

A Thesis:

George C. Marshall, A Dynamic Leader of Transition & Adaptation

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Introduction

George Catlett Marshall was the Chief of Staff of the United States Army during the tumultuous years of the Second World War. Prior to the war, Marshall headed various officers' schools and professional development centers, mentoring an entire generation of young officers who would become field commanders and general officers during the World War II. Eventually, he oversaw the monumental task of modernizing and enlarging the United States Army as World War II began and escalated. Together with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and his opposites in the British military, he helped formulate the grand strategy that the Allied powers implemented to eventually defeat Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany, and Imperial Japan.

George C. Marshall's career in the U.S. Army spanned over four decades. Even at a young age and early point in his career, Marshall was considered an exceptional leader and earned the rank of Cadet Captain at the Virginia Military Institute.¹ Having sought a career in a growing regular army, he was officially commissioned in the United States Army on January 4, 1902.² His first duty station was the Philippines in the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and he served as a staff officer during World War I. Following several school assignments, during World War II, Marshall instituted widespread changes to the Army, replacing his contemporaries with younger officers who would have been junior officers during the First World War. The Army that the United States sent to Europe under Dwight Eisenhower, was one that, as Peter Mansoor explains, was the creation of Leslie McNair and George C. Marshall.³ Furthermore, recognizing the critical contribution that the U.S. Army had made to the Allies' success in Europe, Winston Churchill called Marshall the "organizer of victory."⁴

¹ Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General 1880-1939* (New York: Viking Press, 1963), 53.

² *Ibid.*, 67.

³ Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999), 21.

⁴ Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), 585.

Contemporaries and his subordinates considered Marshall an influential figure. General J. Lawton Collins, spoke highly of Marshall, who as a colonel, had been his superior at the Infantry school in the interwar era. Collins recalled, “Despite Colonel Marshall’s seemingly forbidding appearance, he was always accessible. Anyone with a new idea, a new method or procedure, could get a hearing and was encouraged to come up with a specific project to develop his theory.”⁵ Without him, the United States Army would have been a very different entity during the Second World War.

Marshall never wrote an extensive autobiography on his own life. His only self-biographical work of significance was *Memoirs of My Services in the World War, 1917-1918*. This was published in 1976, but written much earlier, in the immediate aftermath of World War I between 1919-1923.⁶ Others had to document and explain Marshall’s life after his death in 1959. Forrest Pogue wrote a massive, four volume biographical work on Marshall, the first volume of which, *George C. Marshall: Education of a General, 1880-1939*, was published in 1963. This was followed on by *Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* in 1966, and *Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945* in 1973. Pogue wrote an additional volume, *Statesman, 1945-1959*, chronicling Marshall’s later life and government service. In this multi-volume biography, Pogue heavily relied on interviews that he conducted with the general in the late 1950s. Since then, others have written biographies of Marshall, although not nearly to the length of Pogue’s work. Mark A. Stoler published a short biography in 1989 and touched on the major aspects of Marshall’s life. Stoler’s thesis was that Marshall’s selfless service to his country mirrored that of George Washington, due to his long career and his involvement in

⁵ General J. Lawton Collins, *Lightning Joe, An Autobiography* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 50.

⁶ “Foreword by Brigadier General James L. Collins, Jr.” George C. Marshall, *Memoirs of My Service in the World War 1917-1918* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), v.

“America’s rise to world power.”⁷ His intellect and his understanding of the limits of power allowed him to build up a citizen army to protect the American way of life.

Others make mention of Marshall in their own autobiographies or memoirs. Dwight Eisenhower, in his *Crusade in Europe* (1948), favored Marshall heavily, citing his heavy influence on the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff. Furthermore, Eisenhower recalled Marshall’s “constant thoughtfulness for his subordinates,” in allowing Eisenhower’s son to visit his father before assuming his new post as a freshly minted West Point graduate.⁸ Likewise, J. Lawton Collins emphasized Marshall’s role upon his own career. Marshall’s subordinates recognized that they were in fact the products of his mentorship. General Manton Eddy was likewise heavily influenced and furthered by Marshall’s mentoring.⁹

Others, if not addressing Marshall’s life directly saw his place in the wider events of the period. Mansoor assigns much of the structural and training decisions made in implementing American strategic planning to General Leslie McNair. However, throughout that work, he nonetheless makes it clear that the overall strategic vision for the Army was Marshall’s doing.¹⁰ The size, scope, and the training of that army fell to others, but were overseen by Marshall.

Others have, likewise, seen Marshall’s forward thinking and vision as being a key part of American political policy of the pre-war landscape. *Roosevelt’s Second Act* by Richard Moe and *1940* by Susan Dunn focus on primarily on the 1940 presidential election. However, the outbreak of the war in Europe did cast a pall over the United States at that time. As Roosevelt tried to navigate the touchy nature of war preparation in a decidedly divided America, Marshall pushed for increased military spending, above and beyond what even the decidedly internationalist Roosevelt was willing

⁷ Mark A. Stoler, *George C. Marshall: Soldier-Statesman of the American Century* (New York: Twayne Publishing, 1989), 194.

⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1948), 263.

⁹ Henry Gerard Phillips, *The Making of a Professional: Manton S. Eddy, USA* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 55.

¹⁰ Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe*, 17.

to provide. As Moe stated, “Roosevelt came to see in Marshall the candid, intelligent, and incorruptible professional soldier he needed by his side.”¹¹

Andrew Roberts, in *Masters and Commanders*, saw how Marshall fit into the broader scheme of the American and British Combined staff. From the early part of 1942, Marshall had urged the Combined Chiefs of England and the United States to attack Nazi occupied Europe at once. As Robertson states, “Work was underway for what was to be called the Marshall Memorandum, which was going to offer not one but two separate strategies to attack Germany via France.”¹² Similarly, Mark Stoler, in *Allies and Adversaries*, notes Marshall’s centrality to the strategic thinking process. As early as July 1942, Marshall and his naval counterpart Admiral Ernest King were threatening to divert American troops to the Pacific rather than commit them to the Mediterranean. Marshall wanted to force the British to commit to a direct strategy against Germany.¹³ Due to British reluctance to meet what was seen as a superior German army with a defensive advantage on the mainland, it was Marshall who had to push for the eventually successful invasion and battle for the occupied countries and Germany itself. At the Quebec Conference in August of 1943, Marshall reiterated his threat that the United States would shift the bulk of its forces to the Pacific theater if the Mediterranean strategy was not abandoned in favor of Operation Overlord, the invasion of Northwest France.¹⁴

Marshall was a unique man for his era because he could think beyond the immediate environment in which he would be waging war. He was able to maintain a successful career that spanned two World Wars and massive changes in technology. From the beginning of his career,

¹¹ Richard Moe, *Roosevelt’s Second Act: The Election of 1940 and the Politics of War* (New York: Oxford, 2013), 30.

¹² Andrew Roberts, *Masters and Commanders: How Four Titans Won the War in the West* (New York: Harper Collins, 2009), 123.

¹³ Mark A. Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries: The Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Grand Alliance, and U.S. Strategy in World War II* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

even as a student at the Virginia Military Institute, Marshall demonstrated a high standard of leadership and excellence. In France during World War I and in analyzing his involvement afterward, Marshall clearly identified problems in the army's methodology and developed solutions to those problems. Marshall was a man ahead of his time, and his vision, drive for excellence, and adaptability, perhaps because of his humility, has not received the widespread public recognition that other soldiers and military thinkers of his era have continued to receive.

This case study focuses on three key areas regarding Marshall. The first is his military theory. This section identifies the roots of Marshall's military career and documents his military and leadership philosophy. It reveals how this philosophy was solidified under wartime service in France and in the immediate aftermath of the conflict.

Second, this thesis answers the question of how Marshall took his soldierly vision and applied it to how the U.S. Army, and in turn, the United States, would fight the Second World War. Marshall was appointed Chief of Staff in 1939 and oversaw the expansion and modernization of the U.S. Army prior to the outbreak of war in December of 1941. This section documents the arguments that Marshall made to increase the size and funding of the army, based off of the changes in technology made in the prior twenty years and the lessons that had been learned in the aftermath of the First World War.

Lastly, this thesis investigates men who Marshall mentored during the interwar and wartime periods. It identifies how Marshall encouraged and fostered his own vision of a soldier and commander amongst his subordinates. It demonstrates the means by which he molded and honed these younger officers to become the men he would delegate field command to during World War II, namely Omar Bradley, J. Lawton Collins, Manton Eddy, and Dwight Eisenhower.

Marshall left a wealth of written material from which a researcher can glean information about his personal and professional life. Marshall, as discussed earlier, is also referenced in several

of his subordinates' autobiographies, memoirs, and letters. Together, his written material and the recollections of the men who served under him combine to give an excellent picture of the man, his thought processes, and the way he was able to argue for his strategies and policies.

The George C. Marshall Foundation and its archives, located in Lexington, Virginia offers an abundance of rich materials. This includes his personal correspondence, both formal and informal. These letters, memos, and other documents give a glimpse into the Marshall's life and his command philosophies as he laid out his perspective on leadership, counseled his subordinates, and addressed the planning, mobilization, and use of the Army during the war.

Marshall's papers address all three questions posed above. For instance, regarding his philosophy as a soldier, he explained to the first graduates of the Army's Officer Candidate system in 1941 that:

The carefully prepared plans of higher commanders can do no more than project you to the line of departure at the proper time and place, in proper formation, and start you off in the right direction. Thereafter, the responsibility for results is almost entirely yours. If you know your business of weapons and tactics, if you have inspired the complete confidence and loyalty of your men, things will go well on that section of the front.¹⁵

In regard to his relationship to his subordinates and colleagues, Marshall's letters showed his care for his fellow officers and subordinates. He clearly wanted them to succeed. In a letter to the overworked and exhausted Brigadier General Bruce Magruder, he advised him to, "make a studied business of relaxing and taking things easy, getting to the office late, taking trips, and making everybody else work like hell."¹⁶ Additionally, the Marshall archive includes correspondence with the War Department and the Secretary of War, illustrating Marshall's hand in pushing for increased

¹⁵ Major H.A. DeWeed, ed., "Address for Delivery to the Graduates of the First Officer Candidate School, Fort Benning, Georgia, September 18, 1941," from *Selected Speeches and Statements of General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, United States Army* (Washington, D.C: The Infantry Journal, 1945), 175-176.

