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Target of the Press

The Wartime Relationship Between Patton and the Media.

Alexander G. Lovelace

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"News policy is a weapon of war. Its purpose is to wage war and not to give out information." Dr. Joseph Goebbels
Patton and the media, U.S. Army Military History Institute (USAMHI), Carlisle Barracks.
Relations between the military and the media have been a critical element in the success or failure of modern warfare. From William Howard Russell’s dispatches during the Crimean War, to the “embedded” journalist live reporting from Afghanistan and Iraq, the role of the press on the battlefield has expanded drastically. As the role of the media increased beginning in the 19th Century up to the present its influence in modern war has expanded. As recently as June, 2010 General McChrystal was relieved of command of U.S. troops in Afghanistan because of indiscrete comments reported in Rolling Stones Magazine. Indeed, he was one of only two commanders in Afghanistan to be relieved from his post during the war on terror. It is clear that to succeed on today’s battlefield, a general must have an understanding of the damage that the press can cause. However this is not a new phenomenon. General George S. Patton, Jr.’s career was enhanced and then destroyed by the media, in a way that modern military leaders would find all too familiar. Yet despite this, there is precious little scholarship devoted solely to this area of his career. Most biographies mention the press in passing, but not comprehensively.\(^1\) To date, the scholars that have explored various aspects of Patton’s career have missed the decisive role played by the media. Most biographies try and answer two questions “who was Patton, and why did he succeed”? The answer to this question can be found in the relationship between Patton and the press. The media would make Patton into a legion, but also be his great undoing. It would be the media that would shape his image and many of his actions in World War Two, leading both to fame and infamy. Patton and the press had a symbiotic relationship. Patton saw the advantages

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\(^1\) See Blumenson, Martin. “Patton and the Press.” Army, May 1982, 66-72. The dean of Patton scholarship, Martin Blumenson, wrote this short article in which he briefly described some of Patton’s interaction with the “two-edged sword” of the media to help the war effort while the press used Patton to make headlines. However this article is little more than a rerun of a few press conferences and is too short to go into much detail. See also Jeffrey St. John, “The Press and General Patton,” The Patton Society Research Library, http://www.pattonhq.com/textfiles/press.html which covers the story in even less space than does Blumenson.
of press attention for improving morale, while the press saw Patton as making good headlines which would eventually lead to his downfall.

**Pre-Battle Accolades**

Between September 1, 1939, through December 7, 1941, an intense debate raged within the United States over whether the U.S. should enter the war in Europe. The pro-war interventionist saw Hitler’s conquest of Europe as a threat to freedom. However, the isolationist could point to the fact that America had nothing in the way of armaments to match the German Blitzkrieg. The U.S. regular Army in 1939 was made up of 190,000 soldiers. There were no armor units and mobility existed only in two cavalry divisions.\(^2\) Intervention was popular among many journalists yet they too were becoming increasingly concerned with the insufficiencies of U.S. armaments.\(^3\) Thus when America began to rearm in 1940, it was given extensive coverage by the press. “News is an important weapon in modern warfare…” wrote Matthew Gordon in 1942, and the U.S. effort would be supported from the beginning by most of the American media.\(^4\) The real question behind this focus was whether the American Army could stand up to the German Blitzkrieg. American armor strength was growing but it needed a personality like Guderian, Rommel, or Montgomery to lead it.

General George S. Patton Jr. rode into American pop-culture during the summer of 1941, riding in a tank with red, white, blue, and yellow stripes painted on it, and dressed in a self

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designed green jumpsuit topped off with a golden football helmet. He made good headlines and the media knew it. As Col. Robert Allen would write later, “A picturesque United States military figure was urgently needed. Patton had color, to spare.”

Patton had a long and distingue military career, both with the cavalry and tanks. Born in 1885 to wealthy California parents, he graduated from West Point in 1909 and married into an even wealthier Boston family. Though he had been held back a year at West Point for failing mathematics, he was a various reader of military history outside the class room. He had participated in the 1912 Olympic Games coming in 5th in the Modern Pentathlon. Throughout his life Patton was a devoted Christian despite his huge vocabulary of swearwords and a belief in reincarnation. In 1916 he finagled a position onto General John J. Pushing’s staff by claiming he had experience with handling the press which he actually did not have. A cavalryman by training, and temperament he had helped start the American Tank Corp in France in the First World War then left the dwindling armored force to return to the cavalry. Only to be made commander of the 2d Armored Division in November of 1940. He was known throughout the army as being large, profane, flashy, and wealthy. He is known to history as one of the most complicated military figures in American history.

These attributes had made Patton no stranger to the press before the war, and reporters had flocked to the 2d Armored Division headquarters at Fort Benning. However, it was not until 1941 when the army began large scale field maneuvers in Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas that the press began to make Patton a national figure. Charles B. Odom, who was then a civilian but would later become Patton’s doctor during the war, remembered that he first heard of the

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General “like everyone else” in the headlines generated from the Tennessee and Louisiana Maneuvers.\textsuperscript{7}

For the U.S. Army the maneuvers of 1941 were a formative time where commanders, tactics, and reputations were made or broken. For Patton it was a chance to shine. The 2d Armored Division moved with speed and daring that mirrored what the Germans had done in France; a fact not missed by the press. The \textit{New York Times} referred to the 2d Armored Division as ‘the Army’s new ‘Blitz’ force…’ and quoted Patton’s saying that his division was “the strongest force ever devised by the mind of men.”\textsuperscript{8} \textit{Life} magazine put a full colored photo of him on the July “Defense Issue.” Patton is dressed in the photo as a tanker with a steely gaze and his pearl handled pistol in a shoulder holster. The caption to the picture stated ‘Because of his snappy helmet and costumes, and because he likes to ride a tank with his troops, Major General George S. Patton Jr., commanding general of the Second Armored Division, is sometimes called General “Flash Gordon” or the “Green Hornet.”’\textsuperscript{9} The article went on to state:

\begin{quote}
\textit{it was apparent last week that the U.S. at last has created a military force which in gun power and mobility is fast becoming a match for a German Panzer division…the Second Armored Division is the most encouraging military news of the year. Even to military observers, it seems just as self-sufficient as a panzer division.}\textsuperscript{10}
\end{quote}

The press showed that the Army was quickly creating a force that could fight the German divisions. This was far from true since the U.S. armored divisions were massively outnumbered, outgunned, and would have been outfought if that had had come up against the German Panzers in the summer of 1941. However, huge progress was being made and the war situation looked bad enough without looking too closely at difficult problems.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{10} Ibid., 73.
\end{flushleft}
The media did not create the image of Patton that emerged out of the 1941 maneuvers, only propagate it. He was a diligent student of warfare and almost everything he did was designed to make him a better warrior. Historian Roger Nye has suggested that Patton's ideas on inspiring public leadership stretched back to 1915, where he had written in the margins of a book that "[t]he individual [leader] may dream greatly or otherwise, but he must infect the crowd with the idea [in order] to carry it out."\textsuperscript{11} Throughout the War Patton would make fiery addresses to his soldiers, dress in flashy uniforms, and make colorful statements. It is true that Patton at first enjoyed the publicity;\textsuperscript{12} however his actions were more to inspire his troops and make them better fighters and not to gain notoriety for himself. Patton once told his nephew, Fred Ayer, Jr., about his "war face which I have been practicing before a mirror all my life."\textsuperscript{13} Most photo's of Patton taken during the war show him with his "war face" staring back; an image of toughness to hide a soft heart and delicate personality.

Patton's dedication to his image got the desired affect with the soldiers he commanded. He was not out to make his troops love him and they often did not. However, they respected him and more importantly followed him. An artillery officer in the 94\textsuperscript{th} Infantry Division in charge of censoring mail remembered "[s]ometimes people that'd write those letters saying how wonderful Patton is would go outside and bitch about him to each other...But when they'd write home, they'd brag, brag, brag. They'd say, 'I'm a Patton man!'"\textsuperscript{14} Clp. Ralph P. Spinelli of the 10\textsuperscript{th} Armored Division remembered Patton being "tuff. He made us work hard. But he was always

there too." Herbert Leo Bruenamer summed up Patton as "that type of man, he was a soldier." All of these accounts are remarkable since they show that Patton made his presence felt among front line soldiers. World War Two was notorious for American Soldiers never seeing their commanding officers or even knowing who they were. However the soldiers of the Seventh and Third Army’s never doubted who was commanding them.

His relationship and use of the press was likewise more than, as some have claimed, a mere chance to gain fame. The editor of Life wrote Patton after his appearance on the cover to tell him all the 2d Armored had done for the magazine, to which he replied “[r]emember that the article in Life did as much for the 2d Armored Division as the 2d Armored Division could possibly have done for Life. The important thing in any organization is the creation of a soul which is based on pride, and no member of the division reading your magazine could fail to be filled with pride.” He always guided press attention away from himself and toward his troops. This began in Tennessee were the New York Times stated that troops of the 2d Armored Division had been handpicked while the public relations officer of the division stated that it "attracts the best. For that reason, our men are noteworthy for their alertness and their appearance." This use of the press to praise his troops would be a continual and seldom recognized attribute throughout the War.

The media added to his already colorful image by giving Patton the title of “Old Blood and Guts.” It had come about in a staff meeting at fort Benning were Patton had made a speech saying that the division needed “blood and brains” to win in combat. A reporter heard of the

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16 Herbert Leo Bruenamer, interviewed by Kristen Locus, Library of Congress Veterans History Project.
speech and published it after changing "blood and brains" to "blood and guts."²⁰ The label stuck, though it only showed one very public side of Patton, and gave him a picture of ruthlessness which he did not deserve. However it sold papers and Patton saw its usefulness. He commented in his diary "[t]oday Captain Emmett talked for three hours and said nothing. I talked blood and guts for five minutes and got an ovation."²¹ However in a letter sometime afterward Patton stated that the "name was invented by some itinerant newspaper correspondent, and I have never known one of my soldiers to use it in referring to me. However, I have no objections to standing up to the implications...."²² In another letter, he stated flatly that his soldiers usually called him "General Georgie."²³ Later his press officer, lieutenant colonial E. C. Deane, remembered that "'Georgie,' "Uncle Georgie", and as was the Army custom, "the Old Man" were used, always with affection' referring to Patton instead of "Blood and Guts."²⁴ At a meeting before the invasion of North Africa he told his staff "The newspapers call me 'Old Blood and Guts.' That's all right. It serves its purpose. It makes good reading. But it takes more than blood and guts to win battles. It takes brains and guts."²⁵

Though Patton's appearance, swagger, and profanity got headlines they did not always help his army career. When his long time friend Dwight D. Eisenhower, then at the War Department, suggested that Patton be sent to help the British in Egypt, he was "astonished to find my choice flatly opposed by a considerable portion of the staff..." Eisenhower was convinced that "this was due entirely to Patton's rather bizarre mannerisms and his sometimes

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²¹ Diary, October 22, 1942, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
²² George S. Patton Jr. to Edgar N. Raynor, January 12, 1944, letter Box 44, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
²⁴ E.C. Deane, "An Arkansas Officer in the Headquarters of General G.S. Patton, Jr.," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 3 (Autumn, 1947), 348.
unpredictable actions.” However “[s]uch doubts had no influence with me because of my confidence in his fighting heart and my conviction that he would provide effective leadership for combat troops.”\(^{26}\) The mission fell through for reasons besides Patton’s capacity for command. When Patton was assigned to lead the invasion of Casablanca, his reputation for flamboyances continued to cause problems. The navy grew increasingly annoyed with Patton’s lack of cooperation partly due to his suspicion of the navy and the fact that Admiral Hewitt’s did not know how to take his flashiness and diatribes.\(^{27}\) Eisenhower who was:

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\text{certain that the difficulty [with the navy], whatever its nature, was nothing more than the result of a bit of George's flair for the dramatic, protested at once, suggesting that if his personality was causing any difficulty in conferences the issue could be met by sending him out with troops and allowing some staff member to represent him in completion of planning details.}^{28}\]

George C. Marshall warned Patton to “influence Hewitt but not to scare him” and by the time the invasion took place, relations “could not possibly be more satisfactory.”\(^{29}\) However, the pattern of Eisenhower rescuing Patton from his mouth was set and would be continued until the end of the War.

**Fame with Victory**

Patton’s fame created by the media’s pre-battle buildup would not have lasted if he had not followed it with victories. Operation Torch, code name for the invasion of French North Africa at Casablanca, Oran, and Algiers, would provide him with victories that would etch him into the history of the Second World War. The Vichy French colony of Morocco was a colonial pyramid of—the Germans oppressing the French, the French oppressing the Arabs, and the Arabs oppressing the Jews. “The first victory we have to win,” Winston Churchill wrote, “is to

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avoid a battle; the second if we cannot avoid it, to win it.” The question that no one could be certain of was whether the French would fight.

