

Notes 146N, Copy 2

George Patullo

Hotel Carlyle

New York City

May 8, 1959

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Interview with George Patullo at his apartment in the Hotel Carlyle, New York, May 8, 1959, by Forrest C. Pogue.

(Mr. Patullo, about 79, is well preserved. Stockily built and vigorous. Strongly conservative. Was a correspondent for Saturday Evening Post in World War I; knew Gen Marshall then and has kept in touch since. He would not let me record our conversation or take notes, since he didn't want to be quoted, so I have put down these random notes in the hour after I saw him. They are not in the order he gave them and they give only a part of the long discursive conversation we had. He has a good bit of money which he and his brother made in business. One brother was prime minister of British Columbia. He says the name is Scotch and was originally Patulloch, but people think I'm a Wop. He quoted me a Passage from Grant's History of Scotland on the original Patulloch).

He was reluctant to talk with me at first because he said he didn't believe Gen Marshall would ever write his memoirs. He said he had gone down fairly early in Marshall's Chief of Staff Period with instructions from Jack Wheeler of NANA to buy Marshall's memoirs (they had serialized Pershing's which they bought for \$250,000 and Patullo had been the go-between). He said he could have offered up to \$450,000, but that Marshall cut him off as soon as he started in that direction. He said he thought Marshall felt that he shouldn't exploit his position and that he didn't want to hurt people.

He says he met Gen Marshall soon after reaching France in 1917 and saw him at 1st Division, but that he was up forward much of the time and thus did not have as close contact then as he did later. Don't think that I was a hero because I was up front. I never wanted to be a hero. (Said he got \$12,500 for his.) Later contact was strong when Patullo was doing a five part piece on Pershing and the AEF and was allowed to use Pershing's papers. Marshall helped on this. Tells how he had to work in an office with an armed soldier standing right by him to make sure he took nothing out.

Talked of people he met at 1st Division, such as Teddy Roosevelt Jr. Says he was very brave. Also mentioned Kermit, who drank too much. Says that in WWII he got into British Army and then transferred to U. S. Says that Gen Marshall told him one day he had to send Kermit to Alaska because he was drinking too much where he was and causing trouble. Says he died of alcoholism. Says this goes back a long way. Mentions taking Mrs. Patullo to a hotel one evening in London and Kermit came in, disheveled and drunk and waved at him. My wife sniffed (she is an English lady and can sniff when she wants to) and I told her who he was. She then looked more closely and said I can see that he is someone after all.

Says he was told by Robert Low Bacon of Theodore Roosevelt's death and asked to tell T. R., Jr. and Kermit. He said let us check first. Malin Craig confirmed it. They finally got the regimental commander to tell them. Gave them several drink first and then told them.

Mentions Quentin's death and how he was buried where he fell. French said they would keep it in good shape. But, at T. R., Jr's request, he visited it later and found it overrun with weeds. French let things go.

Told of visiting one of the generals one night and being invited to have some drinks. He said I am afraid to drink too much, I won't get home. The General then turned to Captain Clifton Cates and said let him home when he is ready to go. Cates did. Next time he saw him Cates was Marine Corps commandant.

Obvious he is quite a drinker. Says that Pershing was a heavy drinker in his earlier days. Bad man after women all his life. Very profane. Says that soon after he was jumped from captain to brigadier, someone printed a story that he had two illegitimate Filipino children. Pershing came to one of his Army friends and said my wife insists that I must bring suit. He was told that they could prove it. Advice of a judge advocate friend was to ask for a court of inquiry. They then got a sergeant to swear the children were his and Pershing was cleared.

Says Pershing would be sitting at the table talking and he would ask, "Who was that god damned son of a bitch I relieved for such and such?"; "Who was that bastard that didn't get moving?"

I sent him a case of Bourbon for his next to last birthday. Later saw someone who went to see him that day and he said the old man and nearly everyone else who saw him that day got tight and that the old man was sick for several days. He tried to drink it all up that day.

During the war, I came to Washington and went to see Gen. Marshall. I told him I was going to see Pershing. He said put in a good word for me. Earlier I went to see him quite often to tell him what was happening. Now I can't go as often and he doesn't like it. Of course, he still thinks I am his aide. Told Patullo that the old man would want him to have a drink with him. Says that Pershing called for Bourbon soon after he got in. Patullo said he took a short one, but the old man filled a tumbler about two-thirds full.

Says it was hard to popularize Pershing. He was very cold. Could be very ruthless. (One man he was profane about one day was Gen. Bundy who sent back word when told to pull back that he didn't know how to retreat. Jim James made a hero out of him by writing that Americans didn't know how to retreat. Pershing relieved him for not knowing how to handle his troops).

Patullo was on hand for the ceremony for the first Americans to be killed in France. Says two of the men had their throats cut. This started him on atrocities. Said he tended to exaggerate a great deal. Said Gen. Marshall came to him one day in 1917 or 1918 and said that the higher officers felt the men were not angry enough and that they needed some stories telling about how bad the Germans were. Patullo said he couldn't make up stuff like that. Marshall didn't press point. Said he knew that much of the stuff was made up. Also knew that our people could be very rough at times. Wrote up one such story and a woman told him that isn't true. Our boys are too noble for that.