¹⁶ George C. Marshall, "To Brigadier General Bruce Magruder, August 7, 1939," from *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall, Vol. 2, "We Cannot Delay," July 1, 1939-December 6, 1941* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1986), 31-32.

allocations for the military, even before the war. This, along with his planning and staff correspondence with other officers, allows for a thorough study of Marshall's role in the planning and implementation of the military's strategy, even in the environment of steadfast isolationism.

Memoirs from his subordinates, such as J. Lawton Collins' *Lightning Joe, an Autobiography*, and Dwight Eisenhower's *Crusade in Europe*, give perspectives on Marshall's mindset and his teaching methods. *Selected Speeches and Statements of General of the Army George C. Marshall* provides additional information to further understand and document Marshall's vision and strategic mindset, particularly for the transcripts of his testimony before Congress regarding military preparedness and funding before and as the war broke out. Lastly, Mark S. Watson's *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations*, published in 1950, indicates the overall role that Marshall had in the planning and implementing of American grand strategy during World War II.

This thesis reveals how Marshall's life, leadership, command philosophy, and mentorship impacted the environment in which he walked. Rather than merely conducting himself to meet the bare minimum of what was expected of him, Marshall sought to demonstrate and even require excellence of those under him. Even as he sought to make his fellow soldiers better at their trade, Marshall still demonstrated a basic level of care and courtesy that endeared him to his subordinates. He did not consider himself infallible. When he asked for his subordinates' opinions of his plans and decisions, he wanted their honest, meaningful critique. General Omar Bradley later observed, "It was this reaction of a true commander or executive who did not want a staff of "yes men" which is what made General Marshall an outstanding leader."¹⁷

¹⁷ "Forward by General Omar N. Bradley" Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, ix.

Chapter 1

Marshall's Philosophy on War and Soldiering

To understand George C. Marshall as a war planner, commander, mentor, and teacher, one has to understand and investigate his philosophy as a soldier. Marshall's ideals and professional mindset were rooted in his upbringing and his professional training but were expounded in full as he matured as an officer, oversaw planning and operations during the First World War, and later trained other officers to lead soldiers into battle. This early half of Marshall's career in the U.S. Army granted him not only real-world experience but demonstrated his ability to calmly determine the correct response to problems that he faced.

Marshall's career began at the turn of the century as the United States grew into the role of a world power after the Spanish-American War. The U.S. Army grew to match the needs of the nation and gave him an opportunity to serve as an officer, first on occupation duty in the Philippines, and then later in various staff roles through the beginning of the First World War. During that conflict, Marshall demonstrated a firm knowledge of how much the army had changed, even in the decade and a half of his own service and would need to adapt to be able to combat a modern European army. His no-nonsense approach earned him the respect of his superiors and led to Marshall's promotion to higher staff positions. After the war, Marshall sought to make certain that the lessons of the First World War were not forgotten when such lessons tended to be forgotten.

Marshall's choice of career was an interesting one, given the decade in which he came of age. Just exactly when Marshall made up his mind to become a soldier is not known. Even when his biographer, Forest Pogue, asked Marshall on the matter, the general could not remember.¹ Such a career, in the late 1890s, seemed like an unwise choice. Promotions were stagnant in a force that

¹ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 39.

numbered around 28,000 men and was primarily tasked with guarding the coasts and the Rio Grande River.² West Point was not a viable prospect for Marshall, as he was not a strong enough student. Virginia Military Institute, or VMI, was, by this point, more of a technical school, rooted in chemistry and engineering rather than working as an alternative military school, as few of their graduates served in the army during that period.³

Marshall's older brother, Stuart, attended VMI, and upon graduation took a job as a chemist. Desiring to follow in his brother's footsteps, George was challenged to succeed there when he overheard his brother belittling him to his mother. As he told Pogue, "he was trying to persuade her not to let me go because he thought I would disgrace the family name."⁴ Marshall later argued that Stuart's disparaging comments were at the root of his life long drive for excellence. "The urgency to succeed came from hearing that conversation," Marshall said to Pogue, "it had a psychological effect on my career."⁵

As there was no academic barrier to Marshall's entry to VMI, his attitude was what impressed the school's superintendent, General Scott Shipp. At a mere sixteen years of age, and despite the fact he had only just recovered from a bout of typhoid, Shipp still described the young Marshall to his mother as, "already looks the soldier."⁶ General Shipp was a hard to please, crusty war veteran, having fought for the Confederacy during the Civil War. Discipline, for Scott, was the intent of the school. Life for freshmen cadets, or Rats, was made miserable because of the hazing of upperclassmen, and, as Marshall admitted, "The mess was a pretty stern affair."⁷ VMI was so steeped in tradition that Marshall thought that the primary lessons he learned were, "self-control,

² Ivan Musicant, *Empire by Default: The Spanish American War and the Dawn of the American Century* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 235.

³ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 40.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 41

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 43.

discipline, so that it was ground in.”⁸ Marshall’s excellence and drive while occupying lower ranks were rewarded with what Marshall considered the highest honor at VMI, to be named cadet First Captain for his senior year. Explaining the honor to Pogue, Marshall said: “I was very exacting and very exact in all my military duties as I gradually developed from the mild authority—almost none—exercised by the corporal to the pronounced authority of the first sergeant. As first sergeant, I fell the company in, called the roll, kept tabs on it, and marched the detail to guard the mount every morning.”⁹ Disciplined attention to detail and a command presence would mark the remainder of Marshall’s life at VMI.

The Spanish-American War of 1898 affected the future careers of military officers throughout the United States. The Army’s small size and lack of experience outside of quelling Indian uprisings on the Great Plains meant that, as Ivan Musicant described it, only the old officers from the Civil War had seen, “any unit as large as a brigade, to say nothing of a division or an army corps.”¹⁰ The army that was fielded for the war with Spain beginning in April of 1898 was composed of hastily trained volunteers and a projected regular army of 60,000 men, but due to raw, sentimental fervor and more lax discipline in the state volunteer regiments, the army never reached its authorized strength until after the war.¹¹ There was simply too much incentive for men to fight alongside of their neighbors under officers they knew versus joining the more rigidly organized ranks of the regular army. Instead, the army was underequipped and short of professional officers who could function under the heat of combat.¹²

The war itself moved at an astonishing pace. Following the declaration of war, the navy’s Asiatic Squadron under Commodore Dewey attacked the Spanish fleet in the Philippines. On May

⁸ Ibid., 46.

⁹ Ibid., 53,54.

¹⁰ Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 237.

¹¹ Ibid., 247.

¹² Ibid.

1, 1898, Dewey's squadron fell upon the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay, sinking all of the Spanish ships with no losses of their own.¹³ The navy protected the Army's landing in Cuba and decisively sank the Spanish naval squadron stationed in the region in the Battle of Santiago.¹⁴

In the war's aftermath, widespread reforms and expansions provided young cadets like Marshall career opportunities they would not have otherwise had. The displays of patriotism and the excitement upon the return of Uniontown, Pennsylvania's state troops from the Philippines impacted Marshall's psyche. The military accomplishments of his home town's citizens would confirm his choice to become a career military officer. He explained to Pogue, that such enthusiasm had, "a determining effect on my choice of profession."¹⁵

The issue of Filipino independence would cause a bloody, pernicious war that caused the army to professionalize and modernize. Emilio Aguinaldo, a young Filipino nationalist leader exiled for his rebellion against the Spanish government in 1897, returned to his homeland in 1898, under impression that American leaders intended to grant the islands full independence.¹⁶ Admiral Dewey, in his conversations with Aguinaldo, believed that the United States would in fact move in that direction, but never realized that the nationalists were so eager for immediate independence.¹⁷ Instead, President William McKinley, with Germany and Japan looking to expand their holdings in the Pacific, chose to maintain American control of the islands.¹⁸ He did not believe that the rebels were trustworthy and that to leave the islands in Spanish hands would merely make a bad situation worse. However, the lack of clear direction from Washington meant that General Wesley Merritt, as

¹³ Ibid., 231.

¹⁴ Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 184.

¹⁵ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 53.

¹⁶ Musicant, *Empire by Default*, 197-198.

¹⁷ Ibid., 549.

¹⁸ Ibid., 600-601.

the expedition commander at the armistice, had little leeway in establishing clear, firm, and yet humane control over the islands.¹⁹

Even in 1898, Aguinaldo had dispatched many of his lieutenants throughout the islands to further his own personal control.²⁰ Aguinaldo's soldiers even assisted in the capture of Manila in August 1898. As Aguinaldo's irregulars harassed American troops, Merritt's age, poor health, and lack of defined orders led him to resign, and he was replaced by Elwell S. Otis. Despite Otis's cantankerous personality and tightfisted command style giving him a bad reputation, but he did succeed in pacifying the Filipino population and creating a practical colonial government.²¹

American troops, by 1899, were increasing the number of schools and expanding and modernizing the infrastructure of the islands in a way that would placate the majority of the archipeligo's population.

Aguinaldo declared the existence of the Philippine Republic on January 23, 1899, but his armies were undisciplined and unaccustomed to fighting against a determined enemy.²² They were nonetheless a pain in the Americans' side, with fighting erupting near Manilla on February 4, 1899. When conventional tactics proved ineffective against the better organized Americans, Aguinaldo declared a guerilla war in late 1899, but such tactics from Aguinaldo and his subordinates only "alienated the population and encouraged collaboration with the occupiers."²³ Even though some American army officers used brutal reprisals to achieve their goals, most represented their nation well. In many cases, regional and tribal rivalries, rather than the guerillas allied with Aguinaldo, caused as many problems for the American administration. Importantly, the surrender of one of Aguinaldo's key subordinates, Mariano Trias, in March 1901, led to Aguinaldo's capture.²⁴ After

¹⁹ Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War, 1899-1902* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 29.