The French resistant’s caved after a few days, and this short but hard fought victory added to Patton’s fame. His pre-battle publicity had already made him more famous than other officers in the U.S. Army. In February, 1942 Time had run a short piece on Patton and Major General Alvan Gillem Jr., who each were taking over one of the two new armored corps. The article, however, was mostly on Patton giving the by then familiar, “blood and guts” stories. Gillem was only mentioned once in passing. Yet it was North Africa that made Patton a household name.

However Patton was disappointed by the press coverage. He wrote in his diary on November 20th “[r]ead press report interceptions. Apparently the Western Task Force was not in the war. I feel a little hurt.” He had some justification for feeling let down. The New York Times was typical in not filing a story that mentioned his landing at Casablanca until November 14th, six days after the landing, and it was not printed until the 16th. The story only mentioned Patton and Casablanca in passing saying that the fighting was “particularly heavy” in his sector. This was not deliberate since communication with the Allied High Command in Gibraltar was poor with only indirect reports on Patton’s activity. Many details of the landing

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33 Diary, November 20, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
34 The Associated Press Correspondent Harold V. Boyle filed a story on the Casablanca landings on the 9th of November, but which was delayed until the 16th.
were not known until Eisenhower issued a special communiqué on November 16<sup>th</sup>.<sup>37</sup> Given these conditions, it is not surprising that reporting was scanty about the invasion. This shortage of news coverage would not last long. Patton’s wife, Beatrice, had subscribed to a clipping service and “less than a month after Torch had more than 1,300 articles about her husband.”<sup>38</sup> However, this was the first incident where Patton would feel that the accomplishments of his armies were not being adequately covered by the media.

Not all the press that Patton would receive for his handling of North Africa was positive. Patton had taken the surrender of the French Governor of Morocco Resident General Charles Auguste Noguès and then left him in charge of the French forces, resting on top of the original colonial pyramid. This was to allow the French to keep order in Morocco while American forces would move east to fight the Germans. Instead of a force of occupation, American soldiers would simply pass through an “allied” country. Patton was taking a risk since the State Department had drawn up a treaty which called for harsh terms and the disarming of the French military if they resisted the landings. At the surrender Patton had quickly grasped that the situation had changed and that disarming the French would do more harm than good. Since communications with Eisenhower were still bad, Patton took it upon himself to rip up the proposed terms and said that as long as the French did not attack U.S. troops they could keep their arms.<sup>39</sup> This decision to leave Noguès in command would bring criticism toward Patton from some areas of the American left.

Noguès was not, as Patton knew, the most loyal of allies. He had spent the past year and a half in happy collaboration with the Germans, and resisted the Allied invasion until it was

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evident that the French were surely beaten. Seeing that it was in his best interest to switch sides
again he signed the surrender. Patton, who privately described Noguès as a “crook”, saw him as
a necessary evil.\(^4^0\) Yet, in the long run, peace was kept in Morocco saving thousands of allied
troops for duty against the Axis.

However Patton’s decision to leave Noguès in command was not liked by many in the
media. The press disliked the terms of the agreement Patton had signed which had forced them to
give up their anti-Vichy propaganda and their hopes of improving the lives of the Jews of
Morocco.\(^4^1\) Patton’s aid-de-camp Col. Charles Codman wrote of Noguès that “most or our own
press and consular representatives are out to get his scalp.”\(^4^2\) Typical of left leaning journalist
was C. L. Sulzberger of the New York Times who, after touring Morocco found the Noguès and
Giraud’s administration to be only minimally committed to the allied war effort. Jews were still
oppressed, the radio spewed “Axis propaganda”, and the “Vichy-originated Veterans’ Legion,
which for two years was definitely lined up with anti-Allied, anti-Semitic, anti-Free Mason and
pro-Axis forces, still maintains considerable influence…”\(^4^3\) The War was seen as a crusade
against Fascism by many in the left--leaning media crusaders usually do not make deals with the
devil. There was suspicion of U.S. military leaders expressed by many “New Dealer” Liberals, in
and out of government, which was summed up in the comment of Jay Allen of the Office War
Information (OWI) to Supreme Court Justice Frankfurter, that “[m]ost of our Army people are
not only ignorant about all these things but on the whole, by inclination, rather more comfortable
with the Vichyssoise [sic] crowd, the Nazified Frenchmen, than those who for their convictions

\(^4^0\) Diary, November 14, 1942, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress,
Washington, D.C.
\(^4^1\) Allan M. Winkler, The Politics of Propaganda: The office of War Information 1942-1945 (New Haven: Yale
of liberalism either had to leave France or were put in prison, etc.\textsuperscript{44} The fact that Patton had torn up the State Department treaty and seemed to be running diplomatic policy as he saw fit angered many in the Liberal media. Oddly, their criticism was not only directed at the General but also Roosevelt, and Eisenhower.\textsuperscript{45}

On December 11, 1942 Milton S. Eisenhower, brother of Dwight D. Eisenhower, arrived in Algiers and explained to American diplomat Robert Murphy that some newspapers and radio commentators in the states were calling his brother a “Fascist.”\textsuperscript{46} He demanded that the French release any prisoners that had been arrested because they opposed the “Nazis domination of the world.”\textsuperscript{47} Of course this was not as simple as it sounded since many of these were common criminals and uncommonly important communists. Murphy agreed that the relationship between Noguès and the General had “become embarrassingly cordial.”

News reports had been published in the United States about the extraordinary cooperation between these generals...and these dispatches aggravated sentiment against the way French Africa was being administered. This was the first time, but by no means the last, when Patton created a problem in public relations for General Eisenhower.\textsuperscript{48} Noguès was no saint which Patton realized full well. However his critics failed to offer a solution to the delicate situation in North Africa. The Allies had not invaded North Africa to liberate the Arabs from French rule, but to engage the German Army on two fronts. In this Patton’s action was correct. It is unclear how much Patton knew of the turmoil that he had caused in Washington. Public attention was soon drawn, along with Patton, to the battlefields of Tunisia.

On February 14\textsuperscript{th}, 1943, the 1\textsuperscript{st} U.S. Armored Division that was fighting in Tunisia suddenly came under heavy attack by the 21st Panzer Division, under the command of the

\textsuperscript{46} Robert Murphy, Diplomat Among Warriors (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1964), 149-151.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 150.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 151.
legendary Field Marshall Erwin Rommel. The poorly led and disciplined American soldiers fled. The Germans advanced through Sidi Bouzid and Kasserine Pass and collected a large number of prisoners including Patton son-in-law Johnny Watters. Luckily for the United States, it was only a spoiling attack to disrupt a pending American operation and the Germans never intended it as a major advance.\(^49\) However, it was a stinging defeat for the Americans first real encounter with the Wehrmacht. Yet perhaps its greatest repercussion was that the British lost any respect for or confidence in American soldiers. Later when Eisenhower told British Field Marshall Alexander that the Americans should have their own sector in the Tunisia fighting, Alexander’s answer reflected the common British view that the Americans had failed and they belonged in the rear.\(^50\) Seeing that the Americans had avoided destruction by the supply needs of the Germans and not by their own efforts, Eisenhower relieved the current commander and ordered Patton, than restlessly planning the invasion of Sicily, to Tunisia to take command of the II Corps.\(^51\)

Patton was overjoyed. Here was a chance to get out of the tedious and boring diplomatic maneuvers in Casablanca and get back into the limelight that battle provided. The press spun the story, as Eisenhower hoped, that Tunisia was a tank battle and Americas foremost tank expert was there to do the job. Patton arrived at the II Corps headquarters with sirens wailing and a host of ideas to inspire his troops. Fines were imposed for sloppy dress and unsolder like conduct. Neckties and helmets became mandatory for front and rear-echelon troops. As a somewhat nonplussed Omar Bradley, soon to become Patton’s second in command, observed “[e]ach time a soldier knotted his necktie, threaded his leggings, and buckled on his heavy steel helmet, he was forcibly reminded that Patton had come to command the II Corps, that the pre-Kasserine


\(^{51}\) Harry C. Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 272-274.
days had ended, and that a tough new era had begun.”\(^52\) The press reported this with optimism. Frank L. Kluckhohn wrote a long piece for the New York Times on April 4\(^{th}\) showing a bold, armored expert, who seemed fearless in battle. “He hit Tunisia like a whirlwind,” Kluckhohn wrote, “amazing men who had never served under him…”\(^53\) The flamboyant general, with his colorful comments, was also easy to write about. Arriving at his new command he announced that he had sworn off alcohol and smoking until the end of the campaign. He added “when I enter Tunis, I hope somebody hands me a cigar and a bottle of whisky.”\(^54\) Patton, as before, used this press attention to make his troops know who was in command of them but also to give them credit. The United Press quoted him as saying “The private who is out there getting shot at does most of the work in this war. He gets damned little credit out of it too…it takes guts to live in a foxhole in the rain eating cold rations.”\(^55\)

Patton’s time at the II Corps was short, yet he managed to defeat the Germans at the Battle for El Guettar and begin a rivalry with the British, which would last till the end of the War. On April 15, Patton returned to Rabat and Casablanca to begin planning the invasion of Sicily, while the II Corps was left to Bradley to finish off the tattered remains of the Africa Korp.\(^56\)

The views of the war correspondents were beginning to change about Patton. “Old blood and guts” still was the preferred name for him, however many of the more observant reporters began to see him as a more complicated figure than they had before. When the April 12, issue of Time magazine, written by a reporter in the states, charging that Patton’s performance in battle had been “disappointment[ing]” and that “[p]eople at home had had high hopes for General

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\(^52\) Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier’s Story (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), 44.
\(^54\) “Patton Commands in Mid-Tunisia; Leads Americans in Offensive,” The New York Times, March 19, 1943.
\(^55\) Ibid.
\(^56\) Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier’s Story (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), 70.
Patton” outraged the *Time* correspondent in Africa. General McClure informed Patton that the correspondent angrily sent off a 300 word telegraph cussing out the editor of the magazine. Patton for his part seemed less eager to be noticed by the press. He commented on the Tunisia campaign in his diary of April 9, that “Things look pretty good but I fear the papers will make too much of a play about me.” Yet of course, he had not renounced all fame he or his soldiers would earn.

“Where is General Patton?” was the question asked repeatedly at a press conference given by Eisenhower on May 8th. Ike gave the official explanation that during the battle for El Guettar a tank expert was needed while the more mountains terrain of Northern Tunisia required the skills of an infantryman such as Omar Bradley. Patton listening unseen in another part of the building noted sardonically that this answer “fooled no one and they kept on asking”. Eisenhower had taken the time to concoct this ruse on the behest of the information director, General McClure, who had hoped that by downplaying the possibility of future operations in the Mediterranean many of the correspondents would leave. Eisenhower realized that this plan had failed and finally stated “I have had to pull General Patton out to plan a bigger operation, and at the moment he commands the I Armored Corps. Please lay off mentioning him.” Hearing this, Patton mused to himself that his reputation would “Catch hell for a month” but it did not matter since Ike “needs a few loyal and unselfish men around him, even if he is too weak a character to

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58 Diary, May 10, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
59 Diary April 9, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
61 Diary May 8, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
63 Diary May 8, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
be worthy of us." His return from Tunisia marked a new low point between Patton and Eisenhower who he considered to be caving to British demands. He was not comforted by Eisenhower, who told him that he "did not consider himself as an American but as an ally." Patton saw Ike as being more favorable toward the British. He fumed that

Lt. General Cocran, the s.o.b., publicly called our troops cowards. Ike says that since they were serving in his Corps that was O.K. I told him that had I so spoken of the British under me, my head would have come off. He agreed, but does nothing to Cocran. There was also the British Field Marshal, war hero, and egotist Sir Bernard Law Montgomery, who drove American leaders, many with much more patients than Patton, to fits of rage and frustration.

The Battle for Sicily would in large part turn into a contest, played out both on the battle field and in the press, between Montgomery and Patton trying to gain prestige of their respective countries. After the defeat at Kasserine Pass, the British regarded the Americans with ill-guised distain. Patton, suspicious of the British since well before Torch, took the slights and comments toward his soldiers personally. This attitude persisted even after the victory at El Guettar. His actions in Tunisia and Sicily would be driven by his attempts to regain the U.S. Army’s reputation.

On July 10, 1943 two allied armies invaded Sicily. The first was Montgomery's 8th British Army which landed on the east side of the Island. The 8th main purpose was to lead the main drive and stop the escape of the German and Italian soldiers to Italy through the city of Messina. The second force was commanded by General Patton, who led the 7th U.S. Army, with the job of guarding the flanks of the British advance in the West. There was little doubt that the Americans had been deliberately placed in a supportive role by the British.

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64 Diary May 8, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
65 Diary, May 8, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
66 Diary, April 16, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
He had already determined to prove the effectiveness of the U.S. Army and the expansive
of the British. While the British battled strong resistance and made little progress the Seventh
Army swung along the coast and captured the city of Palermo on the other side of the island on
July 22. Patton had disobeyed orders by expanding his role in Sicily and putting his army in a
position to strike at Messina. Bradley wrote later that Patton “was never criticized by his
superiors for this flagrant disobedience of orders. The victory and the headlines were too
sweet.”