Praised Gen. Marshall for Meuse-Argonne planning. Said Gen. Marshall very modest, but was pleased at compliment of some high placed British official for the way the operation was handled. Says doesn't know of any feud at that time. Says Skip Hunt could color a story at times. Told of one time they got drunk together in First War.

He accepts the idea that Roosevelt wanted the attack at Pearl Harbor, but was aghast at its result. Says someone saw him a day or two later and found him all broken up. Thinks Marshall, as good soldier, took Marshall's orders. Said the fact that they captured a one man submarine at Pearl Harbor 24 hours before should have tipped them off. Marshall should have used government cable rather than commercial cable. Shouldn't have gone riding. Of course, the man on the spot is responsible and they should have been better prepared. Says Kimmel asked him to write up his story. Turned him down. Said the man on the spot has to be the goat. Best to let this thing alone. Said Roosevelt vindictive. You will not only be ruined, but your two boys in service will be ruined.

Thinks Marshall's China Mission tragic. Made many mistakes as Secretary of State. Military man shouldn't go into politics. Of course, I blame Dean Acheson for the China affair. I know his family. His whole family is pro-British. The mother's side of the family is not very bright. I knew his uncle, Herbert, at school. He had a mental breakdown. In Secy of State job, Marshall didn't know his way about. But on China, he accepted the agrarian reform nonsense.

Thinks Marshall may have helped get MacArthur. I said he was never in a position to do that. Said he hadn't thought of that. Says he never cared for MacArthur, but thought he was a good administrator and helped in Japan. Ambitious man. Mentioned fact that Gen. Royce once told him he flew MacArthur somewhere. Part of the time he was very charming, when he wanted something, and then could be very distant.

Then he said he guessed Marshall didn't fire MacArthur. Says both fine people. Says Colonel Marshall wrote him after the death of first Mrs. Marshall and was obviously heartbroken and much torn up. Worried about him. Not long after got announcement of his re-marriage. My wife and I chuckled about how soon he recovered. I said his first wife died in 1927 and he remarried in 1930. He said well that is certainly a proper waiting period; that ruins my story. Anyway, he said, it would have been a tribute to his first wife if he felt he had to have the type of companionship she had given him.

Says Marshall very honest. I once tried to give him a fine horse -- cost \$10,000. He said don't talk to me about such a thing as long as I am in public life. Wouldn't touch a thing that would give anyone the idea he could be bought or was being bought.

Spoke of knowing Ralph Smith in First War. Very weak-seeming person; ineffective. Not surprised to find that Cates relieved him in WWII. (I said it was Holland Smith).

Doesn't like Roosevelts. Says his brother came to see Franklin once about a Canadian-Alaskan highway. Offered to build it for \$10 million. FDR said title would have to come to U. S. Brother said no go. Years later we had to pay a lot more and give title to Canada anyway. Brother didn't like Roosevelt, but said he liked Mrs. Roosevelt. She was a lady. (I said I imagined that the elder Mrs. Roosevelt was considered more favorably than the others by conservative people. He said she was a bitch. Said he used to see her at the George V in Paris. She would be pleasant in the elevator and then she would bawl the hell out of the chauffeur or the servants. I don't like that kind of people).

Mrs. Roosevelt reminded him of Pegler. Said he had known and like Pegler, Grantland Rice and others over once. Rice, after he had drunk a good bit, said Pegler is eaten up by hate. He will attack us all. Said he wrote terrible pieces about Rice after he died. Said after Herbert Bayard Swope died, he and Jack Wheeler and Pegler were together. Said I am going to destroy that phony. Wheeler and Patullo said why. Said Swope always telling of the big people he ran around with. Wrote violent article. Ten of Mrs. Swope's friends called her up to make sure she read it. Jack Wheeler furious. Thinks Pegler will lose contract after this one expires. Doesn't understand his violent feelings. Says that Pegler so severe on Mrs. Roosevelt that he makes friends for her. Says he told him once people will think that you have some Freudian desire for her and that your violence against her comes from a frustration. Said made Pegler furious. I asked if he drank a lot and he says at times and then he swears of.

(The picture I got of a lot of newspaper column writing and of their so-called history was summed up in some of the half true statements and gossip which Mr. Patullo told me. He seemed more tolerant than many of these people, but his confident history was pretty shaky).

Tells of being in Marshall's office one day when Gen. M. called Eisenhower. Said when he was finished, Marshall said that Patton had broken loose and was on his way towards Germany. Very pleased. Patullo thought Patton was the greatest field soldier we ever developed.

Patullo, despite his dislike of Roosevelt, Truman and others, has a healthy skepticism about some of his own friends. He said that after Albert Wiggins had been found out in his misuse of several millions, he saw him in a golf club they belonged to. Wiggins asked him what his score was and he refused to speak to him. Later, someone asked why he had done it and he said he is a crook. Then he said I am going to get him thrown out of the club. The man answered, don't do that or we won't have 10 per cent of our members left.

We left with Mr. Patullo repeating again his view that Gen. M. was an honest man and one who did what he thought was his duty.