²² *Ibid.*, 34-35.

²³ *Ibid.*, 324.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 295.

another year of patrols, reprisals, and civil improvements, the United States largely secured the islands.

Following his graduation from VMI in 1901, Marshall passed the officer's exams, and received his commission in the US Army on January 4, 1902.²⁵ He did not prefer his assignment to the infantry, but, with little option, he took the assignment to the 30th Infantry in stride and would join his regiment in the Philippines. Marshall, even if he saw no real combat in his tour of duty on Mindoro, nonetheless demonstrated his cool-headed composure on the voyage to his assigned outpost. He and another freshly minted junior officer, Lieutenant Daly, were forced to take the helm of the small steamer when the captain, having sailed the vessel into a storm, abandoned his post. The two amateur sailors then had to threaten the rest of the crew at gunpoint to maintain their posts until the first mate was finally able to join them at the helm.²⁶

With few exceptions, Marshall's tour of duty was free of excitement. He was immediately made acting commander of Company G for more than a month, writing reports and overseeing patrols as the American garrison continued its pacification efforts. Such patrols provided little excitement. "Sir," he reported to the Battalion Adjutant on August 1, 1902, "I have the honor to report that no insurgents surrendered or were captured at this post since last report."²⁷ The need for the 30th Infantry's officers to uphold discipline was paramount, however, when a cholera epidemic struck the island. "The only defense against the disease," Pogue recorded, "was to avoid it." Meticulous sanitation was implemented, with all drinking water being boiled, and all cooking elements meticulously cleaned.²⁸ As Marshall stated, "A very little skimping could cost you your

²⁵ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 67.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

²⁷ "Report to the Adjutant General, 2nd Battalion," *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 1, *The Soldierly Spirit, December 1880-June 1939* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), 25.

²⁸ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 74.

life.”²⁹ Marshall’s later attention to detail, which he impressed upon his students, was almost certainly rooted in this garrison chore.

When noting the violence of the early American occupation of the Philippines, Marshall took a different tack from his contemporaries, demonstrating a tendency towards independent analysis. Governor Howard Taft and Secretary of War Elihu Root sought to grant the Philippines full independence at the earliest possible date.³⁰ In many ways, President McKinley’s misguided belief that the islands had been conquered by Dewey’s naval victory built the American occupation on a foundation of civil misunderstanding.³¹ On the other hand, many Army officers had no respect for the Filipinos as a whole, so hardened had they become from fighting an enemy who did not follow the basic conventions of war.³² While the civil officials had wanted to speed up the process of self-governance and punish Army officers who brutalized the population, Army officers believed that “sanctions” such as fines and arrests were necessary to achieve pacification.³³

Marshall made his own judgement, concluding that both soldiers and civilian officials had erred. Civil officials had an overly optimistic view of the civil populace and their capacity for immediate self-government. He was quick to judge the actions of many fellow soldiers as excessive and disgraceful. “I remember distinctly,” he told Pogue, “one officer reporting that he had three men wounded in an encounter and he had burned the town down... It showed how men are likely to get out of hand when they are on their own in critical instances.”³⁴ On another occasion, Marshall recalled his shock and disgust upon hearing American soldiers had burned a church and library near Manila. He noted that, “when you get abroad on a wartime basis under conditions that are extremely

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 80.

³¹ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 6.

³² Pogue, *Education of a General*, 81.

³³ Linn, *The Philippine War*, 327.

³⁴ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 81.

difficult, you are likely to do things that you would utterly discountenance at another time.”³⁵ As Pogue stated explicitly, Marshall understood the thinking behind the way the army had conducted itself, but, “he did not approve them and never doubted the principle of re-establishing civil control as soon as possible.”³⁶ Marshall’s service in the Philippines provided early experience and illustrations on the relationship between military and civil authorities, which when combined with the lesson gained on the benefits of attentive discipline, would become a hallmark of the rest of his career.

Marshall’s mindset and philosophy on higher command, and soldiering in general, would be played out in a modern war as a staff officer in France between 1917 and 1919. After multiple incidents with Germany, the United States entered the European conflict by declaring war on the German Empire in April of 1917.³⁷ Even before he went overseas, now Captain George C. Marshall helped prepare the army to go to war. He was assigned in April of 1917 to General J. Franklin Bell’s Eastern Department Headquarters on Governor’s Island, New York. As Chief of Staff, Marshall was part of the training apparatus that sought to build a citizen army. Reserve Officer training camps were established in Plattsburg, New York, and Marshall had no sooner arrived at his new duty station, then he was helping to organize them. As department Chief of Staff, Marshall even temporarily ran Bell’s administration.³⁸

Marshall could not stand the prewar inertia displayed by others. Pogue recorded that Marshall had sparred with the Eastern Department’s quartermaster over the supply of blankets for the more than 5,000 officer candidates training in the Plattsburg camps. Many other items were desperately needed. When confronted by the quartermaster over the cost of express shipping the

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid., 82.

³⁷ Mark Ethan Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War: The American Army and Combat in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

³⁸ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 140.

needed blankets to the troops, Marshall recalled that he had told the colonel, “what *he* was letting the government in for if he didn’t have the proper things there for these men.”³⁹ The crux of the matter was that Marshall was, in essence, using more up to date methods and knowledge to challenge a superior officer’s experience. The quartermaster told Marshall, “we have been here for several years and we originally supplied these camps with what we thought was necessary.” With Marshall’s new and adapting requirements, the man asked, “How can you possibly believe you are right?”⁴⁰ In fact, Marshall’s data had been based on calculated lists that related to how many hundreds of men were in each camp, down to pencils and shoes. Upon the revelation of his source, the quartermaster relented.

Furthermore, many Americans seemed to be confused as to the nature of the war the United States had joined. The army was simply an “imperial constabulary and coastal defense force” and lacked much of the equipment and heavy weapons that were a staple for modern armies in Europe.⁴¹ Furthermore, many Americans exhibited such patriotic fervor that they thought that their services would be of immediate use to the army. Thousands of wealthy young New Yorkers, sometimes with their political sponsors with them, came to Marshall’s office demanding commissions.⁴² It was as if the country thought energy would be an adequate substitute for technical proficiency in an increasingly complex military art. Time and time again, Marshall turned away these young, unqualified scions. “I guess I stood them off better than General Bell could have because I didn’t know them and they didn’t know me,” Marshall remembered later.⁴³ Before long, this problem would be taken out of Marshall’s hands. He was needed elsewhere.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 141.

⁴¹ Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 11.

⁴² Pogue, *Education of a General*, 141.

⁴³ Ibid., 142.

Due to the urgent need for troops to be sent to France immediately, a token force of Infantry was stood up as the First Division, composed of four regiments. On Bell's recommendation, Marshall was assigned to the new organization as the Chief of Staff. Much organizing needed to be done. "One example of our unpreparedness for was the fact that the staff of the division met for the first time aboard the boat," Marshall recalled in his memoir of the First World War.⁴⁴ The army knew little to nothing on the nature and particulars of combat in Europe save for the documents they had received from the French and the British as they sailed. Furthermore, the regiments were filled with men who had never served together and officers who had only just graduated the Plattsburg camps. These men were learning how to use new weapons in a new style of warfare few of them could grasp at the time. "In the light of later experience," Marshall noted, "some of the questions asked and ideas proposed now seem ludicrous. Today, it is inconceivable that we should have found ourselves committed to a war while yet in such a complete state of unpreparedness."⁴⁵

The First Division arrived in France still unprepared and disorganized. The division was not combat ready, but as Pogue described it, "only the raw material for one sent over for assembly in France instead of at home."⁴⁶ The division was sent to train in the vicinity of Nefchateau, where, once additional American forces arrived and had worked up to combat readiness, they could join the fight in earnest. Marshall inspected the localities and made arrangements for the billeting of American troops. While the French leadership wanted American troops to begin combat training immediately, Marshall believed that the overall training needed to get back to the basics of

⁴⁴ George C. Marshall, *Memoirs of My Service in the World War, 1917-1918* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1976), 7. This memoir is particularly important as it was written between 1919 and 1923, when both the memories and lessons were still fresh in Marshall's mind. This memoir would show that Marshall's core opinions never changed between the World Wars. Rather, the lessons he gleaned from his service would be expressed throughout the interwar period.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* This statement, written nearly twenty years before his appointment as Army Chief of Staff, would express the same core belief that he would reiterate regarding the inadequacies of the military's preparedness in 1939-1941.

⁴⁶ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 147.

soldiering. Green recruits and collections of unseasoned men needed to be converted into disciplined soldiers and combat ready units.⁴⁷ As Marshall explained after the war, the French officers, “could not understand that this Regular unit was an entirely new organization filled with recruits. Regiments with a strength of 700 men in May had, during the ensuing weeks, lost about one half of this small trained personnel, and by the assignment of recruits, had then been raised to a strength of 2000.”⁴⁸ There was a high expectation of the American army that, if failed to be met, would damage future American participation in the war. Fortunately, “The men,” Marshall observed, “accommodated themselves to their strange surroundings with remarkable celerity.”⁴⁹

In a report to General Pershing on August 1, 1917, Marshall demonstrated a knowledge of the issues being faced by individual soldiers, and the possible negative ramifications if these problems were not addressed immediately. He told Pershing that, “wine is so cheap and much in evidence, amusements are so few and the rate of pay of our men is so high, that a brief pamphlet of information and advice might well be issued to each soldier before he reaches his first billet.”⁵⁰ The need for chores and make work had to be explained and implemented, if, for nothing else, that the soldiers be encouraged to stay out of trouble. Such advice would also need to include and exhortation to avoid, “association with women who are generally diseased,” while also encouraging the men to send most of their pay back to the States. Marshall reported to Pershing that, “The soldier could be counseled against needlessly incurring the enmity of the poorer classes of the French people by overpaying for services and supplies and thus raising the prices beyond what the inhabitants can afford to pay.”⁵¹ At the same time, Marshall would, having understood the common

⁴⁷ Ibid., 150.