If Sicily was a race between the Americans and British, the British had won the media
battle. On the day Palermo fell the New York Times published a column by Raymond Daniell who stated that “British press has fared better than the American in reporting the Sicilian
estimated today that they had been sending five times as much material from British sources as
from their own correspondents” in Sicily. The impression created, explained Daniell’s, was that
“the British and Canadian forces were inexorably sweeping forward while the American troops
were encountering stiff opposition and were doing little better than holding their own.” In fact
the opposite was true.

The reason for this dearth of reporting on the success of the Seventh Army was, in part,
due to Eisenhower. Captain Harry C. Butcher, Eisenhower’s naval aid, recorded that Monty’s
slow advance was damaging his reputation in Britain. To save the reputation of Britain’s greatest
war hero Ike had tried to balance the progress of the two armies in the public’s mind by stating to
the press that the “Seventh Army had relatively easy going and the Eighth very difficult.”

68 We will meet Raymond Daniell near the end of this story.
Eisenhower had secretly received the thanks of Churchill. Patton either did not know about Ike's statement or did not find it significant enough to write in his diary, which is unlikely. Yet as Butcher states the Eighth Army continued to get much more publicity than the Seventh which "has been going great guns, [and] is still somewhat under the cloud of the great reputation of the Eighth."\(^71\)

For a time Patton was blissfully unaware that the 7\(^{th}\) Armies triumph was going unreported in the States. Throughout the war, it was not uncommon for Patton to entertain visitors ranging from Hollywood actors to Senators. One of these visitors sometime during the Sicily campaign was the novelist John P. Marquand, a friend and Harvard classmate of Patton's aid-de-camp Charles R. Codman. At dinner, Patton asked Marquand what the reaction was to what the Americans troops had done in Sicily. Marquand informed him that from what "I had read in the newspapers the general impression a reader gathered was that the American forces had knifed through token Italian resistance while the British had faced the brunt of the fighting..." The General was shocked. Patton thundered:

By God don't they know we took on the Hermann Goering division?"... By God, we got moving instead of sitting down, and we had to keep moving every minute to keep them off balance, or we'd be fighting yet—and what were they doing in front of Catania? They [the British] don't even know how to run around end.\(^72\)

Marquand was fascinated by the General's tone. He was not really being anti-British or speaking out of jealousy. Instead, the novelist believed, "He was speaking solely for his troops, aroused because their exploits had not been given proper recognition."\(^73\)

Patton was accused, by Bradley and others, of taking unnecessary risks in the dash from Palermo. Patton was supposedly trying to beat the British to the city of Messina; however the mountainous terrain and increased enemy resistance began to slow the Seventh Army. Patton

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\(^71\) Ibid., 377.
\(^73\) Ibid., xvii.
decided to bypass strong Axis resistance by using the sea to land behind the battle. These tactics outraged Bradley who believed that they were too risky. Yet he wanted to get to Messina before the British as much as Patton did since “our men had been ridiculed and abused by the British media in Sicily. It seemed fitting revenge to rob Monty of the triumphant march into Messina.”

When General Truscott, backed by Bradley, requested one of the landings be delayed, Patton refused. Bradley believed that it was because Patton had a large number of correspondents around to witness the attack that he refused to call it off. If this was true, then the conversation retold by Marquand may have spurred Patton to reckless actions for the sake of publicity and to trying to race the British to Messina.

However, this was not the case since prestige was a secondary, if not unimportant objective for Patton. He did not like Montgomery and wanted to get to Messina before him. Yet his extensive diary and correspondents at this time says nothing about trying to get his Army noticed by the press and very little about the British. By pushing his army hard, Patton believed, it kept the Germans off balance and unable to dig-in, thus saving American lives. As he explained “our system of continued attack is better than the British system of attack, build up, and attack; because everytime they halt to build up, the enemy builds up in front of them...[sic]”

Neither Bradley, nor Truscott, who were both writing many years after the end of the war, actually heard Patton say he would not stop an attack because of bad publicity.

75 Ibid., 196-197. Bradley seems to have gotten the idea of the presents of correspondents changing Patton’s mind on the landings from General Truscott who was told by General Keyes that Patton wanted the operation carried out no matter what, and reminded Truscott about the correspondents who would give bad publicity if the attack was not launched. See L.K. Truscott, Jr., Command Missions: A Personal Story (New York: E.P. Dutton and Company, Inc., 1954), 234.
76 Diary, Appendix 48, July 18, 1943, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
The press hyped up the race between the Americans and British and it has recently been brought into question exactly how much animosity existed between Patton and Monty. Patton had told General Truscott on July 26, that he “would certainly like to beat Montgomery into Messina” yet it is doubtful whether this was his overall priority.\(^7\)\(^7\) Just as Patton tried to save his men by not letting them slow down, historian Carlo D’Este believes that Monty was also more interested in saving his soldiers than engaging in a races for national prestige. As D’Este states “[c]ontrary to some of the nonsense written about the so-called race for Messina, in Sicily Montgomery demonstrated that he would not jeopardize the Allied effort for the sake of personal glory.”\(^7\)\(^8\) Patton pushed his men so hard to end the campaign sooner and save lives, if this generated headline’s that was fine, but he was not fighting for publicity.

**The Slapping Incident**

Drew Pearson was a muckraking journalist whose extensive connections and willingness to expose the powerful had gained him national fame. Though he had been a strong proponent for America’s entry into the War, Pearson saw no reason why the conflict should prevent his exposing of military or political mismanagement. He had happily printed military secrets of both the United States and Great Britain, which had raised the wrath of both Churchill and Roosevelt.\(^7\)\(^9\) He was about to break the single most devastating news story of Patton’s career.

On August 3, 1943 Patton had stopped at an evacuation hospital and talked with the 350 soldiers being treated there. He suddenly noticed “the only arrant coward I have ever seen in this army. This man was sitting, trying to look as if he had been wounded.”\(^8\)\(^0\) The soldier was named

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\(^0\) Diary, August 3, 1943, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Pvt. Charles H. Kuhl from the 26th Division, who worked as a carpet layer in civilian life. He had been in the hospital twice within the past ten days and diagnosed with "[p]ychoneurosis anxiety state." Patton asked what was wrong with him, and Kurl replied I "just couldn’t take it." Patton "gave him the devil, slapped his face with my gloves and kicked him out of the hospital." Kurl was quickly picked up by corpsmen outside and taken to another tent. It was soon discovered that he had a temperature of 102.2 degree F. stemming from malaria and chronic diarrhea.

Seven days later Patton visited the 93d Evacuation hospital where he "[s]aw another alleged nervous patient—really a coward." The tent had ten to fifteen wounded in it when Patton came to Pvt. Paul G. Bennett or 17th Field Artillery who was huddled up shivering. Patton asked what was wrong and Bennett sobbed "It’s my nerves". "What did you say?" Patton bellowed. "It’s my nerves," Bennett replied, "I can’t stand the shelling anymore." Dr. Donald E. Currier recalled Patton saying ""Your nerves, hell; you are just a Goddamned coward, you yellow son of a bitch." He then slapped the man and said "Shut up that Goddamned crying, I won’t have these brave men here who have been shot at seeing a yellow bastard sitting here crying." Patton then "told the doctor to return him to his company...I may have saved his soul if he had one." Currier remembered he then ‘turned to the man again, who was managing to sit at attention though shaking all over and said, “You’re going back to the front lines and you may

83 Diary, August 3, 1943, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
84 Ibid.
86 Diary, August 10, 1943, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
87 Box 1, "Papers of Donald E. Currier," U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.
88 Diary, May 10, 1943, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
get shot and killed, but you’re going to fight. If you don’t, I’ll stand you up against a wall and
have a firing squad kill you on purpose. In fact,” he said, reaching for his pistol, “I ought to shoot
you myself, you Goddamned whimpering coward.”

As Patton angrily stormed out of the hospital and back into his jeep on that bright Sicilian
day he went past a jeep full of reporters which included British journalist Noel Monks, who
’distinctly heard him shout: There’s no such thing as shell shock. It’s an invention of the
Jews.”

It seems highly doubtful that Patton actually said this since Monks is the only eye
witness who claims to have heard it. Neither Currier nor any witnesses except Monks mentions
Patton using anti-Semitic language. There is also scant evidence whether Monks was even there.
Milton Bracker of the *New York Times* reported that no reporters were present and the first to
arrive at the hospital were Merrill Mueller of the National Broadcasting Company and Demaree
of the *Saturday Evening Post*. The official witness list prepared by Currier, who was no friend
of Patton, did not mention any reporters though if they were there Currier would have known.
Monks was writing twelve years after the incident which may have colored his memory. In
September 1945 a false story would be released in the press that one of the slapped soldiers was
in fact Jewish. In his diary Patton describes the incident but makes no remarks about there being
“no such thing as shell shock” or its Jewish creators.

In any case the correspondents now knew. That evening twenty journalists, including
Monks, Demaree Bess, and Ernie Pyle, met to decide what was to be done. Monks observed that
“I don’t suppose such a meeting had ever been held before, and I doubt if the like will ever be
held again. Here was a group of war correspondents meeting to decide what to do about the

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88 Box 1, “Papers of Donald E. Currier,” U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.
89 Noel Monks, *Eyewitness* (London: Frederick Muller LTD, 1955), 195. Monks does not say the date but from his
description it is obviously the second slapping incident.
90 Milton Bracker, “Patton Struck Ailing Soldier, Apologized to Him and Army,” *New York Times*, November 24,
1943.
conduct of a famous general...” It was decided that they all would not report the story. Instead, the reporters drafted a letter to Eisenhower and Demaree Bess to deliver it.93

The report reached Eisenhower a few minutes before the reporters did. Bess who had visited one of the hospitals 24 hours after Patton,94 carried a letter from the correspondents state that Patton had committed a court-martial offense by striking a soldier. Charlie Daly, of CBS, had also written a report concluding that Patton had gone crazy. Quent Reynolds had the most extreme statement that “50,000 American soldiers...would shoot Patton if they had the slightest chance.”95 Eisenhower assembled the war correspondents at his headquarters, most of whom, were, as Butcher put it “incensed.”96 He stated that the rumors were true and that Patton would be severely reprimanded and ordered to apologize. He ended his statement by saying:

The day will come when the Allies will punch a hole through the west wall built by Germany along the English Channel and Atlantic coastline. Then we will need the greatest open-field runner in history to take the mails to town. George Patton is that man. If he is then commanding armor in Europe, he will save thousands of American and Allied lives and shorten the war by many months.

You all know that there is something more important in this war than a single story. If you want to write about these incidents, you may do so, and there will be no censorship. There will be no recriminations on my part. I leave each of you to use your conscience and do what you feel is best.97 Not one of the correspondents reported the story. Yet, the press was still not happy with Patton.

Butcher related how some of the correspondents attributed the Seventh Army success to Bradley and other division commanders instead of Patton.98 Eisenhower, who spent several sleepless nights worrying about the situation, fired off a reprimand to Patton not to cause any more trouble and to apologize to the soldiers he had slapped. He believed the press was probably

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93 Ibid., 196-197.
96 Ibid., 396.
exaggerating the normal grumbling of the soldiers and correctly knew that many of Patton's men were devoted to him.

Pearson received a tip about the remarkable story by his friend, and OSS official, Ernest Cuneo. Cuneo said that the famous General George S. Patton Jr., who had conducted one of the great feats of modern military history in reaching the city of Messina before the British, had gone into a hospital during the campaign and slapped two shell-shocked soldiers. Pearson checked the story, discovered that it was well known in Sicily, and found out that the war correspondents had chosen not to report the story. Pearson saw no reason why he should not report it. He checked with the United States internal censors which asked the War Department who suggested the story would hurt morale and should not be published. The U.S. censor, however, did not feel that this was a good enough reason and on November 21, 1943 Pearson stated on his radio station in part:

When a private does something wrong he gets punished for it and when a General does he should be punished too. Everybody has been wondering what about the Seventh Army, and for a long time people here thought that it was held in reserve or was about to go into the Balkans. Leut. General Patton in going through a hospital stopped at the bed of a man and asked what was the matter with him. The reply was that he was suffering from overfatigue. At that General Patton exhibited great impatience and ordered the man to get up out of bed and go back to duty. The man did not make any move to get out of bed whereupon the General got violently angry and reached into the bed to pull the man out or to hit him. At this point the Doctor interfered saying that he was in command as far as the sick were concerned and that he knew when a man should be in bed and when not.[sic] Pearson went on to say that Patton tried to grab his gun but was restrained.

