

News 'Black Market' Described; Sometimes System Can Backfire

By LYLE C. WILSON
United Press Correspondent
Washington—UPI—The black market in news was never better than in the Eisenhower administration, some of whose members are dissatisfied with the normal channels for release of lively information.

The term black market is used because the method of planting or leaking these news stories is strictly secret. There is nothing sinful about the system until it miscues, as it just has in spectacular fashion.

Then big names are exposed as the alleged sources of embarrassing or misleading leaks. Efforts are made to repair the damage

by denials or fuller explanations. At that point the news reports flowing from Washington become confused and contradictory. If newspaper readers and radio and television listeners are not confused it is a wonder, because the newsmen right here on the spot frequently are.

A Peek Backstage
For a peek backstage to the source of some of the big news you read or hear, this is how the black market works.

An individual reporter or several of them want some high-level, background information on some developing situation. For example, the situation now developing around the off-shore

Chinese islands, Quemoy and Matsu.

They pick some official and ask him if he will dine or lunch with a group of newsmen soon, if he agrees, the party is on, and the reporters who set it up invite secretly a dozen or so of their associates to be present. The attending official usually knows in advance the identities of those with whom he is to discuss confidentially highly sensitive subjects.

It is customary that these meetings are for "background" only. That is, in making use of the information obtained, the reporters may not name the official who gave it, or sometimes

not even say it came from "authoritative sources." They must use it on their own responsibility. More often than not there are points brought up in such meetings which are not even for background. They are off-record—not to be published at all.

A group of newsmen met one week ago tonight under precisely those circumstances. Their guest was Adm. Robert B. Carney, chief of naval operations and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. To shield further the source of information gained in such meetings it usually is the practice to let a day or so elapse before any use whatever is made of it.

It was not until last Saturday morning that the Carney story broke—without, of course, mentioning the admiral's name. Carney's story jarred the country; jolted Allied foreign offices and brought none knows what smiles or frowns in Moscow and Peking. Carney's story was that the big Red Chinese grab for the two Chinese islands was coming around April 15—a war probably was just around the corner.

None was jolted harder than President Eisenhower. The New York Daily News is authority for the statement that James C. Hagerly, Mr. Eisenhower's press secretary, secretly met with a hand-picked group of reporters

on last Monday night to deny the story in detail and over-all.

However, that may be, big headlines in Tuesday morning papers said President Eisenhower emphatically disagreed with Carney. These stories did not say who had revealed Mr. Eisenhower's point of view—merely that he disagreed.

There was an instance of the black market miscuing. More often however, there is no miscue. The leaked or planted story slips easily into the new stream without the source of the information accepting public responsibility for it.

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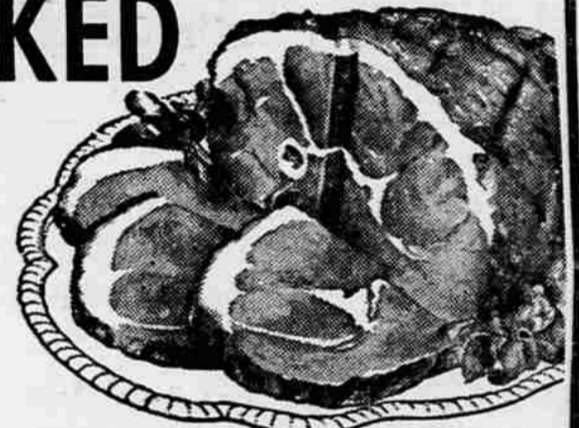
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