⁴⁸ Marshall, *Memoirs of My Service*, 19.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 20.

⁵⁰ “Report to the Commanding General, A.E.F., August 1, 1917,” *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 1, *The Soldierly Spirit, December 1880-June 1939* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), 116-118.

⁵¹ Ibid.

soldier, seem to have believed that such a measure would, at least in part, succeed. He seems to have thought well of most of the enlisted men, that, if trained to a high degree of discipline, they would rise to the challenge given to them by higher officers.

Marshall's mindset, and the ease with which he viewed and solved the issues facing the staff of the First Division won him the praise of his superiors. However, Marshall's first altercation with the commander of the American Expeditionary Force nearly became his last. When General William L. Sibert received an unfair dressing down from Pershing over the supposed unpreparedness of the division in mid-August, Marshall confronted Pershing. Much of what the division had been asked to do and even master was in complete ignorance of how the division had been billeted or equipped at this point. "Exactly what the irate captain had to say was not recorded," Pogue wrote, "and afterward, he could not remember."⁵² It is unclear what Marshall said, but he did bombard Pershing with the facts surrounding the First Division's situation. Despite the harsh exchange, Marshall was never reprimanded for speaking out of turn.

In fact, whenever he visited the division, Pershing would pull Marshall aside and ask for a personal status report on the unit. Marshall noted of Pershing that, "You could talk to him as if you were discussing somebody in the next country. He never held it against you for an instant."⁵³ "I have been deeply impressed with Captain Marshall's marked ability in General Staff and all other duty entrusted to him," General Sibert reported to Pershing, "and strongly recommend that he be given a temporary commission as Lieutenant Colonel in the National Army and kept on General Staff work. He is fully qualified to perform the duties of Chief of Staff of a Division."⁵⁴ In fact, over

⁵² *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ "Commanding General, First Division, to Commanding General, A.E.F., September 11, 1917," *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 1, 121.

the later part of August, and into the early part of September, Marshall in fact fulfilled such duties as acting chief of staff.

In June 1918, following several months of service in the First Division's Headquarters, Marshall, rather than being transferred to field command, was assigned to the Operations Section of General Headquarters, A.E.F.⁵⁵ With his responsibility and even authority growing, Marshall was heavily involved in the planning and implementing the St.-Mihiel offensive of September 1918. Transferred to the newly activate US First Army Headquarters, Marshall was then tasked with moving more than 400,000 American troops to the Meuse-Argonne sector on September 16, a mere ten days before that offensive was to take place.⁵⁶ He did not suffer fools; rather, he cut red tape and found unorthodox solutions to problems as they presented themselves. On one occasion, when one division refused to feed the French truck drivers used to move their troops to the front, Marshall said, "We had to deal with them very drastically."⁵⁷ An entire division delayed its movement to the front because there was not enough trucks to move both brigades at once, leading to the trucks being repurposed. Marshall informed the intransigent general that, "General Pershing would never forgive him."⁵⁸

The end of the war came abruptly for Marshall. Across the whole front, the Allies were seeing remarkable success, pushing deep into the German defenses. Having been awakened several times throughout the night of November 10-11 with various phone calls, Marshall was again woken up at 6 AM and informed that the fighting would cease at 11 am.⁵⁹ Without even leaving his bed, Marshall began to call different commanders to inform them of the news and to order a general halt to combat operations.

⁵⁵ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 168, 169.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Marshall, *Memoirs of My Service*,

After the armistice, Marshall had to oversee the peacetime change of pace as Chief of Staff, VIII Corps. Marshall already understood the importance of compatible personalities. “Realizing that we were to endure the French Winter before there would be any chance to return to the United States,” Marshall chose, not only competent men, but also, “men of agreeable dispositions, who would not be likely to grow pessimistic during the coming months of waiting.”⁶⁰ Marshall, as much as he also wished to return home, wanted and needed sound men to stay the course and wait their turn to go home. However, the army’s rapid demobilization caused Marshall to question the direction of the nation’s military policy.

Marshall feared in the post-World War I era that the lessons of that war would not be remembered, and there would be serious consequences for future generations. As Marshall observed before an assembly of Massachusetts teachers in 1923, that historians and teachers had, by necessity, been forced to simplify history and how it was presented to students.⁶¹ However, Marshall felt that, if history was taught well, it would help future generations in their pursuit of better public policy. Conversely, a failure to teach it well would have a negative impact. Marshall observed that only a small handful of men would continue to study history after they had left school, as little as five percent.⁶² Marshall believed that because of this, “the textbook they use and the manner in which they are taught finally determines their knowledge of American and world history.” Marshall believed that poorly thought out and “inconsistent” public policy, was linked to a badly taught political body, caused by, “biased histories, poorly taught and devoid of reference to the conclusions to be drawn from the recorded events.”⁶³

⁶⁰ Ibid., 206 & 207.

⁶¹ “Speech on School History Texts, February 10, 1923,” *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 1, 219-222. This source is vague as to the reason Marshall had been invited there.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

“In this connection the prediction is ventured,” Marshall said, “that more of our future schoolboys will know the date of the declaration of war against Germany than will learn that a year elapsed before an American soldier could attack the enemy. Almost none of them will be given any idea of the deplorable situation in which we found ourselves and the reasons for it existing.”⁶⁴

Context and the particular difficulties that had faced the United States and its military in the recent conflict would be glossed over, leaving students to draw the wrong conclusions regarding warfare and the preparedness of the American military. Marshall exhorted these teachers to do their utmost to reverse the trend, asking:

Are you familiar with Washington’s difficulties with the Continental Congress over the maintenance of his army of the Revolution? Do you remember any of the cautions that he pointed out to the coming American? Are the many humiliating incidents of the land fighting in 1812-13 clear in your mind and more particularly the reasons for them? Do you know why the Union armies were so unfortunate during the early days of the Civil War and the Confederate armies so frequently successful? Have you ever read how most of the State Volunteer troops had to be returned from the Philippine Islands, leaving a small contingent of the Regular Army actually besieged in Manila?

The lessons of history would sometimes prove exceedingly ironic. Marshall recalled the life of General Phillip Sheridan, a Union General from the American Civil War. As an observer during the Franco-Prussian War, Sheridan witnessed the ambush and surprise of the French army by a German division at Beaumont, France. Surprised by the sudden German move, an entire French Division had been overrun.⁶⁵ More than forty years later, a fast-moving American regiment had surprised a German force in a similar manner in the same general area. “Possibly there is a lesson in this,” Marshall observed. “In any event it goes to prove that the friend of today may be the enemy of tomorrow, and that the road over which one advances to victory might be the identical route of withdrawal in defeat.”⁶⁶ The lessons of a nation’s history, if one failed to internalize them, could

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

lead to disaster and failure, while conversely, such lessons, if internalized could help better a nation's existence and future preparations.

Once assigned as an instructor and chief of the Infantry School at Fort Benning at the end of the 1920s, Marshall sought to take the lessons of World War I and apply them to the school's curriculum.⁶⁷ A failure to correct the errors and misunderstandings of the past might lead to a tragedy less forgiving and far more lethal. Marshall sought, in field training, to create a hectic atmosphere to test the capabilities and mental wherewithal of the students. Some students, like Matthew Ridgway considered such training and "conditioning" to have benefitted them more than any degree of theoretical training.⁶⁸ Marshall and his assistant at the Infantry School, Joseph Stillwell, believed that any future war would be one of mobility, where the battle front would likely be in a constant state of flux. They believed that simplicity of training and methodology would be required for units to function in those circumstances.⁶⁹

"Warfare of movement was a far more difficult matter than static warfare," Marshall told his students in one lecture. "Mistakes were much more easily made and were far more devastating in their result; large scale maps were seldom available and the solution of tactical problems on an ordinary geological survey map or with no map at all required much more skill..."⁷⁰ American troops and officers had become accustomed to a slower paced, more methodical form of warfare. Plans and communications could be prepared long before an upcoming action, something for which the rapid, fluid nature of the last weeks of combat in France had not allowed. "Time was always short; delays were often fatal." Specifically, Marshall noted that, "in 1918, days, often a month elapsed between the decision to attack a certain front and the actual operation. Detailed orders were

⁶⁷ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 247.

⁶⁸ General Omar N. Bradley with Clay Blair, *A General's Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 66.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ "Infantry School Lecture," *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 1, 334-338.

prepared long in advance, special maps were lithographed, ammunition and supplies were accumulated, and at times, the troops actually rehearsed a specific operation.”⁷¹

Even then, delays and bungled communications would severely hamper operations under those circumstances. When such an environment became more dynamic, the resulting combination would be deadly. American troops often did well, but there were drawbacks, Marshall noting that in, “rapidly changing situations, their lack of training demanded an appalling toll of life or limb.”⁷² The memories of those blunderings tended to be forgotten in the “rosette” memory of final and complete victory.⁷³ “Do you think all this an easy matter as compared to the more deliberate arrangements possible in 1918?” he asked. “Can you imagine long written orders? Do you suppose tired, irritated and nervous officers will misunderstand this or that, or fail to comprehend their full part in the hurried preparations?” There were four components for success in such a dynamic environment: “discipline that triumphs over fatigue and danger, a thorough grasp of the technique involved, and a knowledge of two vitally important matters—real simplicity and correct methods for maintaining control.”⁷⁴ “Summing up these various difficulties,” Marshall concluded:

...it is apparent that the tactics of future periods of warfare of movement, demand a knowledge of how to operate by means of brief, concise oral orders, based on the ground you can see or on maps with very little detail. They require a knowledge of how to maintain control and direction of units necessarily much dispersed. They compel action when very, very little is yet known of the enemy’s dispositions. They involve the necessity for very perfect teamwork between the Infantry on the one side and the artillery, aviators and various commanders on the other... They compel a constant tactical readiness in security arrangements as well as in battle tactics, in preparation for the sudden appearance of tanks or other mechanized units in front, flank, or rear.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Personal initiative and decisiveness would be the foundation for victory. “In all these matters,” Marshall said, “speed of thought, speed of action and direction and speed of operation is essential to success.”⁷⁵

War itself, and how it was to be waged was, in Marshall’s view, consistent throughout history. In an address given on September 9, 1939, at the opening of the Army Industrial College, Marshall noted, “The real truth about war is that by its very nature it requires the use of force to kill and demoralize people and to destroy property in order to subdue the enemy. This has always been true through the ages and will continue through the generations to come.”⁷⁶ Marshall still recognized the impact that modern industrialization had had on warfare by 1939, stating, “The one thing that is changing about war is the force available for the killing and the destruction.”⁷⁷

Of particular note was Marshall’s comment to an assembly of fellow high-ranking officers on October 11, 1939. In the context of the lessons from American involvement in the First World War, Marshall explained part of his own philosophy as a leader. As he discussed the “*Field Service Regulations* of the United States Army in 1914,” and the impact of trench warfare in France, Marshall noted that theory had come to overshadow the basic “fundamentals” of how war was to be conducted.⁷⁸ He remarked: “To me that was an impressive lesson, and since then whenever changes are proposed, modern theories advance, or surprising developments are brought to my attention, I automatically search for the fundamental principle involved in the particular matter at hand.”⁷⁹

Even as the equipment and tactics of war changed, Marshall saw technology as being subordinate to the same basic principles of warfare. “Many of the discussions at the present time,”

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Major H.A. DeWeed, Ed., “Remarks at the opening of the Army Industrial College, Washington, D.C., September 9, 1939,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 17.