Up to this time, the press had largely looked favorably a pound Patton as a whole. Yet his militarism, his dealings with the French in North Africa, and his extreme pressure that he put on

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his troops during the drive for Messina had angered some in the media. As Pearson put it, “it was time to let loose on him.” The irony of the attack from those who had done so much to build up Patton’s image to fight the war so many of them believed necessary, was caught by Patton’s daughter, Ruth Ellen Patton Totten, writing that “[i]t seemed as if all those who had enjoyed Georgie as a hero-warrior enjoyed even more pulling him off the pedestal they had built for him…”

Why did Patton strike two of his soldiers and create an incident that almost ended his career? It is not, as most historians’ have claimed, that he totally disbelieved in shellshock as a medical condition. A few days before his encounter with Pvt. Bennett he had stopped at another field hospital and wrote in his diary that he “saw two men completely out from shell shock. One kept going through the motions of crawling. The doctor told me they were going to give them an injection to put them to sleep and that probably they would wake up alright.” What Patton objected to so strongly was skulking, which he believed was often disguised as shell shock. Malingering has always been a problem within armies. Patton, well versed in military history surely knew this. Historian Roger Nye who has examined Patton’s intellectual interest notes that Patton had advocated that skulking should be punished by execution in the pre-war years. Nor had he shied away from using physical abuse to motivate his soldiers. On the landing beach at Casablanca Patton saw a soldier stop work during an air raid and curled up jabbering. Patton

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104 Diary, August 6, 1943, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
“kicked him in the fanny with all my might and he jumped right up and went to work.”\(^{106}\)

However, Patton’s actions can best be understood as coming from exhaustion. He had visited several hospitals, a job no general likes to do and which some rarely do, and had been constantly on the move for more than a month.\(^{107}\) He was likely, as Kuhl put it later, suffering from a little combat fatigue himself.\(^{108}\)

The story exploded with a vengeance when Drew Pearson broke it in November. The scandal was only heightened when Eisenhower’s aide, Walt Bedell Smith, at first denied the story.\(^{109}\) Smith stated in part that “General Patton has never been reprimanded at any time by General Eisenhower or by anybody else in this theatre.”\(^{110}\) However, the war correspondents were now under tremendous pressure from their home newspapers and quickly confirmed the story. Correspondent Virgil Pinkley in answer to the furious demands from the United Press sent the editors Eisenhower’s statement in reply.\(^{111}\) The cover up brought the Army under harsh criticism from the press. *Time* stated that “the General’s crime was no greater than the Army’s in hushing it up for so long.”\(^{112}\) As for Patton, *Time* condemned his conduct as “unsoldierly” and related other stories of Patton’s obsession with discipline.\(^{113}\)

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\(^{106}\) *Diary, November 9, 1942, Box 2, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.*

\(^{107}\) Geoffrey Perret, *Eisenhower* (New York: Random House, 1999), 231. Perret states that “A few commanders, such as MacArthur, almost never visited the wounded, to their lasting discredit. Eisenhower and Bradley did it occasionally, but Patton and Truscott did it regularly...”


\(^{112}\) “Army & Navy-Command: War’s Underside,” *Time*, November 29, 1943, [http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,791151,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,791151,00.html)

\(^{113}\) “Army & Navy-Command: Conduct Unbecoming...,” *Time*, December 6, 1943, [http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,850781,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,850781,00.html)
Yet despite this barrage of criticism from the media, public support remained behind Patton. Hol Boyle wrote from Algiers that Patton had been punished enough and was needed in the war.\textsuperscript{114} \textit{Time} reported that the Liberal “PM’s honest editor John P. Lewis admitted that his mail was running almost 5-to-1 against the paper’s high-blood-pressure cry for a court-martial” for Patton.\textsuperscript{115} In December Gallup released a poll that stated 70 percent of Americans believed that Patton should be left in command of his Army, while 22 percent said he should be brought home.\textsuperscript{116}

Pearson would not limit his coverage of Patton to the slapping incident and would continue to publish any bizarre story about him that he could find. These included Patton allegedly firing a pistol in the air while shouting at one of his officer’s, shooting a bad polo pony and Italian farmers mules when they got in the way of his soldiers.\textsuperscript{117} None of these stories were true but have become part of the blood and guts legion. Pearson in his diary, that he kept after the war, never showed any regrets about reporting the slapping incident.\textsuperscript{118}

However, the slapping incident hurt Patton and continues to be his most remembered contribution to the Second World War. On September 2, a radio message was received ordering Bradley, and not Patton, to England to begin planning the cross-channel invasion.\textsuperscript{119} Bradley would have command while Patton would feel lucky to be involved at all. It is likely that if the slapping incident had never happened Patton would have commanded D-day and the history of the Second World War could have been very different.

\textsuperscript{114} Hol Boyle “Patton has Paid for Error and is needed at Front” \textit{D.C. Evening}, November 25, 1943. Box 44, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
\textsuperscript{115} “Patton and Truth,” \textit{Time}, December 6, 1943, \url{http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,850728,00.html}
\textsuperscript{119} Omar N. Bradley, \textit{A Soldier’s Story} (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), 2-3.
After several uncertain months of worrying that he had fought his last battle, General Patton was finally transferred to England in January 1944. He would get an army, the Third, which would become operational after the initial landings on D-day. In the meantime, he was to take charge of an army group that did not exist.

Operation Fortitude was the largest deception operation of the war. The Germans knew that the cross-channel invasion was coming. The only real question was where. They suspected that the Allies would take the shortest route across the channel and attack the Pas-de Calais area. The Allies actually had decided to land in Normandy but wanted to keep the German 15th Army guarding the coast. They developed a fake army group, headed by Patton, to create the appearance of an invasion force. This army group was made to seem 70 percent larger than the actual number of troops that would cross the channel in the actual invasion.\(^\text{120}\)

Patton was perfect for the job. Not only had he proven to be a magnet for media attention, but the Germans also believed he would play a crucial role in the invasion. Yet, he was there on probation and he had promised Eisenhower that he would avoid the media. Before coming to England, Patton had made very public tours to Corsica, Malta, and Egypt with the purpose of making the Germans believe that the Allies might launch an invasion from one of those locations. When the German General Hans Cramer was exchanged by the Allies because of ill health Patton entertained him before his return and let drop bits of seeming sensitive information.\(^\text{121}\) The media also, as Andy Rooney flippantly put it, was “suckered into the diversion.”\(^\text{122}\) One *Stars and Stripes* headline read “PATTON IN UK TO LEAD INVASION

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\(^\text{120}\) Brian John Murphy, “Patton’s ghost Army,” *America in WWII*, December 2005, 28-35.

\(^\text{121}\) Ibid., 26-35.

FORCE! Patton would act out his role of army group commander until well after D-day to such effect that the German 15th Army would play no significant role in the battle for Normandy.

The Knutsford Incident

Patton’s arrival in Great Brittan was officially secret. However, it was well known locally near the town of Knutsford where the headquarters of the Third Army was stationed. On April 25th he reluctantly consented to the request of a few British ladies’ to come to the opening of a welcome club for American soldiers. Patton felt uneasy, and worried that it might attract too much attention. He deliberately arrived late but was disturbed to see a photographer taking pictures. However, the photographer promised not to publish any photos and since the crowd was small there did not seem to be anything to worry about. He estimated that there were about 50 to 60 people, mostly women, present and no sign of reporters, so when the hostess asked the General to say a few words he obliged. Before standing up, the hostess reminded the audience that “General Patton is not here officially and is speaking in a purely friendly way.” Patton took this as added evidence that his remarks would not be quoted. No notes were taken or used but one version of what the General said goes like this:

Until today, my only experience in welcoming has been to welcome Germans and Italians to the “Infernal Regions.” In this I have been quite successful...

I feel that such clubs as this are a very real value, because I believe with Mr. Bernard Shaw, I think it was he, that the British and Americans are two people separated by a common language, and since it is the evident destiny of the British and Americans, and, of course, the Russians, to rule the world, the better we know each other, the better job we will do.

A Club like this is an ideal place for making such acquaintances and for promoting mutual understanding. Also, as soon as our soldiers meet and know the English ladies and write home and tell our women how truly lovely you are, the sooner

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123 Andy Rooney, My War (New York: PublicAffairs, 200), 192.
124 Diary, April 25, 1944, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
the American ladies will get jealous and force this war to a quick termination, and I will get a chance to go and kill Japanese. 125

With that Patton sat down and soon returned to his headquarters.

The phone call from Eisenhower’s public relations people came just before lunch the next day. General Gay picked it up and told Patton that SHAEF wanted to know exactly what he had said the previous evening about the British and Americans ruling the world. Patton responded that he had said “Since it was the evident destiny of the English and the Americans, and of course the Russians, to rule the world, the better we knew each other the better it would be.” 126

Unbeknownst to Patton, a British reporter, perhaps the photographer, had been in the audience and the story had changed somewhat. Gay was told that some of the papers had mentioned the Russians and some had not. 127 The Daily Herald, though it did not mention Patton’s remarks about who would rule the world, was typical of the loose reporting of his statements. Under the headline ‘Welcomed Nazis into Hell’ the Daily Herald stated:

Lieut-General (“Blood and Guts”) Patton, opening a British Welcoming Club to United States soldiers in England last night, said:

“The only welcoming I have done for some time has been welcoming Germans and Italians into hell. I have done quite a lot in that direction, and have got about 177,000 there.

“The sooner our soldiers write home and say how lovely the English ladies are the sooner American dames will get jealous and force the war to a successful conclusion.

“Then I shall have a chance to go and kill the Japanese.” 128

With this looses standard for direct quotation, Patton could have easily mentioned the Russians and it not have been reported. 129 Historian Robert K. Wilcox has noted that British papers had

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125 Martin Blumenson, The Patton Papers, vol. 2, paperback ed. (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1974), 440-441. I have chosen to use this version of Patton remarks since it was in Martin Blumenson book which is usually reliable. However he did not cite where he got it from.
126 Diary, April 25, 1944, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Colonel Blatherwick remembered Patton saying “Undoubtedly it is our destiny to rule the world—the Americans, the British—and then a pause—and of course the Russians.” Martin Blumenson, The Patton Papers, vol. 2, paperback ed. (Boston: Da Capo Press, 1974), 442.
127 Ibid.
129 It is interesting to note that the Times of London did not cover the story at all. Patton throughout the war was not a subject of great interest to the British press.
mostly mentioned the Russians while American papers generally had not. Eisenhower’s chief-of-staff, Walter Bedell Smith, wrote that “British press carrier nothing that I have seen regarding any statement of the nature that Britain and America would rule the world. Coverage here was limited to rather innocuous quotes of the blood and guts type.” In any case, Patton had a feeling that he was in trouble.

When the story broke Patton’s name, which had been under censorship since his arrival in England, had just been released for publication to the press. Eisenhower had been reluctant to do this because as Smith related:

his belief that some incident like the present one would occur as soon as Patton could be quoted in the press. We argued that if Patton’s name was not released, it would provide ammunition for some unscrupulous columnist to write that General Eisenhower and the War Department were keeping Patton’s presence here concealed because of unwillingness to let the American people know that he was to exercise a command in the invasion forces. Eisenhower had expressly “directed George to avoid press conferences and public statements. He had a genius for explosive statements that rarely failed to startle his hearers…” Patton had promised that he would not talk to the press. However, Ike was still uneasy. Patton’s speech to “an American division shortly after his arrival in the United Kingdom caused more than a ripple of astonishment and press comment, and I well knew that it would be far easier to keep him for a significant role in the war if he could shut off his public utterances.” Eisenhower’s reluctance had been correct. When the British Press Association released the story, it was said that it was Patton’s first speech in England. In reality, it was not since he had spoken numerous times to

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132 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
troops. However, it created the impression that Patton always had something bombastic to say as soon as he arrived. American papers had picked up the story from the British Press Association. The day after Patton spoke his comments were front page news in the United States.

Indeed, the impression given of Patton in the media had changed remarkably since the war had begun. He was no longer the tough and eccentric Buck Rogers figure. The title of “Blood and Guts” was still hung around his neck in every news story but now it seemed to mean something very different than a harmless nickname. The collaboration with Noguès and the slapping incident was main reason for this change. Many reporters began to regard him as a necessary evil who was good at fighting but dangerous at everything else. Time magazine now referred to Patton as “brutal” and as the “terrible-tempered ex-commander” of the Seventh Army.136

Many of the left-leaning American news papers were outraged over Patton’s slight toward Russia. They accurately understood that the Soviet Union was bearing the brunt of the fighting, and worried that Patton’s remarks might hurt the already delicate alliance. The Washington Post, who as Patton’s friend Henry Stimson noted in his diary had “always been bitterly hostile to Patton,” stated that Patton had “progressed from simply assault on individuals to collective assault on entire nationalities.” The Post went on to attack Patton’s misquoted uses of the word “dames” and concluded that “Whatever his merits as a strategist or tactician he has revealed glaring defects as a leader of men...All thought of promotion should now be abandoned.”137 Though a correction of the story with Russia among the world’s rulers was

quickly published, *Time* magazine saw this as a cover up and sarcastically reported “[a] hastily revised version of this nifty—which had been reluctantly released by the British censors... included Russia among the General’s choice of world rulers.”

