make sense?

I said, "Well, I know what it is they are trying to do, and what is in this language isn't going to do it."

Well, he said, "All right, I'm in a conference now" -- I could hear all the noise in the conference room. He said, "Come up with some alternate language."

[48]

I said, "Well, in the first place, I'm not accustomed to it; I don't know anything about writing a bill. In the second place, I have no material in front of me and it's 6 o'clock at night. I can't do anything except say what you've got in mind isn't any good. At least, in my opinion, it isn't going to get you what you want.

Well, they finally passed it, and so then they gave orders to set this thing up. So then it was decided to send it over to the Economic Cooperation Agency, or whatever it was then. So the Department said, "All right, Macy, you go over there and run it."

I said, "Well, it was bad enough to have to bring up the appropriation for something I don't believe in, but I was under orders so I had to do it or quit. But when it comes to going over there -- leaving the Department and going to ECA to run something I don't believe in -- then I can

[49]

quit. I do."

So, that's how I got out of the service.

MCKINZIE: You were really in a unique position, because you came from the newspaper world. You could always go back to the newspaper world. I'd like to ask if you think it is best for people who are active in private enterprise to go in and serve a stint in Government, or do you approve of the idea of professional Foreign Service officers and professional civil servants?

MACY: Well, I think it's a question of what level, and I'm not clear on that myself. I ran into it again, because after this period the Korean war came along, and the newspaperman who had been running the printing and publishing division of the National Production Authority was, I don't know, 65 or something and retired or wanted to retire. And so, again, the NPA called me and

[50]

said, "Now, you've got numerous contacts with the publishing, newspaper as well as magazine, side, and they are agreed to go along with us. Since you know something about the bureaucracy and living in Washington anyhow, will you take over as chief of this division?" So I did.

And there the policy was to bring in guys from the industry for a period and then send them back again -- not only because that would then give the industry some knowledge of how Government works, but also because you got an industrial approach to policies of the NPA. Well, sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't, much like you got right now. How does a guy play it, if he comes over and still thinks of himself as there to chisel everything he can for the industry?

MCKINZIE: Then you came back with the Korean war?

MACY: I stayed until the end of that, and then

[51]

they wanted me to take that and some other industries over to the Department of Commerce, but that was just going to be a statistical compilation job. I didn't see any fun in that, so I quit.

MCKINZIE: You mentioned that during your stay with the NPA you worked with a number of people who came from industry, and sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn't work. Well, why didn't it work?

MACY: Well, if they were using their position just to try and grab too much for, say, the lumber industry or something like that, it was not in the public interest. In other words, they didn't draw in their own minds that narrow line between public interest and the knowledge of the industry; they were just executive secretaries for an industrial association, who had an in in the Government. But it doesn't work too well that way.

[52]

MCKINZIE: I've been impressed in our conversation here that you seemed to believe that freedom of the press has a place even within the Government; you seem to be a very strong defender of that.

MACY: The first thing that you do to knock off the freedom of the press is for the Government to exercise censorship, which it can do by deciding which guys they will subsidize and which they won't.

We had the same thing in NPA, because there was a great newsprint shortage, and so the threat was that they'd have to ration newsprint. That's been done in every dictatorship recently, in the 20th Century, that I know of; so we all said, "No, we can't; we just can't let them do that."

So my predecessor in the NPA got the big newspapers with contracts to turn off "x" number

[53]

of tons of paper and sell it to the little papers, who had no contracts, at the contract price, and then, if necessary, go back and buy it for themselves on the stock market to make it up. And that

worked very nicely until, in my time, we got such an agreement among Boston newspapers to cut down their surplus distribution; they were putting out, say, a hundred papers to a newsstand that would only sell 50, just to be sure that, competitively, they were always on the spot. And that wasted a lot of paper. So, they all agreed to cut it down to what they could actually sell, to save the newsprint.

Well, they did that. Of course, newspapers, you know, are always very suspicious of Government, anyhow, but they would do that because these papers and these agreements would be administered and handled by ex-newsmen. Everything went fine, 'till one day the antitrust division came along and said, "This is restraint

[54]

of trade; we want those files." That came down through the head office of the NPA, and so I went up to see them and said, "You can't do this. Sure, it's a limitation on competition, but they've all agreed to it -- no pressure other than general public interest. They are giving it to newsmen, and they won't let anybody else have it."

And they said, "Well, of course, they can come in with a subpoena and demand it tomorrow morning."

I remember old John Lord O'Brian was in the meeting, and Maxi Fleischman, and they said, "We're with you. You don't have to throw the files out yet. If you do, I'll tell you when." And they made it stick; they told the antitrust they couldn't have them. But, there, again, you can get all kinds of ramifications of freedoms and whatnot involved. And it certainly helps to have people who know the industry in a position where they can talk to the guys in the Government.