⁷⁷ DeWeed, Ed., “Remarks at the opening of the Army Industrial College, Washington, D.C., September 9, 1939,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 17.

⁷⁸ DeWeed, Ed., “An Address at the Army Ordnance Association Meeting, Washington, D.C., October 11, 1939,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 21.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 21.

Marshall noted, “in relation to what we have learned of the occurrences in Poland, seemingly proposes new fundamentals as a basis for warfare.”⁸⁰ He was quick to counter that assertion. He added that, based on what little credible information that was coming through it appeared, “that much of the procedure in Poland was merely a modification or a speeding up of the time honored method of making war, especially adapted to the terrain, the season of the year, the character of the people and the geographic set-up.”⁸¹

Marshall was no war monger, however. Even with the threat of war and conflict on the horizon, it is clear from his speeches and statements that he did not welcome its coming. “War is a deadly disease, which today afflicts hundreds of millions of people,” he said before a panel of fellow officers. “It exists; therefore, there must be a reason for its existence. We should do everything in our power to isolate the disease, protect ourselves against it, and to discover the specific [word omitted] which will destroy it.”⁸²

Even if he desired to eradicate war, Marshall still believed that the human condition made future wars a certainty, and to protect his nation, he sought to prepare the next generation of leaders for that eventuality. Marshall saw a man’s leadership qualities as being the cornerstone of a subordinate’s performance. A unit would rise or fall with its commander. “It is of great importance,” Marshall testified before a Senate committee in August of 1940, “that in a large unit such as the army corps, we have a commander who shows vigorous direction, fine common sense, and management in developing the combat efficiency of the unit.”⁸³

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² DeWeed, Ed., “An Address before the Joint Meeting of the American Military Institute and the American Historical Association, Washington, D.C., December 28, 1939,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 38.

⁸³ DeWeed, Ed., “Statements before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, on Consideration of S. 4207, a Bill Providing Uniformity in Temporary Promotions in the Army of the United States in Time of Emergency, 76th Congress, 3d Session, August 20, 1940,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 83.

On November 6, 1938, Marshall sought to look at the issue of war preparation and planning. In an address at Brunswick, Maryland, Marshall explained to his audience, that, “I think it is the business of every mature citizen to acquaint himself with the principle facts, and form a general idea as to what he or she thinks is the wise course for this country to follow.”⁸⁴ He wanted to explain to his audience not the likelihood of another war, but the mindset and the historical background that influenced the way that he and many of his contemporaries viewed the issue. Being a soldier required that one see himself as a soldier. There was, in Marshall’s view, a distinct difference in the way a green, slovenly recruit conducted himself and the way that a battle hardened, disciplined fighting man conducted himself.

As a staff officer assigned to the First Division, Marshall recalled a young guard, a “tall, rangy, Tennessee Mountain type,” being inspected by an immaculately dressed French general. Marshall remembered that, “the Tennessean did his best with a salute—and I was concerned to see not only was his blouse partly unbuttoned, but he had a watch chain stretched from one pocket to the other.”⁸⁵ While the French general inspected the man’s rifle, rather than stand at attention as befitted a proper soldier, he sat down on a post and rolled himself a cigarette. Marshall went on to say that, “at this moment, they were not soldiers.”⁸⁶ They would prove themselves later, but in 1917, they were not thinking as professional warriors would.

Similarly, leadership, professionalism, and training were linked in the performance of the individual soldier. In a later address to the National Rifle Association, Marshall explained the role of the modern infantryman. “Every hour of my experience in France impressed me more and more with the importance and potential of the infantrymen on the battlefield,” he said, “*if and provided*

⁸⁴ DeWeed, Ed. “An Address at Brunswick, Maryland, November 6, 1938,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 6.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* Emphasis in the original.

the man was hardened and disciplined, and *if* he was trained to use his weapon with efficiency under the conditions of combat.”⁸⁷ Marshall also observed that contemporary training left a lot to be desired. Because they could be quickly activated, the infantry was seen as being the one element that could be rushed, but, Marshall stated, “I would say that we have lost more lives and been delayed more in battle by the acceptance of this doctrine than for any purely military reason.”⁸⁸ As stated before, training and discipline was at the root of such an issue. He noted that, “In ordinary training little that the infantryman does closely simulates what actually happens on the battlefield...”⁸⁹ It was not until the unit was exposed to the death and mayhem of combat that an officer would, “appreciate the special importance to infantry—above all other arms or services—of discipline and leadership, and of communications; and their absolute determining effect on the battlefields.”

In the end, Marshall would have his chance to put both his experience and his doctrine into effect at the highest ranks of the US Army. VMI had fostered a high standard of excellence and self-discipline that Marshall would expect of everyone, most especially himself. Later service in the Philippines and in France tested Marshall’s resolve and his understanding of warfare. Furthermore, what Marshall learned was expounded to junior officers and civilians alike in the 1920s and 1930s. Once appointed Chief of Staff in 1939, Marshall’s resolve would be tested as he sought to implement the changes and reforms that were rooted in the lessons he had gleaned from his service in the prior World War.

⁸⁷ DeWeed, Ed., “A Talk Before the National Rifle Association, Washington, D.C., February 3, 1939,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 13.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Chapter 2

Building a Modern Army

George C. Marshall's approximately thirty-five years of service formulated his leadership and military philosophy and prepared him for the position of Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army. It is difficult to envision the modernization and expansion of the army without Marshall's presence. His mindset, revolving around the conviction that the United States needed to be proactive, not reactive, in its attempt to rearmament, was rooted in the lessons of the prior world war. Public opinion, and the vast distances between the United States and the belligerent nations, rendered rearmament a long and laboring process. At every step of the way, as published transcripts of his congressional testimony bear witness, Marshall had to defend and clarify every request as a reasonable expenditure based on meticulous plans for the use and acquisition of the material needed to conduct war if such a need arose.

Marshall did not work in a vacuum, however. As early as November 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had expressed his belief to a closed meeting of government officials that a stronger military force would have likely curbed Hitler's territorial ambitions in Czechoslovakia. Planning to approach Congress for funding for 10,000 new military aircraft, Roosevelt was not inviting comment, but nonetheless had asked Marshall, then the deputy Chief of Staff, for his opinion.¹ When Marshall voiced his honest disagreement with the proposed plan, some, Marshall included, thought his career was in fact over. Marshall had thought that such a program was unwise, favoring as it did mass numbers of aircraft over the proper expansion of the logistical system to support such numbers while likewise stunting the Army ground forces.²

¹ Moe, *Roosevelt's Second Act*, 29.

² Pogue, *Education of a General*, 334.

Marshall, nonetheless had the support of both retired General John Pershing and the president's close advisor, Harry Hopkins. Furthermore, when General Malin Craig, the sitting Chief of Staff, was asked by Roosevelt in the spring of 1939 to provide a list and the records of eligible general officers to serve as his replacement, Craig did not list several older candidates but included several junior officers.³ Marshall, however, based on context, was likely already Roosevelt's top choice despite his opposition to the imbalanced aspects of the 10,000 airplane plan. Pogue, in describing what happened, states that it was surprising that, "Roosevelt had ever selected Marshall as Chief of Staff. In temperament, methods of work, approach to domestic and international problems, general viewpoints, and even forms of relaxation, they differed remarkably."⁴ Not long after receiving Craig's list, Roosevelt summoned Marshall to the White House and asked him to accept the position of Chief of Staff, with the official announcement being released on April 27, 1939.

As much as their personalities and even their goals on military expansion and modernization were quite different from one another, both the president and the chief of staff agreed on the likelihood of another world war. Marshall recognized that Roosevelt's more cautious approach, emphasizing aircraft and then weapons exports to the Allied belligerents, was rooted in the political realities of the time. Marshall later told Pogue that Roosevelt knew, "if he moved into a large military effort he would encounter such opposition he wouldn't be able to manage it."⁵ Omar Bradley, in his memoir stated, "Marshall was firmly convinced that Europe would erupt in a war and that the United States would ultimately be drawn into the conflict. Given a free reign and a blank check, he would have ordered all-out (but orderly) manpower mobilization and war

³ Ibid., 330.

⁴ Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 22.