The Knutsford incident was also used as an attack upon Roosevelt. As one editorial angrily stated, “If General Patton deliberately tried, he could hardly have produced... a bigger batch of propaganda for the Nazis, the Japanese, and the Chicago Tribune.” It was not only the anti-Roosevelt Chicago Tribune but congressman from both sides of the isle who began to attack Patton for what he had said. The Republicans saw this as an opportunity to attack Roosevelt post-war foreign policy in an election year. Did Roosevelt have plans to divide up the post-war would between Britain and America. Republican Senator Wherry of Nebraska stated “if this is a new foreign policy of the New Deal they have sent up as a trial balloon they had better call their general off the stump.” Many former isolationists did not like the thought of the United States ruling anything outside America. Democrats, goaded by Republican accusations, rushed to inform the American public that this was not the case and that Patton did not represent their values.

At SHAEF the man who had worked so hard holding the alliance between Britain, Russia, and the United States now had a very personal and difficult decision to make. Would Eisenhower relieve his old friend to satisfy the news men and politicians or would he keep him for the liberation of France and the conquest of Germany? Eisenhower was ready to fire Patton since he had expressly broken his word not to say anything to the press. However as facts came

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140 ibid., 442.
141 “Patton Adds Russia to World’s Rulers,” *Globe*, April 27, 1944. Box 1, “Papers of Donald E. Currier,” U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.
to light that Patton had felt obligated to make a few remarks at a social event, and been told that his remarks were off the record, led Eisenhower to change his decision.\textsuperscript{142} There was no one with Patton’s talent for armored warfare in the allied camp, so Eisenhower decided to let “him suffer for a week or so to impress upon him that he could not continue to sound off this way...”\textsuperscript{143} Patton promised to behave and Eisenhower told him, “[y]ou owe us some victories, pay off and the world will deem me a wise man.”\textsuperscript{144}

Patton would repay Eisenhower’s faith in his abilities and disappoint him again in his inability to stay out of the cross-hairs of the media. After D-day the allies became entangled in bitter hedgerow fighting in Normandy. With over a month of little progress Bradley thought up a plan called operation COBRA to break out of the stalemate. After the way was cleared, Patton would take operational control of the Third U.S. Army and attack toward Brest.

From almost the moment he arrived in France on July 6, he began to have more trouble with the correspondents. This was not from lack of precaution on Patton’s part. The arrival of the Third Army, as well as his command of it, was still a secret as part of the ongoing deception operations Fortitude. However, his coming to Normandy could not be kept a total secret and before long the press heard about it. On July 16, Hansen Baldwin of the \textit{New York Times} visited Patton. The description of his visit described by General Gay shows that Patton’s staff was taken no chances with the media. Baldwin arrived at 11 o’clock before seeing Patton, Gay explained to him, in the presents of other officers that he was not to report that Patton or the Third Army was in Normandy. Gay went on to explain that “due to the past unfortunate newspaper incidents

\textsuperscript{142} Dwight D. Eisenhower, \textit{Crusade in Europe} (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1949), 224. Eisenhower seems to have no illusions that Patton had failed to mention the Russians despite his latter denial of the same. For his reaction see Dwight D. Eisenhower, \textit{At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends} (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 269-270.

\textsuperscript{143} Dwight D. Eisenhower, \textit{At Ease: Stories I Tell to Friends} (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 270.

\textsuperscript{144} Stephen E. Ambrose, \textit{Americans at War} (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), 136.
certain precautions had to be taken which were somewhat distasteful to the Third Army, But were necessary.” After reading a memorandum Gay handed him, Baldwin stated he understood the rules and he would not report Patton’s presence. It is clear from this encounter that Patton and his staff considered the media as dangerous as the Germans and would treat them as such. However the press would get an official briefing every Saturday at 10 A.M. at which time Patton would be available for a brief press conference.

General Bradley angrily reached for his telephone. An aid had just informed him that Patton had just briefed the war correspondents at the Third Army about operation COBRA. “I’ll be damned,” growled Bradley but Patton was not at his headquarters. The correspondents from the Third Army had informed the correspondents for First Army, who had angrily demanded why they had not been told about the operation. When Patton returned Bradley’s call, he was just as angry. He had briefed his officers but not the news men. Colonel C.C. Blakeney who was in charge of the Third Army Psychological Warfare and Public Relations had then informed the Third Army Correspondents. Patton at once went to the correspondents’ camp and “told them how dangerous this slip was, and that they had violated my trust in them by divulging the fact that they had been briefed to the other correspondents who were stationed with the First Army.”

Patton had promised Bradley that he would relieve Blakeney for leaking COBRA. However, the correspondents had anticipated this and had written out a statement exonerating

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145 Box 2, “Hobart R. Gay Papers,” U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.
146 Bradley account of this event written in 1951 sets the date at July 18th. Patton’s dairy placed the event on the July 17th. It seems since Patton’s diary was written nearer the event that this incident took place on July 17th.
148 Diary, July 17, 1944, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Blakeney. Paton did not think it would do any good but he seemed to absolve the reporters of any intent to publish secret information. Patton told the approximately forty correspondents that “I shall continue to trust you,…must not—I repeat—not, never, never, never talk about anything that you are told unless it is specifically told you that you can mention it. The information you get is for coloring, for background.” He wrote in his dairy later that night:

I do not think they divulged the plan to the other correspondents, but like little boys, boasted that they knew something. Then the correspondents with the First Army began to talk, and found that three of their number had been secretly briefed…This anger was accentuated by the fact that there is intense rivalry between the two groups of correspondents, each group claiming that they are superior. This was the continuation of a trend in the behavior of the war correspondents in Europe to take sides in bragging about the army they had been assigned too. Their opinions often reflected the judgments and jealousy of the staff of their army. Reginald Thompson of the BBC remembered that reporters would back their general in disputes on strategy and personal revelries such as Bradley against Montgomery. The reporters shared in their general’s victories and the glamour of his name. First Army clearly resented the fame and attention Patton and the Third received. As Bradley stated “[w]hen Third Army monopolized the headlines for a month after the breakout, even First Army became infected with…frustration…” In reality, Patton’s name was not in headlines since he was still under censorship. Captain Butcher suggested to Eisenhower after the Third Army breakout that now might be a good time to release Patton’s name and show the world why it was necessary to keep him as a commander. Eisenhower

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150 Blakeney would not be relieved until sometime later and for another offence. Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier’s Story (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), 356.
152 Diary, July 17, 1944, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
refused simply saying “Why should I tell the enemy?” Later, Captain Butcher would suggest to the First Army correspondents that they write about First Army as Hodges’ Army in the hope of getting name recognition, like that received from Patton’s Third Army. Much of the criticism Patton got during, and after the war, was from reporters who were not attached to his unit. Typical of this was The Stars and Stripes reporter Andy Rooney whose hatred of Patton has persisted over the years. Rooney attributed Patton’s undeserved fame to the:

stiff competition for headlines between correspondents for the First Army and those with the newcomer Third Army, and as a result the public got a wrong impression that Patton was winning the war...A few irresponsible Third Army correspondents, looking for headlines, blew his progress full of hot air.

It is interesting to note that Blair Clark, former historian for the Third Army and a journalist who would later work on the presidential campaign for Liberal Democrat Eugene McCarthy, believed that Rooney’s accusations toward Patton were unjustified.

Rooney was not the only reporter at The Stars and Stripes in his dislike Patton. This came partly from the papers left-wing bent which following the trend of left leaning papers in the United States had a growing distrust of Patton. It is surprising that a military news paper would have such a strong bent to the left but as historian Todd DePastino has stated “Stars and Stripes was dominated by liberal and left-wing editors and reporters.” Editors like Dave Golding and Robert Neville had socialist or left-wing backgrounds. Roosevelt, the New Deal, and the Soviet Union were all things to be praised in its pages. Patton had had problems with The Stars and Stripes in Sicily where he had become so enraged with how the correspondents “glorified” hiding in shell holes that he had threatened to remove them from the island if the “scurrilous

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155 Harry C. Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 635.
158 Ibid., 198. Rooney, apparently thinking that devoting eight pages of his war meow to attacking Patton filthy-five years after his death was insufficient to display his dislike, lambasted him on his television show. Patton’s only serving daughter wrote him in response “Dear Mr. Rooney, My father wouldn’t have liked you, either.” Ibid., 193.
yellow journal” did not improve.\textsuperscript{160} This, as will be seen, was not the last time Patton would clash with the newspaper.

On August 1\textsuperscript{st} at 12 noon the Third Army became operational and began to advance through the hole made by operation COBRA.\textsuperscript{161} This would begin the Third Army’s race across France, moving farther and faster than any army had done up to that point. By August 7\textsuperscript{th} Brittany had been liberated except for the fortress cities of Brest and Lorient. Captain Butcher wrote happily “[e]ven the correspondents in the field can’t catch the battle front, but they are writing in ecstasy about the speed.”\textsuperscript{162}

General Bradley believed that Patton’s drive across France was motivated by trying to recover his glory from the media scandals. Bradley wondered “how much this nothing-to-lose attitude prodded Patton in his spectacular race across the face of France.”\textsuperscript{163} He believed that the “private whose face he [Patton] slapped in Sicilian hospital ward did more to win the war in Europe than any other private in the army.”\textsuperscript{164} Before COBRA on July 20\textsuperscript{th} there was an attempt on Hitler’s life which if successful would have ended the war in Europe. Patton had begged Bradley, “[f]or God’s sake, Brad you’ve got to get me into this fight before the war is over. I’m in the doghouse now and I’m apt to die there unless I pull something spectacular to get me out.”\textsuperscript{165} Patton would have gone fast no matter what. He had learned that speed saved lives in Sicily. However, trying to save his reputation from the wounds of the media attacks may also have been a driving motivation. Knowing this, Bradley was eager to have censorship on Patton

\textsuperscript{160} Diary 3, October 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
\textsuperscript{162} Harry C. Butcher, My Three Years with Eisenhower (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 635.
\textsuperscript{163} Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier’s Story (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), 357.
\textsuperscript{164} Ibid., 357.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid.
lifted since “George was stimulated by headlines, the blacker the headlines the more recklessly he fought.”

Yet historians have wondered if the memory of his close calls from press attacks shaped the Third Army advance in less helpful ways. After a failed German counterattack on Patton’s flanks the Third Army swung East and then North East toward Aroentan. The Canadians and British were moving south-east toward Falaise creating a pocket trapping nineteen German divisions. Between encirclement and possibly an open road to Berlin lay only a 40 mile gap that the Germans were beginning to withdraw. Patton wanted to close the gap. He phoned Bradley “[l]et me go on to Falaise and we’ll drive the British back into the sea….” It was for that very reason that Bradley said no. He was worried that Patton would over extend his line and the Germans would be able to push through. It was also Montgomery’s job to close the gap and did not want the allied armies shooting at each other. Montgomery delayed closing the gap which allowed between 20,000 and 40,000 Germans to escape to the east, reorganize, and man the Siegfried line. Patton grumbled but he did not argue. It must be asked why?

Historian Carlo D’Este believed that Patton’s compliance with not closing the Falaise gap came from reluctance to make trouble after so nearly losing his command. D’Este states that “his shaky status in the Allied hierarchy after Sicily and Knutsford left him unwilling to stick his neck out.” Because of this failure with regards to media scandals which left him in the service on good behavior he was reluctant to challenge his superiors. If it had not been for the slapping

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167 Ibid., 376.
168 Ibid.
incident Patton might have been in Bradley’s job and possibly taken risks his commander would not. Patton’s silence was a direct consequence resulting from his scandals from the press.

Meanwhile Patton’s command of the Third Army was secret and he was still safe from any more quotations attributed to him because his name was still under censorship. On August 12, Bradley asked Eisenhower for permission to lift censorship, and disclose that Patton was in command of the Third Army. The Supreme Commander flatly refused saying “after all the troubles I’ve had with George, I have only a few gray hairs left on this poor old head of mine. Let George work a while longer for his headlines.”\(^{171}\) A few days later, censorship was finally lifted and headlines around the world announced that it was Patton’s army that was liberating France. However, the censorship ban being lifted did not mean reporters could print whatever they wanted. Patton could not be directly quoted except in stories passed by Ike’s chief-of-staff General Smith.\(^{172}\) This did not always do a lot of good since, Butcher put it, “[i]f the correspondents with the Third Army don’t mention Patton apparently the headline writers at home insert his name.”\(^{173}\) The press, which had been gloomy during the stalemate in Normandy, was now euphoric.\(^{174}\)

Patton had his own reasons for wanting the Third Army’s exploits reported, besides restoring his good name. He believed that soldiers would fight better if their names and the names of their units were reported in the newspapers. Near the end of September, after the advance had slowed to a crawl for lack of gasoline, Patton persuaded Eisenhower to get

\(^{173}\) Ibid.
regimental commanders to be released. The names of junior officers had already been cleared, but it was slower for higher ranks. Later near the end of October, with progress going even slower, Patton told visiting Army Chief-of-Staff George C. Marshall that one of his Generals wives was about to divorce him, because she thought her husband was a slacker. Marshall could save the family simply by releasing the Generals name and the Corps he commanded. Patton wrote his own wife that he had forgotten that Marshall had no sense of humor, but thought he would release the names.