[55]

MCKINZIE: You never, then, really considered yourself a "guy in the Government?"

MACY: Yes, because I've never gone back to the newspaper business, never have. Yes, I was a guy in the Government, with, as you'd say, a very lucky position, because I had the background to think I knew what was right to do. And if my boss had been laggard, I could quit, and I didn't give a damn.

MCKINZIE: That's a good position to be in.

MACY: We had that same situation in the Army, in the Bureau of Public Relations, because, obviously, we were all professionals in there, and we knew our profession better than the regular officers who were obviously and properly our bosses. We, particularly at the beginning, were all officers who had been trained in the line. I mean, I put in 18 years as a line officer, and I wasn't too happy to be sitting down at a desk

[56]

fighting the war. So, we did what we thought had to be done, and if they didn't like it, all that they could do was send us back to the troops, which was where we wanted to go anyhow. So, we were a wild outfit and did a lot of good and always got backed up.

MCKINZIE: Did you think the people in the State Department understood the importance of the information program, or was it simply something they accepted? Now, we've already talked about Foreign Service officers, but I'm talking about the upper hierarchy of the State Department the Assistant Secretary level and that kind of thing.

MACY: No, I don't think they even knew what it was. One of the experiences I had when I first got there was with the United Press, who wanted to use some yen which they had blocked, and the Department said, "Nothing doing." So, I went

[57]

up to argue it.

Well, the picture was that under the International Telegraph Agreements, I think it's 30 percent is paid the receiving country and 70 percent is paid the sending country -- or vice versa; I don't know which. The United Press, at the request of the War Department, was serving the newspapers in Japan. They were being paid in yen, but then all they could do was store it in the backroom. They couldn't do anything with it; they couldn't even pay their cleaning woman in the offices with it, practically -- that's about as far as they could go, I guess.

So, they asked that for that 30 percent of their cable bill, which was payable in Japan, if they could use their yen to pay it in Japan, and they'd go on carrying it on the cuff for the U.S. end. So that was the argument, and I remember finally going up before a bureau chief

[58]

in the Department and arguing about this foreign exchange problem. He said that he didn't see any reason for it at all. I argued it all the way I could, and finally he said, "Well, no. The value of the press reports which the United Press puts into Japan from all over the world is less than the value of the Japanese news which it gets out of Japan. Therefore, they are a net burden upon the Japanese economy, and they may not have any yen." That's how much understanding was in a bureau chief, at least, in my experience. He was subsequently crooked by involving himself in some wheat deal in Chicago -- using his knowledge of what could be exported or not to play the wheat deal. So, they fired him on that.

MCKINZIE: How about the relationship between your three colleagues and yourself, the four men who started it? Was it harmonious throughout the period you were there?

[59]

MACY: Oh, yes. King didn't stay very long, but the rest of us were, and still are, good friends.

MCKINZIE: So there was not any internal difficulties?

MACY: No, none whatever; it was a very pleasant relationship.

MCKINZIE: Mr. Macy, thank you very much.

Index

Acheson, Dean, 44
Agence France Press, 13
Allen, George V., 44
American Newspaper Publishers' Association (ANPA), 2-3
Antitrust Division and American Newspaper Publishers' Association (ANPA), 53-54
Arab League, Secretary of, discussion of Zionist policy, 33-34
Arabic language, 35-37
Associated Press (AP), 12

Begg, John, 4, 9, 29
Benton, Bill (William B.), Assistant Secretary of State, 12-16

Edwards, Herbert T., 4, 9
Egypt, and U.S. Information Service, 39

Ferguson, Seymour, 14
Freedom of the press, in U.S. Government, 52

Hearst, William Randolph, 14

International News Service (INS), 13-14

Lyons, Cecil, 30, 31

Marshall, General George C., army public relations, 2, 21
Marshall Plan, difference made, 41, 42
Molotov, Vyacheslov, U.N. Charter Conference, 7, 8

National Production Authority (NPA), job opportunity, 49-51
Newspaper staffing, problems and results, 16-17
New York Times, 19, 45

Office of Public Affairs, relationship between, 28

Press Branch of the Bureau, 21
Propaganda versus Information, 26

Radio Operations, controversy, 23-24
Relationship between Colleagues, 58-59
Richardson, General Robert C., Jr., 2

State Department, importance of information program, 56
State Department, Information Program, division of responsibility, 9-10

Stettinius, Edward R., U.N. Charter Conference, 8

Stone, William, 11

Time Magazine, and U.S. Information Program, 45

Tippy (Somerville Pinkney Jr.) Tuck, Ambassador to Egypt, 39

United Nations Organization, 6

United Press (UP), 13

U.S. Army, public relations, beginnings of, 2, 3

U.S. Congress, and international information program, 22-25

U.S. Economic Assistance, 42

Wallace, Henry A., 20

Zionism, 33-34