⁵ Ibid., 5.

production in the summer of 1939.”⁶ The Army had suffered from the “normalcy” of the 1920s, in which its size and funding had been reduced. The National Defense Act of 1920 called for a peacetime army of 280,000, but as Robert K. Griffin Jr. described that army, “it never existed except on paper.”⁷ Even after the outbreak of the war in Europe in September of 1939, the army, as authorized in May of that year, would not reach the approved strength of 210,000 men until December.⁸

As Marshall made his case to the president and congressional leaders for more men, weapons, and bases, internal memorandums and planning documents reveal the mindset and thinking that was permeating the staff that Marshall was building. Matthew Bunker Ridgway, as part of the staff of the War Plans Division under Marshall, was a cog in the bureaucratic machine in which military officers and civil servants at the highest levels of the U.S. government developed policies to protect the nation. Various documents that passed through Ridgway’s hands helped Marshall formulate strategy with civil leaders, put on paper the concerns of military planners, and then lay out the weaknesses that planners had detected in the nation’s military apparatus. Also, Marshall did not test the boundaries of the allocations he could reasonably expect; everything he asked for was demonstrated to be an absolute necessity.⁹ The process that Marshall adhered to was one intended to make the best use of the material and manpower that could be had at the time each wave of requests would be made. At the outset, the army needed to concentrate its scattered units and test its organization outside of the theoretical discussions and organizational tests that had been done in class rooms and at officer schools. In doing that, the army could verify what needed to be changed before funding for new equipment and increased force levels would be requested.

⁶ Bradley, *A General’s Life*, 86.

⁷ Robert K. Griffin, Jr., *Men Wanted for the U.S. Army: America’s Experience with an All-Volunteer Army Between the World Wars* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 53.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 183.

⁹ Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 17.

The funding for the movement and large-scale training would have to be obtained outside the then approved budget. The outbreak of war in Europe raised the hopes of many high-ranking officers that the army could finally receive the monetary outlays that it had been so desperate to receive for almost two decades. Omar Bradley worked in Washington as Marshall's aide, and he recalled, "It was assumed that the lid was off, that for the first time in twenty years the Army might be given the manpower and hardware commensurate with the threats facing the country."¹⁰ Bradley noted that, "The Chief of Staff walked a tightrope. There was widespread isolationist sentiment in the nation, with powerful representation in Congress. Almost every day this element of our society demanded assurances that the United States would not be dragged into a European war, "phony" or real."¹¹

The nation was overwhelmingly, according to a Gallup poll taken in October of 1937, opposed to becoming involved in European affairs. Some ninety-five percent of Americans wanted to avoid entanglement in another World War, while sixty-nine percent of those polled wanted more stringent neutrality laws.¹² Isolationism was not, however, a monolithic or homogenous political phenomenon. The America First Committee, for instance, formally founded in September of 1940, was begun by Yale students, and would eventually be joined by famed aviator Charles Lindbergh, already an ardent isolationist. Although nominally bipartisan, the organization had noticeable Midwest and Republican roots.¹³ By no means pacifist, America First supported increases in all areas of military spending, provided it did not propel the United States into a foreign alliance and therefore a war. Even earlier, just after World War I, some German-Americans had formed the

¹⁰ Griffin, *Men Wanted for the U.S. Army*, 53.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Susan Dunn, *1940: FDR, Willkie, Lindbergh, Hitler—the Election Amid the Storm* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 24.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 65-66.

Steuben Society to protest the unfair treatment of Germany under the Versailles Treaty.¹⁴ In Congress, isolationists made up large portions of both the Republican and Democratic parties, with sympathetic allies in the nation's media apparatus.¹⁵ Such sentiments would change and bend under the strain of contemporary events.

Some changes to the army were relatively easy to implement. In a September 1939 letter to his former boss, General Craig, Marshall noted, "We are headed to full peace strength of 280,000, and a total increase of 126,000 for the National Guard, with about double the number of pay drills and two rations a month—one for week-end shooting and one for week-end field training."¹⁶ Marshall, however, explained that such training and increases in manpower were useless without parallel increases in other acquisitions. "Unfortunately," Marshall lamented, "there is little that can be done regarding munitions which we lack which can be remedied quickly. Of course, we are after the money to place large orders."

Marshall could not advocate for the heavy allocations he wanted because this might alienate the congressional support he needed to expand the Army. Roosevelt was of little help, since the president was more focused on the Navy and Army Air Force.¹⁷ With the of Secretary of War Henry Woodring being an ardent isolationist, Marshall was left to tend to the growing needs of the army and to argue for further appropriations on his own.¹⁸ Roosevelt himself found Woodring's presence in the cabinet to be a nuisance but could not immediately replace him because of the need to appease the isolationist branch of his own party.¹⁹ Opinion polls from 1937 would reveal, however, that the American public, by a noticeable majority, supported increased military spending for

¹⁴ Aelig Adler, "Isolationism Since 1914," *The American Scholar* Vol. 21, No. 3 (Summer 1952), 338.

¹⁵ Moe, *Roosevelt's Second Act*, 14.

¹⁶ "George C. Marshall to General Malin Craig, September 19, 1939," *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 2, 61.

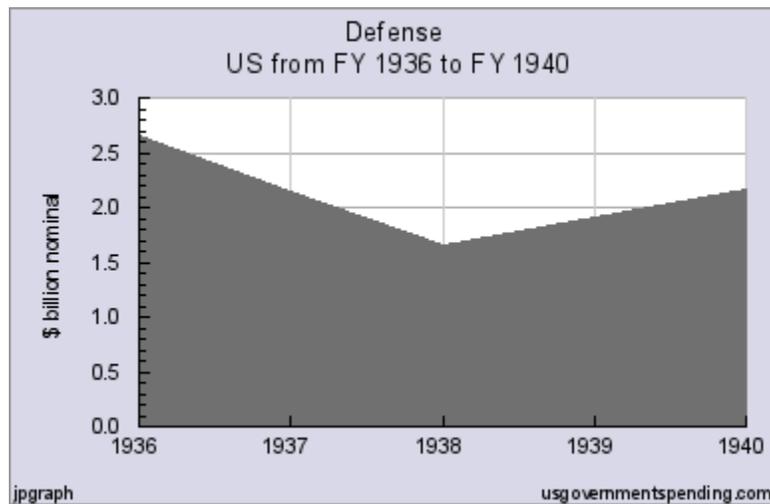
¹⁷ Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Moe, *Roosevelt's Second Act*, 45.

defensive purposes, with some sixty-nine percent approving an enlarged army.²⁰ Marshall, therefore, had a foundation for a calm, incremental approach to rearmament that would keep abreast of international events.

Figure 2.1: Defense Spending Fiscal Year 1936-1940



Marshall's requests for increased military spending would put his name in the headlines, as the increased requests for further funding created fervor and debate. On November 28, 1939, the *New York Times* ran an article with the headline, "Marshall Pushes Defense Fund Plea."²¹ President Roosevelt had proposed a \$271,000,000 additional allotment to the 1940 Fiscal Year, and, although the writers of the *Times* seemed to think the measure would be approved, "the Appropriations Committee showed a desire to obtain full information, assigning its subcommittee dealing with this topic to sessions which have started five weeks before the date for the convening of Congress."²² The article noted that the committee sessions would likely continue "indefinitely."

²⁰ John Walko, "How Would We Know if We Saw It? Reopening the Case of the 1930s," *The Public Perspective* (August/September, 1997), 41. With those numbers, it is easy to see how the America First movement gained the support it that it did, as rearmament was not necessarily seen as being directly linked to becoming embroiled in another World War. In many ways, foreign armament sales and the eventual "Lend Lease" program were seen to carry a greater risk of entanglement with the Axis powers than mere rearmament and expansion of domestic armed forces for the expressed purpose of defending the Western hemisphere.

²¹ "Marshall Pushes Defense Fund Plea," *The New York Times*, November 28, 1939.

²² *Ibid.*

Two days later, Marshall was testifying before the House of Representatives Sub-committee on Appropriations regarding the widespread regional maneuvers for which Marshall had requested funding. Representative John Taber of New York asked Marshall, “The maneuvers that have been set up here involve something like eight months, of one type or another, and at one place or another. Why should they last that long?”²³ Marshall’s response highlighted how the subsequent two years would be conducted in Congress. He outlined in detail how the army had operated for the prior twenty years. The overall cost of widespread maneuvers, Marshall argued, was not the main concern that had prevented those longer training maneuvers. He explained that, “The shorter the duration of the maneuver or concentration ordered, the greater the cost per soldier, due to transportation charges.”²⁴ Funding had been lacking in the key area of unit strengths. Units had been scattered and subdivided in the post-World War I period, and what funding had been there was barely sufficient to gather a full army division. The reserves were also in poor shape, as, in many cases, their officers lacked critical training.²⁵ “We have eighteen divisions in the National Guard, but they could only be assembled for two weeks’ training, and as the men were fresh from civil pursuits with soft muscles and tendons, and had had no field training since the previous summer, it was necessary to devote at least a week to company, battalion and regimental training,” Marshall noted.²⁶ In each two weeks of annual training, a mere four days at most would be left for the division to train as a cohesive combat unit.

²³ Major H. A. DeWeed, ed., “Statements on the Purpose and Advantages of Army Maneuvers before the House of Representatives Subcommittee, Committee on Appropriation, 76th Congress, 3d Session, November 30, 1939,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal, 1945), 27.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe*, 19.

²⁶ DeWeed, ed., “Statements on the Purpose and Advantages of Army Maneuvers, Nov. 30, 1939,” 28. As a clarifying note, Marshall was referring to the annual field training that the National Guard was required to conduct by law, not that the National Guard had only trained for two weeks in the preceding twenty years.

What this had caused was a necessary reliance on a command and control technique constructed “largely on a theoretical basis.”²⁷ Marshall expressed his full confidence in the army school system, calling it, “the best military school system for the training of officers in the world,” but he recognized that there were, in fact, shortcomings. The tactics and concepts of command and control that had been developed were merely theoretical when it came to brigades and divisional sized units. There was a dire need to test these concepts in an environment that even remotely resembled a genuine, real world military campaign. Fresh changes had been implemented to the infantry rifle company and the heavy weapons company, while the infantry division had been slimmed down to a lighter “triangular” format, of three infantry regiments compared to WWI era practice of placing four regiments in a division. This new format required testing. Marshall noted a young officer’s comment that before 1939 most regular army units had not even assembled at regimental strength.²⁸ In comparison to France, which held shorter maneuvers, the United States did not have the luxury of limited geographical distances or a system of universal military service which enabled the French to hold shorter, more systemic maneuvers.²⁹

When Representative William Lambertson attempted to bring up the issue of the war in Europe, which overshadowed the meetings, Marshall reiterated that the maneuvers under consideration had no direct bearing on the war that had broken out in Europe.³⁰ What was clear in the discussion between Marshall and the congressional committee was that Marshall believed that major mistakes had been made in how troops were mobilized for World War I and the Spanish American War. A year and a half had elapsed between the American declaration of war in 1917 and

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 31.