The media helped the Third Army’s war effort in other ways. Just before a major attack in the Saar on November 8, Patton assembled the correspondents two days before the operation was to jump off and briefed them on the coming battle. He asked them to keep the attack secret until it began and then requested that they say it was a small scale attack to even out the lines. The Germans would hopefully be fooled and not put a lot of troops there. This was, as Gay noted, “to mislead the enemy and not the public.” The correspondents seem to have complied.

A few months later when Patton was at the high of glory after the Third Army’s heroic exploits in the Bulge he had perhaps his most famous face-to-face confrontation with the press in the form of The Stars and Stripes cartoonist Bill Mauldin. Mauldin had served in the Seventh Army in Sicily and had become a sergeant and a cartoonist drawing for The Stars and Stripes in Italy. His cartoons showed the common GI in the form of “Willie and Joe” as unshaven, unkempt, and cynical of life. He also took plenty of shots at officers and showed disparities in privileges.

Patton hated Mauldin and his cartoons. He saw them as subversive to morale and discipline that was indispensable in an army. He finally had enough one day and wrote The Stars

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175 George S. Patton Jr., War as I Knew It (New York: Bantam Books, 1947), 139.
177 Diary, November 6, 1944, Box 2, “Hobart R. Gay Papers,” U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.
and Stripes stating if Mauldin’s cartoon continued to be carried in the newspaper it would be banned from the Third Army. This of course got SHAEF’s notice.

Mauldin was brought to see Eisenhower’s aid Captain Butcher by Will Lang of Time. Butcher wanted to help and believed that if Mauldin and Patton met to talk about their differences the situation could be cleared up. Mauldin was terrified, but agreed. Patton’s response was not unexpected. “If that little son of a bitch sets foot in the Third Army I’ll throw his ass in jail” he bellowed over the telephone.\(^{178}\) However, he eventually agreed to meet with the cartoonist.

Mauldin arrived at Patton’s palace headquarters and was suitably impressed. He seemed also to have made an impression on Patton’s staff (if not on Patton). General Gay recorded in his diary “[u]ndoubtedly Sgt. Mauldin is a great cartoonist, and much to the surprise of the Author, he is merely a boy.”\(^{179}\) Mauldin was also shocked by Patton. “There he sat, big as life….His hair was silver, his face was pink, his collar and shoulders glittered with more stars than I could count, his fingers sparkled with rings, and an incredible mass or ribbons started around desktop level and spread upward in a flood over his chest to the very top of his shoulder…”\(^{180}\) Patton arose and greeted Mauldin who saluted. They sat down and Patton began to talk. For a while,” Mauldin was fascinated.

Patton was a real master of his subject….as I sat there listening to the general talk war, I felt truly privileged, as if I were hearing Michelangelo on painting….Just as when I had first saluted him, I felt whatever martial spirit was left in me being lifted out and fanned into flame.\(^{181}\)


\(^{179}\) Box 3, “Hobart R. Gay Papers,” U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.


\(^{181}\) Ibid., 261.
After a while Patton concluded, "I don’t know what you think you’re trying to do but the krauts ought to pin a medal on you for helping them mess up discipline for us." Mauldin defended his cartoons as letting the ordinary soldier blow off steam a little and making him feel as if he is not alone in his feelings. After 45 minutes, the meeting was over and Mauldin departed on cool terms. The *Time* reporter, Will Lang, was waiting outside. Mauldin told him "Patton had received me courteously, had expressed his feelings about my work, and had given me the opportunity to say a few words myself. I didn’t think I had convinced him of anything...." Patton had also not convinced Mauldin of the error of his ways. The cartoonist returned to Italy to continue the adventures of Willie and Joe as disheveled as ever. The meeting was not secret and word spread around the ETO that Mauldin had run afoul of Patton. Many GI’s, who loved his cartoons seem to have taken Mauldin’s side. Pfc. Keith Winston of the 100 Division wrote his wife "General Patton is strongly against some of his [Mauldin’s] stuff. You might think he’d be above it. Tonight I notice Mauldin didn’t appear and our group really miss him. We hope it’s temporary. He certainly has captured the true inner feeling of the G.I." Mauldin would go on to win the Pulitzer Prize and went on to champion many progressive and left leaning causes. For a time he became a little more than a New Deal Liberal and something less than a Communist. After the war he would state that Patton had been right to call his cartoons "seditious" and that they "incited soldiers to mutiny" and there was a "deep, dark meaning," to them and that they had not been "meant to be entertaining at all."

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183 Ibid., 264.
186 Ibid., 230.
In the beginning of March, General Bradley remembered feeling frustration with the fact that the Third Army seemed to always grabber headlines at the expense of the First Army. However, Patton was about to engage in an operation which would demonstrate that he had a much more sophisticated understanding of the use of the media than is sometimes contributed to him.\textsuperscript{187} This was the Third Army’s crossing of the Rhine River, which was the last main obstacle protecting the traditional German frontier. The First Army had crossed at Remagen on March 7. To the north, Montgomery was preparing a massive operation complete with 2,000 guns, a massive artillery bombardment, and paratroopers. He also had massive publicity to cover the historic crossing.

Patton uncharacteristically acted much differently than the image created by the media would lead one to expect. Third Army slipped across the Rhine with little opposition, and no media cover, on the night of March 22-23. This was, as Historian Stephen Ambrose as noted in “deliberate contrast to Montgomery…”\textsuperscript{188} Only one reporter, Edward D. Ball of the \textit{Associated Press}, crossed with the Third Army and though he remanded the only reporter to cross for twelve more hours he complained later that his story had been severely censored.\textsuperscript{189} This silence did not last long. Patton called Bradley later on the evening of the 23\textsuperscript{rd} shouting “for God’s sake tell the world we’re across.”\textsuperscript{190} Bradley was more than happy to help overshadow the British operation. He delayed announcing the crossing until late on March 23, hours before the British crossing. Bradley made sure to mention that the “RHINE could be crossed at practically any point now by American forces, without aerial bombardment and without the dropping of paratroops in front of

\textsuperscript{190} Omar N. Bradley, \textit{A Soldier’s Story} (New York: The Modern Library, 1951), 522.
them.”¹⁹¹ This was a deliberate swing at Monty’s long preparation and Churchill’s pre-recorded speech which said the British attack was the first assault on the Rhine in history. The reporters picked up the message. The next day, Butcher remarked in his diary that the “correspondents were chuckling that with Monty’s obvious preparations for crossing the Rhine in the north, about which there have been numerous stories of smoke screens to hide activities of his troops and massing of strength in that area, Patton had slipped around right end.”¹⁹²

The Rhine crossing showed that Patton could forsake media publicity when he wanted too and that he could also use it to enhance his army’s reputation. However, he was beginning to worry about his media image. He had created a reputation out of the “blood and guts” title the press had labeled him with before the war. It had only been enhanced by the slapping and Knutsford incidents. He had always been an actor but now he had become the persona he was playing. He commented to his nephew, Fred Ayer, around this time that:

Well, I’m not sure whether some of it isn’t my own damned fault, but, however that may be, the press and others have built a picture of me. So now, no matter how tired, or discouraged, or even really ill I may be, if I don’t live up to that picture my men are going to say, ‘The old man’s sick, the old son-of-a-bitch has had it.’ Then their own confidence, their own morale, will take a big drop.¹⁹³ His image by this point was fixed in American pop culture, to such an extent that his public shadow illuminated by the light of the media attention that was very different than the man actually who casted it.

**Trouble in Peace**

On May 7, 1945 Germany surrendered. Patton however did not see victory. The Western Allies had met the Soviet Union Armies on the Elbe River and Patton, never good when dealing with allies, took an immediate disliking to the Russians. He had desperately wanted to take

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Berlin or at least Prague but Eisenhower had refused, by the request of the Soviets, to allow this.\textsuperscript{194}

On May 8 the last press conference for the war correspondents was held by the Third Army. Patton strode in and said with great emotion

This war stopped right where it started...But that’s not the end of this business by any means. What the tin-soldier politicians in Washington and Paris have managed to do today is another story you’ll be writing for a long while...They have allowed us to kick hell out of one bastard and at the same time forced us to help establish a second one as evil or more evil than the first. We have won a series of battles, not a war for peace...Today we should be telling the Russians to go to hell instead of hearing them tell us to pull back...We’ve defeated one aggressor against mankind and established a second far worse, more evil and more dedicated than the first.\textsuperscript{195}

His remarks were off the record, and the ban on quoting Patton had not ended with the war. In the official transcript of the meeting Patton thanked the correspondents for keeping the home front informed of individual unit’s activities during the war.\textsuperscript{196} “By and large,” Patton wrote later, “the correspondents with the Third Army did a splendid and loyal job...”\textsuperscript{197} However, his off the record comments had been too provocative not invite questions. A reporter asked why the Third Army had not taken Prague. “I can tell you exactly why” Patton stated. An air of anticipation swept over the reporters. Patton noticed this and stated “Because we were ordered not to...”\textsuperscript{198} The reporters laugh many of them had genially come to admire and like the General. He was a reporter’s dream story. They had collectively filed 30,326 stories amounting to 7,010,963 words and embellished with 7,129 photographs.\textsuperscript{199} Patton was always colorful, and also a winner which made reporters and soldiers want to follow him.

\textsuperscript{197} George S. Patton Jr., \textit{War as I Knew It} (New York: Bantam Books, 1947), 312.
\textsuperscript{198} ibid.
Another reporter asked if SS prisoners were being handled differently than ordinary German soldiers. Patton responded “No. SS means no more in Germany than being a Democrat in America—that is not to be quoted.”\textsuperscript{200} Yet he would repeat this comparison later and forget to put it off the record. The Third Army reporters may have liked Patton, but the majority of the left-leaning press, both home and abroad, saw him as a problem. His comments about the dangers of Russia would get around. Patton was certainly not going to keep it a secret telling correspondent Virgil Pinkley, who was attached to SHAEF, that the U.S. should take the Ukraine which could be done relatively cheaply instead of having to wait till the Soviet Union was strong again.\textsuperscript{201}

How much did the media sympathized with the Soviet Union and communism in general? The question is hard to answer. However, there is substantial evidence that a large section of the press viewed both in a favorable light. It was this section that Patton was continually having problems. Leftist journalist had jumped on the story of Patton and Noguès in North Africa. Drew Pearson, who broke the slapping incident, was pro-soviet.\textsuperscript{202} The Stars and Stripes, which employed Andy Rooney and Bill Mauldin was a leftist paper were the Soviet Union was always welcomed.\textsuperscript{203} The Knutfords speech was remembered not because Patton said the Allies would rule the world, which was the main reason that Republicans did not like it, but because he forgot to mention the Russians.

The New Dealers had closely allied themselves with the Soviet Union during the war and this had spilled over into the coverage. At the Teheran conference Roosevelt and Stalin had

gotten along well. In private they had talked about British India and Roosevelt had remarked that
the problem needed to be “reform from the bottom, somewhat on the Soviet line.” In public
FDR called Stalin “Uncle Joe.” General Albert C. Wedemeyer who was an aide to General
Marshall stated after the war,

it was regarded as positively unpatriotic, or at least in very bad taste, to voice dislike and
distrust of our “gallant ally,” the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic, or to denounce the
tyrranny of “good old Uncle Joe” Stalin. Naturally, the press affected Washington’s
political judgments as well as the views of most of the American people, and so tended to
color official policies that were based on those judgments. Wedemeyer, who paid multiple visits to all the war fronts, also saw media glorification of the
Chinese Communists. When he was called upon to help give U.S. aid to the nationalist
government Wedemeyer found himself attacked by newsmen who favored the Communist.
Wedemeyer’s conclusion on the media was that “the Communist, using fellow-traveler
“transmission belts” with superior skill, had the initiative—in fact, the almost undisputed control
of information media.” George Orwell agreed with Wedemeyer and believed that the allied
press had largely conducted “self censorship” when it came to negative news about the Soviet
Union throughout the war. Patton’s doctor, who served by his side throughout the war,
believed that much of the criticism that attacked his boss came from the “pink press.”
Stephen J. Skubik, who was agent for the Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) during the war, stated that
“NKVD and the OSS used the press as a cover for their agents.” He had known a “very

206 Ibid., 345-346.
207 Ibid., 87.
distinguished American journalist who served as a spy for the NKVD.\textsuperscript{211} Historians have recently added substantial evidence to Skubik’s claim. A recent work stated that twenty-two journalists were in the pay for the KGB in 1941.\textsuperscript{212} These agents were not only used to gather information but also to plant stories in the press that served the Soviets ends.\textsuperscript{213} Other reporters had flirted with communism but had never joined the Party or KGB. Andy Rooney believed in 1945 that “I might be a communist or, at least, a socialist” but never got near to actually joining the party.\textsuperscript{214} Bill Mauldin had would also come down briefly on the side of the Communist after the war though he never joined the Party after the war.\textsuperscript{215} Quentin Reynolds, who had told Eisenhower about the slapping incident in Sicily and that 50,000 American soldiers would shoot Patton if given the chance, spoke at a Communist fundraiser after the war.\textsuperscript{216} Not every journalist or editor in the 1940s was a communist, nor even on the left. However, it is clear that there was a significant number of journalists with sympathy toward the Soviets and that this group had been, and would be, a significant element in shaping Patton’s image.

Patton was made the military governor of Bavaria but he had not been home since 1942. On June 7, he returned to the United States on leave accompanied by Army Air Force General Doolittle. Boston gave him a hero’s welcome with over a million people turning out to see him. He also traveled to his home in California before returning to Germany on July 3\textsuperscript{rd}.

The trip was a public relations disaster. It began almost as soon as he stepped off the plain. He was paraded down to the Hatch Shell were 20,000 people waited to hear him speak. 400 of those people were wounded veterans, of the Third Army who sat in a reserved section.

\textsuperscript{211} ibid.
\textsuperscript{213} ibid., 146.
\textsuperscript{214} Andy Rooney, \textit{My War} (New York: PublicAffairs, 200), 244.
\textsuperscript{216} Andy Rooney, \textit{My War} (New York: PublicAffairs, 200), 306.
The speech started well with Patton as usual passing the praise off of himself to the men of his Third Army. Then looking at the wounded veterans he said it was a misconception that a man who was killed in action was a heroes. In fact Patton said, such men were frequently fools. These wounded men are the real hero’s. Patton had not meant to demean the dead, but it certainly sounded like it. His long suffering friend, Secretary of War Stimson, tried to explain to the angry press that Patton had meant to say that soldiers were frequently killed under foolish circumstances. The War Department was also kept busy writing the “corrected” version of Patton’s remarks to angry relatives of dead soldiers. However, as historian Martin Blumenson has observed “[i]n general, newspapers and radio commentators mentioned Patton favorably...” In this way the General was not greatly affected by the reaction to his remarks.

Doolittle noted that Patton, despite having public relations people ready to switch off his microphone in case he became to profane, would not let himself be “muzzled.” He made “off-the-cuff remarks about our Allies, the Soviets, politicians, and even the next war.” The speeches were mild to Patton, who was used to addressing soldiers, but Doolittle always tried to give a “quieter pitch for balance.” At a speech in the Hollywood Bowl, Doolittle concluded his remarks by referring to the presents of Mrs. Doolittle and Patton, sitting behind them, saying “If General Patton and I have achieved any success in fighting the war, these two lovely ladies are responsible for that success because of their constant support, understanding, and affection.”

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218 Ibid., 722.
219 Ibid.
Patton walked to the lectern he whispered to Doolittle, "You son of a bitch, I wish I'd said that!" The microphone gave Patton's remark, in Doolittle's words, "glorious amplification".²²²

Patton's animus toward reporters did not help him. Near the end of his leave he was asked to visit the double-amputation ward in Walter Reed Hospital. The news men followed him up to the door of the ward where he turned on them and snapped "I'll bet you goddam buzzards are just following me in here to see if I'll slap another soldier, aren't you? You're all hoping I will."²²³

Patton was happy to return to Germany. As his orderly, Sgt. Meeks put it "we have sure done our thirty days!"²²⁴ He was now back with his soldiers, and more-or-less living as a king in a concurred country. Yet, his kingdom lay mostly destroyed with millions of displaced persons (dp), former concentration camp inmates, former Nazi hiding from retribution, and soldiers from six different nationalities more-or-less running things. Patton mission in Bavaria would be to de-Nazify the country and reestablish order. However he saw nothing but problems.

Patton had always been anti-communist, by value and background. He viewed the U.S.S.R. on the Elbe River as a major threat. Shortly after the surrender he wrote, that the Russians soldiers "give me the impression of something that is to be feared in future world political reorganization."²²⁵ A few days later he stated,

[i]n my opinion, the American Army as it now exists could beat the Russians with the greatest of ease, because while the Russians have good infantry, they are lacking in artillery, air, tanks, and in the knowledge of the use of the combined arms; whereas we excel in all three of these. If it should be necessary to fight the Russians, the sooner we do it the better.²²⁶

²²² Ibid., 412.
²²⁴ Diary, July 4, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
²²⁵ Diary, May 14, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
²²⁶ Diary, May 18, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Frustrated that Eisenhower and the Truman administration was still treating the U.S.S.R. as an ally, Patton determined that he was not going to be intimidated. At a victory parade in Berlin Patton caught sight of Marshal Zhukov covered with medals and exclaimed to General Lucius Clay “Damn it, Lucius, why didn’t you warn me? I would have worn mine and I would have matched him too.”

Around the same time, Patton was sitting in his headquarters at Bad Tolz when General Gay entered and told him that there was a Russian General who requested that the river boats on the West bank of the Danube be returned to the East bank from which they had fled. General Harkins remembered that the Russian General was brought it and began to explain his request when the atmosphere in the General’s office exploded. General Patton reached in a desk drawer, slammed his pistol on his desk, stood up in a rage and shrilled, “Gay, goddammit! Get this son-of-a-bitch out of here! Who in hell let him in? Don’t let any more of the Russian bastards into this headquarters. Harkins! Alert the 4th and 11th Armored and 65th Division for an attack to the east.

The Russian was shown out and Patton smilingly explained that he was not going to let any Russian tell him what to do.

Patton’s remarks then and for a long time later seem the ravings of a madman. Given the conquerors who have entered Russia and never left, it seems to be the lesson of history to avoid war with the East. Patton’s aggressive actions toward the Soviets seem to be chancing just such an event. However, recent scholarship since the demise of the Soviet Union shows that Patton understood the nature of Soviet aggression much better than is usually accredited to him. Stalin was extremely uneasy about expansion because he feared provoking the West. The Soviets were not ready for war and remained unready for years to come. Stalin refused to interfere in the

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Korean War years later because Russia was not ready for a Third World War.\textsuperscript{230} Given this evidence Patton’s tough approach, in general, would have prevented or slowed Soviet expansion if it had been the official policy of the West.

Patton’s administration and views of the Displaced Persons and his growing anti-Semitism is less defendable. His diary was free of anti-Semitism until he became the Governor of Bavaria. He had been sickened by the concentration camps however he began seeing the Jews as unwilling to work, being pro-Communist, and wanting only to get revenge on the Germans. Patton stated in his diary that he did not believe that displaced persons are human and “this applies particularly to the Jews, who are lower than animals.”\textsuperscript{231} Patton kept such extreme thoughts to himself, his diary, and a few close friends, but his opposition to moving Germans out of their homes for former concentration camp inmates could not be hidden. Nor could the fact that months after liberation many Jews still lived in the camps they had been liberated in. The squalid condition of these camps and the reality that the Jews were kept under guard did not help matters. Nor could it remain hidden for long.

\textbf{The Final Press Conference}

The end was coming. The ban on the press quoting general officers was lifted on September 21, 1945. The next day Patton held a press conference.\textsuperscript{232} Since the war had been over so the size of the correspondents had dwindled. However, there were some new faces today: Ray and Tatiana Daniel of the \textit{New York Times}, Carl Levin of the New York Herald Tribune, and Ed. Morgan of the Chicago Daily News. These four had driven down from Nuremberg the night before. Patton’s press officer, E.C Deane, stated later that a reporter had overheard the group at

\textsuperscript{230} ibid., 30.
\textsuperscript{231} Diary, September 15, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
breakfast that morning plotting to needle Patton and “make him lose his temper.” Frank Mason, who was a former reporter visiting Europe on a mission for Herbert Hoover, who took time to investigate the press conference also heard that the reporters were plotting over breakfast. There was no transcript of the conference taken, so exactly what happened can never be truly known.

The usual briefing was held in which Patton was presented with the findings of a study on the 11th SS Panzer Division history. Patton was very excited over the history, and this probably did not help him in the minds of the correspondents. “At the termination of this,” Patton remembered, “I permitted the newspaper correspondents to question me. I did this weekly during active operations and always had them on my side.” But today would be different. As Gay’s diary records:

From the beginning the questions the press asked the Army Commander seemed to point to the fact that denazification was not going as rapidly as it should. In fact, two of the reporters, Mr. Daniels for the New York Times and Mr. Levit, or the Herald Tribune, tried to put words in the General’s mouth. The interview began to get heated with Patton losing his patience. The reporters wanted to know why the appointed Minister President of Bavaria, Mr. Schaeffer, was still in office since he was corrupt. Patton responded that the appointed government officials did what they were told from the U.S. command or they were removed. The questions then turned to why there were still Nazis in the government. Patton stated that all had been removed, though there were probably many other lower Nazis who would eventually be removed. Then he said it:

suppose the AMERICA had lost the war and the conquering nation started the removal of persons in power. Denazification would be like removing all the Republicans or all the

234 Ibid.
235 Diary, September 22, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
236 Diary, September 22, 1945, “Hobart R. Gay Papers,” U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.
Democrats who were in office, who had held office or were quasi Democrats or Republicans and that would take some time. He went on to say that Germany needed to be put back on its feet to save the American taxpayers money and keep the Germans farm starving and the displaced persons from freezing.237

More hostile questions followed. What did Patton think of getting all the U.S. Troops out of Germany at once? Patton said he could not and would not answer. What “about the relaxation of non-fraternization policy”? It was good since it would teach Germans about democracy form the American soldiers. The interview ended and Patton confide to his diary “[t]his morning we had the ragtag and bobtail remnants of the great U.S. press present at the weekly Saturday morning briefing.” However he felt that the questions were more hostile to the army than to him personally. Yet he felt that they wanted to make him mad. He wrote that:

There is a very apparent Semitic influence in the press. They are trying to do two things: first, implement Communism and second, see that all the businessmen of German ancestry and non-Jewish antecedents are thrown out of their jobs. They have utterly lost the Anglo-Saxon conception of justice….They were evidently quite shocked when I told them I would kick nobody out without the successful proof of guilt before a court of law.238

Patton knew he was in trouble stating “I will probably make the front page, but frankly, do not give a damn.”239

The next day’s headline in the New York Times read “Patton Belittles Denazification; Holds Rebuilding More Important”. Its author, Ray Daniell stated that what Patton said was important “not only because he is head of the Military Government of Bavaria, but because some of the views he expressed in the occupation policy toward Nazis appeared to be in conflict with the ideas laid down in the Potsdam Declaration and Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower’s directives.”

Twice in the article, Daniell quoted Patton saying that “this Nazi thing is just like a Democratic

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237 Diary, Box 3, “Hobart R. Gay Papers,” U.S. Army Heritage Center, Carlisle PA.
238 Diary, September 22, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
239 Ibid.
and Republican election fight.” Patton was also quoted saying “[d]o you want a lot of Communist?” Finally, Daniell’s editorialized, that the views expressed by Patton and others below him were little different than “from those expressed from the beginning by German apologists themselves.”240 Daniell’s story was quickly picked up by other papers around the country.

Given the situation, it is only natural to wonder about the motivations of the four journalist involved in the Patton story. Many of the regular correspondents at the Third Army believed along with Patton and his staff that the journalist were out to get the General because of his noted dislike for the Soviets. Patton recorded in his diary that the older correspondents had come up to him and said that both Daniell’s and Levin, were from the pink press.241 Patton’s nephew, Fred Ayer wrote Daniell while preparing his book in the 1960s asking for his side of the story. Daniell responded that he had not been, nor did he know of, any movement to “get” Patton. However, he admits “there was widespread talk, both among correspondents and officers, as well as among civilian representatives of various branches of the U.S. Government, of laxity in the enforcement of de-nazification throughout Bavaria.”242 Daniell claimed he did not know if the talks were started by someone but “[i]n the light of present knowledge, I would not, however, rule out the possibility that such might have been the case originally, although, by the time I decided to look into conditions in Bavaria, whatever pebble had been thrown in the pond, had created a ripple of very great dimensions.”243 Years after Patton’s death one of the reporters

241 Diary, September 25, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
phoned Mrs. Patton and told her that he and the others had been out to get Patton bit “[a]fter he met Georgie and saw what he was like, he realized it was a setup and wanted to back out, but it had gone too far.”²⁴⁴ He had called to apologies. Mrs. Patton was not very forgiving. There is no evidence that Daniell, Levit, or the others correspondents were motivated by wanting to help the Communists. They were, however, motivated by wanting to see change in Germany, if that change meant communism at least it was better than Nazism.