²⁹ Ibid., 32.

³⁰ Ibid., 33.

the large-scale introduction of American troops into combat. The entire process was rushed in the areas of logistics and training, and lives were lost, Marshall argued, because of that haste.³¹

In 1917, the Army had drafted few, if any contingency plans for joining the war, and had made no provision for large scale recruitment, conscription, and training.³² Overall, the army in 1917 had lacked modern support weapons or the logistical mechanism to supply and equip a large, modern force. For the first several months in France, General John Pershing spent much of his time reorganizing the structure and methodology of the army to conform to the lessons the French and British had learned about a modern war over the prior three years.³³ Such lessons were hastily applied due to necessity. As Edward Lengel wrote, “To fight effectively and avoid useless losses, green troops needed extensive training under seasoned officers. And for that, there was simply no time.”³⁴ Marshall, regarding the First World War, stated in his testimony, “Fortunately, the AEF had allies to protect it for more than a year while it found itself. The future problems of our Army visualize no such protected period for overcoming peacetime military difficulties. We must be prepared to stand on our own feet.”³⁵ These maneuvers were needed for all aspects of the Army. To delay this process in the light of intensifying world affairs, would only make necessary rearmament more difficult.

The War Plans Division noted that merely rearming would not be efficient in and of itself. The policy of national defense would need to be clearly defined and well handled, as it would outline and define the direction that rearmament would have to take. A memo authored in March of 1940 listed three possibilities for the United States’ national defense policy. The first option, and

³¹ Ibid., 32-33.

³² Grotelueschen, *The AEF Way of War*, 10.

³³ David R. Woodward, *The American Army and the First World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 100-101.

³⁴ Edward. G. Lengel, *Thunder and Flame: Americans in the Crucible of Combat, 1917-1918* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 371.

³⁵ DeWeed, ed., “Statements on the Purpose and Advantages of Army Maneuvers, November 30, 1939,” 33.

one that had long been held to as an obvious goal was the defense of the American mainland.³⁶ The second policy was for the United States to expand that line of defense to the territories and Hawaii. Third, the United States would possibly seek to create a strong military alliance which would deter any hostile parties from making war upon the United States.³⁷

In the second section of that memorandum, since national policy dictated it, the Army planned to defend Hawaii and other offshore territories. Several essential elements of infrastructure would be necessary for such a strategy to have any weight, such as, “better equipped airplane bases, available to military forces of the United States,” throughout Central America, that would help secure the Panama Canal.³⁸ Likewise, fleet bases, complete with their own patrol plane bases, would be necessary to secure the sea-lanes and approaches to the Panama Canal. However, this memorandum still recognized the political realities of the day, stating that, “The program of arming to take an active hand in foreign wars is apparently against the policy of our government. However, there is a possibility that we might be drawn into a foreign war. Our War and Navy departments must recognize this possibility and even though we might not arm for it, we should plan to meet just such an emergency.”³⁹

A May of 1940 internal memo prepared with the assistance of Matthew Ridgway delineated potential threats to the Western Hemisphere. With the subject line being, “National Strategic Decisions,” it outlined how the United States needed to approach the growing global crisis. The five immediate actions or results that were foreseen included, first, a Nazi backed coup in Brazil, and second, riots and attacks on American property and citizens in Central America. Thirdly, it was foreseen that Japan would possibly initiate hostilities against the United States in the Far East,

³⁶ Matthew Bunker Ridgway, “Section II, Conclusions and Recommendations, Marsh 5, 1940,” U.S. Army Heritage and Education Center Archives, Matthew B. Ridgway Papers, Box 57, Folder 6, 1.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.

while, in addition to the previously mentioned potential scenarios, there was the distinct possibility of an Allied military collapse in Europe.⁴⁰ Even worse, such events would likely, in the planners' opinions, occur simultaneously. As such the War Plans Division drafted five new war plans were drafted in October of 1939, with input from both the Army and the Navy, under the codename "rainbow."⁴¹ Whereas previous "color" war plans like "orange" were built on the premise of a single enemy nation, the rainbow plans were predicated on the belief that the U.S. would face a coalition of enemy nations on multiple fronts. The possibility of having to secure the Pacific and defeat Germany and Italy in Europe were laid out in Rainbow 3 and 5 specifically.⁴²

The United States had vital interests in the Far East, South America, and Europe. The document made it clear that, "There should be an immediate decision as to what major military operations we must be prepared to conduct."⁴³ For the immediate future, decisions would have to be made regarding what areas would be supported and defended. An absence of military force, if such a need were necessary, would result in the total forfeiture of American interests in the threatened area. In closing, the memo simply listed, "Intelligent, practical planning, and later successful action require an early decision in these matters: First – As to what we are not going to do, Second – As to what we must prepare to do."⁴⁴ This memorandum seems to have had an effect on Marshall, as Ridgway noted that the Chief of Staff wanted an additional copy for his own use and another to provide to the Undersecretary of State. The President was left with the original copy, and its contents were discussed with Admiral Harold Stark of the U.S. Navy.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Matthew Bunker Ridgway, "Memorandum: Subject: National Strategic Decisions, May 22, 1940," USAHECA, Ridgway Papers, Box 57, Folder 6, 1.

⁴¹ Mark S. Watson, *Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 1950), 103.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ridgway, "Memorandum, May 22, 1940," 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 2. Emphasis in the original. This memorandum would suggest a frustrating lack of available military power that could be projected to protect threatened areas. This memorandum would also seem to match similar arguments being made by Marshall before congressional leaders during this time.

⁴⁵ Matthew Bunker Ridgway, "Aide Memoire, May 23, 1940," USAHECA, Ridgway Papers, Box 57, Folder 6.

To adequately expand the army, new officers would need to be appointed to fill the steadily growing ranks of the military establishment, and as Marshall would point out in April of 1940, there was a shortage of such men who were already in active service and could maintain an active career under wartime conditions. Older officers, although possessing the seniority necessary for their ranks under the present system, were simply unable to meet the physical demands of modern warfare. What this meant was that the promotional system would need to be reformed to enable an orderly expansion of the army where officers of adequate maturity and competency would make a smooth transition to higher rank.

“The bill (HR 9243),” Marshall testified, “would control that situation. It would not allow undue rapidity of promotion as has occurred in the past; otherwise we would have a repetition of the vicious circle of too rapid promotion for one group and too slow promotion for the other.”⁴⁶ Many of the men Marshall would need to promote to still higher ranks were lacking the experience they would need at those higher ranks. “That group (of officers) from 1920 to 1930 represents a definite period of leadership in the Army. If we chain them to the company grades until the last moment and then suddenly advance them from obscurity to commanding positions, the result will be harmful in effect.”⁴⁷ These junior officers needed the opportunity to become gradually seasoned in their assigned roles, rather than having a high degree of responsibility abruptly thrust upon them.

Efficiency was the root problem regarding the preparation of the army for National Defense. To be efficient, the promotion system would need to be refined. Representative Andrew J. May of Kentucky noted, “Now, we are spending several billion dollars in National Defense, and if we provide for mechanization in the Army and for 45,000 ton battleships, and leave the personnel

⁴⁶ DeWeed, ed., “Statement before the House of Representatives, Committee on Military Affairs, on Consideration of HR 9243, a Bill to Provide for the promotion List of Officers of the Army After Specified Years of Service in Grade, and for Other Purposes, 76th Congress, 3d Session, April 9, 1940,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 45.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

stagnated, it would become a serious problem, would it not?” Marshall responded by saying that, “Leadership is the most important consideration, if any one thing is more important than the other.”⁴⁸ Other requests, especially for some additional funding for increases in recruitment and equipment in May following the successful German invasion of Norway and Denmark, had to be defended ardently. Marshall had to assure his audience that it was his hope that such resources would never need to be used in open warfare.⁴⁹

At a Veterans of Foreign Wars banquet in Akron, Ohio, on June 19, 1940, Marshall was, by his own admission, able to be more frank about the issues and threat facing the nation at that time than he was before Congress. At the same time, he believed that his audience would both be more understanding and more sympathetic to his work. He noted that, “You men understand the meaning, the requirements of war and, and I feel that you will readily comprehend the point of view of the War Department.”⁵⁰ As he addressed his listeners, he recognized, and reiterated the changes that had taken place in world affairs, and the affects that such events had had upon the nation.

Within a year, we have seen the map of the Old World radically altered in a succession of startling moves. We have seen political faiths and forms of government common to our age, placed in jeopardy or exterminated. Commonly accepted military technique and methods in the art of war have been consigned to the ash heap. And finally, we here in distant America find ourselves facing the imminent possibility of being required to defend the independence of the Western Hemisphere.⁵¹

Marshall was quick to recognize the root problem of the American dilemma of belated rearmament. It was a common occurrence among democracies, he noted. Even in times of prosperity the wider populace had seen no need to maintain more than a token level of military

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁴⁹ DeWeed, ed., “Statement before the Senate Committee on Appropriations, for Consideration of HR 9209, a Bill Making Appropriations for the Military Establishment for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1941, 76th Congress, 3d Session, April 30 and May 1, 1940,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 49-51.