The correspondent that informed Patton that the new reporters were communist sympathizers was most likely Pierre “Pete” Huss who worked for Hearst. Huss, like his employer was strongly anti-communist and suspected that Carl Levin was fronting for Victor H. Berstein who was a correspondent for the leftist New York newspaper PM.²⁴⁵ Berstein had in fact written an article on the problems in Germany the day of the first press conference. The next day, he followed it with a stinging indictment of Patton.²⁴⁶ Huss called Frank Earl Mason, who was a former reporter and was currently on a special assignment for Herbert Hoover, and asked him to come to Bavaria.²⁴⁷

Mason arrived and he and Huss began, as historian Ladislas Farago alleges, to concoct a story were Patton was being batted by reporters who were working for the Jews and Communist. Their motivation, Farago believed, was to embarrass the Truman administration. In any case, Mason met with Patton and told him that the Jews and Communist were trying to trap him. High government officials were behind it, such as Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau.²⁴⁸ White

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 178.
²⁴⁷ Ibid., 170.
²⁴⁸ In fact, Morgenthau liked Patton, had a son serving in the Third Army, and according to his diary had suggested to Truman on June 18, that General Clay be removed and replaced with Patton. “Then I said, ‘...What would you think of Patton to take Clay’s place? Kilgore says that Clay is nothing but a Fascist.’” See John Morton Blum, From The Morgenthau Diaries: Years of War 1941-1945 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1967), 464.
House Staffer David K. Niles, and Laughlin Curry from the Justice Department. He claimed that
two other state department officials, Harry Dexter White and Alger Hiss, were also Communist
spies. The conspirators had recruited Daniell, Levin, and Morgan to help them destroy Patton.
As Farago points out, five out of the nine were Jewish. Patton was not wholly convinced by
Mason but nor did he disbelieve him. Mason went to Eisenhower’s headquarters and told several
officers his suspicions. He also wrote a report on the press conference and sent it to Hoover, the
American Legion, and others in the states.

Farago disputes Mason’s charge of a Communist/Jewish conspiracy since his evidence
was based on hearsay and colored by his anti-communism. It is doubtful whether there was
any conspiracy least one that reached into the United States. Rather Patton had been grinding on
the nerves of the left since Africa. When an opportunity came to attack him it was only natural
for them to take it.

The next day it was the turn of the editorial board at the New York Times to give their
views of Patton. The editors began that Patton was a fine soldier, but continued:

General Patton is now head of the Military Government of Bavaria, and what he says on
the subject of occupation policy is certain to affect both the attitude of our own troops
and the response of the German people. When, therefore, General Patton belittles the very
purpose for which the war in Europe was fought—namely, the denazification of
Germany—we do not believe that his remarks should go unchallenged either by his
commanding officer, General Eisenhower, or by his superiors in Washington. The New York Times was not the only news agency criticizing Eisenhower. Herbert M. Clark of
ABC questioned whether Eisenhower was being too soft while other editorials asked if Patton

249 This allegation was eventually proven correct. See Allen Weinstein and Alexander Vassiliev, The Haunted Wood: Soviet Espionage in America—the Stalin Era (New York: Random House, 1999), 163.
251 Ibid., 173.
252 Ibid., 175.
was speaking for Ike.\textsuperscript{254} Truman wrote Eisenhower a nasty personal letter asking what was happening in Germany.\textsuperscript{255} The editorial had taken Patton’s case to a new level. If his superiors did not do something about Patton’s behavior, they too would be in trouble.

Eisenhower reacted quickly. Beedle Smith called Patton around 10:30 AM on September 15, and read him some of the headlines from papers in the states. Patton was belligerent. He said the war was over and he was tired of being jumped on by the press. He threatened to resign and “to talk back.” Smith talked Patton out of resigning and suggested he have another press conference.\textsuperscript{256}

The second press conference was held at 4:15 PM. Patton quickly said that he did not want his statements to reflect on Eisenhower directives, which were in accord with what the Allied leaders had agreed to at the Potsdam Conference. He explained his comparison between that “vile” thing Nazism and the American political parties.\textsuperscript{257} On the whole, the conference went smoothly enough. Patton had finished dinner after the press conference, by the time Eisenhower’s telegram arrived. Patton was ordered to the Supreme Commanders headquarters as soon as it would be safe for him to get there.

This press conference made the front page of the \textit{New York Times} yet it did not satisfy the press. Daniell’s characterized it as belonging to the “department of fuller explanation.” He saw the issue as a vital struggle between two factions between those who wanted to uphold the Berlin directives and those who did not. These factions were divided between “place[ing] its hope for future peace on the continuation of the Anglo-Russian-American alliance, and the other wing that wants to preserve a vestige of German industrial and military strength to defend western

\textsuperscript{255} Ibid., 77.
\textsuperscript{256} Diary, September 25, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
civilization at the Elbe.”

The next day the editorial page of the New York Times echoed Daniell’s article, saying “General Patton’s second press conference does something, but not enough, to repair the damage done by his remarks last week.” It concluded that “It is highly important, therefore, that, with or without the assistance of General Patton, the facts be made perfectly clear that this war was fought for the very purpose of denazifying Germany....”

On September 26, Bedell Smith met with reporters, including Daniell, Levin, and Morgan, restating Denazification as Eisenhower’s policy toward the Germans. No officer, Smith added, had ignored Eisenhower’s instructions. The question began to fly. The reporters listed Patton’s statements and asked how they could be in-tune with Eisenhower’s policy. Smith tried to defend Patton but the reporters gradually wore him down. Finally, Smith admitted it was “quite wrong” for Patton to express views contrary to Eisenhower’s. What was worst, a report pointed out, Patton’s views were sinking down to the junior officers. One reporter stated that “smart Nazis” were hiding behind the ultra-conservative Bavarian Peoples Party while the social democratic and left wing parties were attacked, or at least denied American support. Smith left the conference shaken.

Patton met with Eisenhower on September 29, seeming subdued as he entered the Supreme Commanders office. His flashy uniform had been replaced with a simpler uniform without his pistols. As Eisenhower’s driver recalled, it was “a very meek Blood-and-Guts” who reported to his boss to plead once again that his words “had been deliberately altered.”

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262 Kay Summersby, Eisenhower Was My Boss (London: Werner Laurie, 1949.), 252. “Blood-and-Guts” was a nicknamed often applied to Patton.
263 Diary 29, September 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
He also pointed out that the supposed Nazi in the Bavarian Government had been appointed before he took over command. Eisenhower said the command was not suitable for Patton and that he thought he should be transferred to the 15th Army which was writing the tactical history of the war. Patton wanted to remain in command of the Third Army but Eisenhower only agreed that he should stay for a few more days. Eisenhower explained to Patton that since the war was now over “the important thing is to stay in with public opinion...” By this point an inwardly sieving Patton asked what Bavarian officials needed to go and Eisenhower’s aids gave him a list. As the two old friends left the meeting that had truly ended their friendship, they found Daniell, Levin, and Morgan with two photographers waiting in the hall. Eisenhower asked what they wanted and they responded that they had come for a statement. Eisenhower replied that “I have conferences with my Army Commanders whenever I feel like it—period.”

The news did not remain secret for long. On October 2, word of Patton’s transfer was leaked in Berlin. Patton blamed Beedle Smith and Eisenhower who had caved because they feared seeming as if they were not doing anything to fix the situation in Germany. Major Deane suggested that the confirmation of Patton’s transfer be given to the International News Service and the United Press since they were the only loyal correspondents left.

The reaction among the press at the news of Patton’s removal from command was triumphant but not damnable toward the General. Reporter William Shirer, whose book, *Berlin Diary*, had done so much to show the evils of Hitler’s Germany before the war, wrote in his diary that “Patton was great in war, but a flop in peace. He had no understanding of politics or even of the significance of Nazism. General X. said tonight that our American generals simply were not

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264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Diary October 2, 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
fitted for the job of occupation, though I think he is one who is."\textsuperscript{267} *The New York Times* editorialized that Patton's removal should be taken as a sign that the U.S. government would not tolerate "any officers, however brave, however honest, who are inclined to be easy on known Nazis and indifferent or hard toward the surviving victims of the Nazi terror."\textsuperscript{268} A few days later the same editorial board decided that they could be a bit more generous saying that "General George Patton has now passed from current controversy into history. There he will have an honored niche. Perhaps he himself will share the sense of relief his countrymen feel at so safe and quiet a transfer."\textsuperscript{269} *The Stars and Stripes* gave a detailed comparison of the Third and Fifteenth Armies implying what a demotion this was for Patton, who considered the article "unnecessarily nasty." He believed that it was probably payback for telling them "in plain and simple language that I considered them a scurrilous yellow journal..."\textsuperscript{270}

Daniell, Levin, and Morgan were not communist yet they were reflecting the interests of the Soviet Union. The United Press quoted the Russian Communist newspaper Pravda which commented on the 'removal of...Patton from command of the Third Army occupying Bavaria, Pravda cited an "American press dispatch" stating that General Patton was not alone in his ideas, which, it said, were shared by a large number of American officers and administrators who wanted to resurrect German industry."\textsuperscript{271} The U.S.S.R. claimed that the U.S. was removing German war industry and technology from the Soviet Zone and bringing it to the west. Pravda went on to say that some Americans were trying to circumvent the Potsdam Agreement. Daniell wrote that the Soviets were indeed being denied German industry that had been promised them at

\textsuperscript{270} Diary 3, October 1945, Box 3, George S. Patton Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
Potsdam, because the U.S. was hoping to create a “bloc” that could be used against the Russians.\textsuperscript{272} Daniell left little doubt who he thought was in the right.

Patton’s death, two months later, was like his life in that it was dramatic and well reported. The day before he was to return to the states he was involved in a low speed car crash that broke his neck. He would linger for days as a huge number of reporters waited outside the hospital desperately trying to find some scrap of information to report. One reporter, Richard H. O’Regan, disguised himself as a patient and slipped into the Generals room. He learned that Patton had drank some whisky and his “scup” made front page news.\textsuperscript{273} It is ironic that the man who had used publicity to get into the national limelight spent his last days under guard to keep reporters at bay.\textsuperscript{274} It is ironic too that perhaps the best description of the cause of his death also came from a reporter. “Georgie Patton,” the reporter state, “didn’t die from an automobile accident. He died of a broken heart when they took his army away…”\textsuperscript{275}

Patton’s death did not end his appearances in the media. The image he had sold to the press, who had populated it, was too glamorous not to carry on after death. In 1970, 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Fox release the film “Patton” to great success. The film tried to show a bit of Patton’s deeper character but was nevertheless dominated by the blood and guts image of Patton haranguing his soldiers to kill in front of a large American flag.\textsuperscript{276} The media had an influence on the film as well. The Chairmen and CEO of 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Fox, Darryl F. Zanuck, had worked with the Signal Corp photographic department creating news reels. Fox had correspondents creating news films during the War, and the film relied heavily on this footage both for research and in the movie

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\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 195.
\textsuperscript{276} \textit{Patton}, DVD, directed by Franklin J. Schaffner (1970; Beverly Hill, CA: 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Fox, 2006).
\end{flushleft}
itself. George C. Scott said that he personally watched much of these news reels repeatedly to gain the personality of the General.\textsuperscript{277} The result was that the picture that most Americans have when they think of Patton is the one he created for the press, which was transferred into the movie.

**Conclusion**

Patton and the media had a symbiotic relationship which forged how history has viewed the Third Army commander. Patton saw the usefulness of the press in a way few other military figures did at the time. The media was useful in improving morale and the will of the soldiers to fight. This was enacted by giving individual units of all sizes fame and publicity at home. This combined pride in their unit could generate a spirit of belonging to an elite unit and confidence that they would achieve victory. This is partly why Patton created such a persona around himself with flashy uniforms and fiery talks to his soldiers. Many have mistaken this for personal aggrandizement yet, in reality, it was to create a feeling of pride in any outfit he commanded. Patton was most annoyed at the press when they did not fulfill these missions by propagating ‘un-soldierly’ conduct, like Bill Mauldin, or ignored his soldiers achievements all together such as in Sicily. The press for their part saw Patton mainly beneficial for selling papers. It did not matter if they were showing him to be saint or devil. Before the beginning of the war through up to the slapping incident the press was generally favorable to Patton. Patton’s real problem with the press began when journalist on the political left began to see his conduct as unacceptable. His dealing with the Vichy French, the slapping incidents, the Knutsford incident, and finally his warning of the Soviet threat angered many who saw his actions as militaristic, and anti Soviet. It should be noted here that this political divide did not happen with journalist who had been with

\textsuperscript{277} “History Through the Lens: Patton—A Rebel Revisited,” Documentary to \textit{Patton}, (Beverly Hill, CA: 20\textsuperscript{th} Century Fox, 2006).
Patton for a substantial length of time. Indeed, just as soldiers took pride in serving under Patton, the correspondents also made allegiances to generals they covered. Though the press destroyed Patton in the end, it could be said he had attained what he most wanted from them. The majority of soldiers in World War Two did not know or cannot remember what division, or army they were in, and those who do, often cannot tell you who commanded their army. The exception to this was the Third Army where almost every soldier can proudly say that they served with Patton and often can give personal stories of encounters with him. The name Patton came to be associated with victory on an epic scale. It is hard to see how this could not have been done without the media.
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