⁵⁰ DeWeed, ed., “An Address at the Encampment Banquet of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Akron, Ohio, June 19, 1940,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 57.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

strength. Public opinion simply would not have it.⁵² Marshall avoided the partisan politics of the day by noting that no one group could be blamed for the state of military preparation. “It is the result,” he stated, “of our form of government, or our sense of security behind what have seemed to be great ocean barriers.”⁵³

Marshall was also forthright in how difficult public opinion was making his efforts as chief of staff. In February 1940, he had labored ardently for further appropriations, believing that if the war in Europe intensified, “we should put our house in order before the sparks reached this hemisphere.”⁵⁴ His belief that rearmament should match events abroad had received severe criticism. Congress had been reluctant to fund the construction of an expanded airbase at Camp Buchanan, Puerto Rico.⁵⁵ After the crisis had exploded in Europe, Marshall said that editorials were aflame with criticism of his supposed timidity. Perhaps a little facetiously, he stated that, “I was being criticized for daring to mention so small a number as 10,000 planes.” Marshall was now having to oversee a massive buildup that the public expected to happen almost overnight, but with such haste that Marshall knew would be hazardous to military competency.⁵⁶ It might take two years for some aspects of recently approved acquisitions to be ready for use.

This was a different era, Marshall argued. “Our people must realize that the flag-waving days of warfare are gone. The successful army of today is composed with specialists, thoroughly trained in every detail of military science, and above all, organized into a perfect team.”⁵⁷ Facts would need to prevail over personal opinion in the matter at hand. “Sentiment,” Marshall stated,

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 58.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ “Army’s Land Needs – Puerto Rico Issue,” *The New York Times*, February 4, 1940.

⁵⁶ “Gen. Marshall Holds Dangerous Developments Possible in Region,” *The New York Times*, June 2, 1940. This article notes that editorials and articles in other papers were calling for further action regarding military preparedness, with critique being leveled at the presidential administration from all sides.

⁵⁷ DeWeed, ed., “An Address at the Encampment Banquet of the Veterans of Foreign Wars,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 58.

“must submit to common sense.”⁵⁸ Plans that had been developed for the contingencies arising throughout the world needed to be adhered to. Impatience and panic would lead to “ill-considered” and hurried expansion of the armed forces, which would, in turn, lead to “half-baked” and “imbalanced” results. Marshall chose to leave his audience with an exhortation stating, “The War Department knows what is needed, the American people know that they want preparedness; and the time for endless debate and other differences of opinion is past. We must get down to hard pan and carry out our preparations without vacillation or confusion.”⁵⁹

The plan would, unfortunately, required the implementation of a draft, or selective service, as it was described, to conscript able bodied men into the army. As Forest Pogue described, “Conscription, the ugly name for selective service, was no stranger to the army. In the Civil War and World War I it had been resorted to after the volunteer system proved ineffective.”⁶⁰ Many of those who called for the draft in 1940 had pushed for a similar system in 1917. Led by prominent attorney Greenville Clark, New Englanders Harold W. Dodds, James Conant Bryan, and Ralph Lowell lobbied for the creation of a selective service system on both capitol hill and amongst the media elites.⁶¹ Through their efforts, more than eighty percent of newspapers and media editors supported the idea of peacetime conscription.⁶²

The Executive branch supported the idea of peacetime conscription, but the political situation was so touchy that, until June 1940 and the conclusion of the French armistice with Germany, Marshall was reluctant to act. He saw the need for such a measure, but as he explained to Pogue, “It wasn’t for me to establish a reputation because I asked for selective service legislation.”⁶³

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 59.

⁶⁰ Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 57.

⁶¹ George Q. Flynn, *The Draft: 1940-1973* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 11.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 57. Marshall, although at times above petty politics, was still politically savvy enough to recognize the realities of partisan politics in pre-war America. To gain the support for such a measure, as he

He would need sufficient political support for such a push for expansion to succeed. Public opinion, according to a Gallup poll taken in June was split fifty-fifty on the issue of conscription.⁶⁴

With the help and blessing of Roosevelt and members of his administration, Democratic Senator Edward R. Burke of Nebraska and Republican Representative James W. Wadsworth of New York introduced a selective service bill to Congress in late June that provided Marshall the foundation he needed from which to work.⁶⁵ On July 12, Marshall testified before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, arguing such a measure was quite necessary. “The experience of the past,” he stated, “has been that there is a very definite limit to how far you can go by way of voluntary enlistments in time of peace, and naturally, a definite limit beyond which you probably could not go in time of war on the basis of volunteer enlistment.”⁶⁶ Funding had been provided to recruit and maintain a strength of 375,000 men in the Regular Army, but Marshall was of the opinion that it would take far too long to reach that full number by voluntary enlistment alone. The immediacy of the crisis required an immediate increase in manpower. He asserted, “We must carry our Regular Army organizations now up to full strength, and we must immediately bring the National Guard up to its full peace strength, and then as rapidly as possible to full war strength.”⁶⁷

Marshall believed it would be necessary to call up the National Guard as part of any expansion made under any selective service act. It was the only way for the Army to proceed at that point, given the lack of infrastructure. As Marshall explained, “We do not have the trained officers and men—the instructors—to spare; also, we do not have the necessary material.”⁶⁸ Furthermore,

told Pogue (perhaps with some disgust), the Army had to play politics and request bi-partisan support and sponsorship for such a measure.

⁶⁴ Moe, *Roosevelt's Second Act*, 253.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ DeWeed, ed., “Statement before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, on Consideration of S. 4164, a Bill to Protect the Integrity and Institutions of the United States, Through a System of Selective Compulsory Military Training and Service, 76th Congress, 3d Session, July 12, 1940,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 60.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 61.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 62.

Marshall went on to state, “We would not dare emasculate existing units in order to provide the personnel to conduct the training, as we would wish to do later as the system develops.” The issue of pay was brought up by Senator Sheridan Downey of California, who noted that pay for the Army seemed to be lower than was adequate. Marshall agreed that trained specialists would need to be paid more. He cited that for a \$400,000 bomber to function properly, it would need a highly skilled and well-trained bombardier. To recruit and maintain such experts within the ranks, a pay incentive would be necessary.⁶⁹ The nation would not welcome the cost of an increased army and the associated cost to increase the pay of those who were trained in various technical fields. Marshall explained the opposition’s critique exactly, noting that, “the charge will be that the army costs too much to expect our Government, in its protected situation beyond two oceans, to continue to bear the expense in normal times, and so, the cycle of unpreparedness repeats itself.” Marshall contended that these costs were necessary, given how long it would take to increase the required military buildup.

By the end of the month, Marshall was forced to argue the necessity of calling up the National Guard into federal service, believing as he did that the environment of 1917, when the United States could rearm and re-equip after the start of the conflict, no longer existed. Marshall noted that just over twenty years before, “we could wait until we built cantonments, we could wait until we trained officers, we could wait until we gathered shipping, until we sent troops to Europe and train them after we got them to Europe.”⁷⁰ In Marshall’s opinion, the ability for the nation to defend itself and the Western Hemisphere depended, “on having available trained, seasoned men in adequate numbers, and there is no conceivable way to obtain them except by some measure such as

⁶⁹ Ibid., 60.

⁷⁰ DeWeed, ed., “Statements before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, on Consideration of SJ Res 286, to Strengthen the Common Defense and to Authorize the President to Order Members and Units of Reserve Components and Retired Personnel of the Regular Army into Active Military Service, 76th Congress, 3d Session, July 30, 1940,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 72.

this, followed by some form of selective service.”⁷¹ If emergencies were to arise, it would take time to call up, equip, and train the men that would be needed to defend the nation.

Senator Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado queried Marshall on the plan for activating the National Guard. Over the course of a year, would some units eventually be rotated out of Federal service? Marshall understood what was being implied and explained that he could make no promises. “That would depend entirely on the situation in the world,” he said. “I wouldn’t attempt to forecast what would be the situation twelve months from now.”⁷² He felt that it was an imperative that Congress enable the president to activate units in order that they could train as a member of a broader army, equipped and trained to the standard being developed in the Regular Army. Marshall needed men and equipment, and the National Guard, despite shortfalls in their training and experience, would still provide a cadre to help expand and train the expanding army.⁷³

To double the Regular Army beyond upwards of 700,000 men, as some had proposed, would have stretched the army beyond the material and infrastructure available. As he had stated in earlier sessions, Marshall believed that such efforts would have been unwise, as they would have destroyed the integrity of both reserve and active components to provide the necessary instructors for those new men. As much as Marshall had been attempting to adhere to a conservatively paced, “businesslike” plan, he noted that, “It is a question as the time grows late whether we can continue on that basis.”⁷⁴ Marshall asked for their trust, noting that the army should be allowed a level of freedom in its expansion so as to not put the nation at risk. If a crisis was to come, the both the National Guard and the Regular Army would need help achieving their authorized strength. At best

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 73.

⁷³ John K. Mahon, *History of the Militia and the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1983), 179.

⁷⁴ DeWeed, ed., “Statements before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, July 30, 1940,” 74.

some National Guard divisions were at two-thirds strength, with one being at just over forty percent of its authorized strength.⁷⁵

The next day, the *Chicago Tribune* ran a section titled, “Roosevelt Acts to Mobilize US National Guard.” Using words like “conscripts” throughout the piece, the *Tribune* would have led readers to believe that both Congressional leaders and close friends of Marshall were surprised by the move to call up the National Guard.⁷⁶ Elsewhere, opponents were hoping that measures in the bill, such as universal registration for future conscription, would be unnecessary. Despite the disparagement, public opinion was, by this point, shifting in favor of the draft, with polls showing that sixty-five percent of participants recognized the need for peacetime conscription, the change attributable to the German conquest of France two months prior.⁷⁷ By linking the National Guard to the National Defense effort, and limiting their initial term of service to one year, it would help quiet the naysayers.

The financial burden of the war preparation efforts would be a sticking point by August. As the army was continually expanded, the issue of the economic burden upon the country was debated in committee. In his opening address the Senate Committee on Appropriations on August 5, 1940, Senator Alva Adams of Colorado stated, “I shall be very happy to be convinced that I am wrong in that idea, that we are not sort of shoveling out money with undue liberality, following our fears a little too closely.”⁷⁸ Adams was quick to point out that he was not of that opinion, but that others had voiced such concerns. After some initial reminders of past discussions regarding the topic, Marshall got to the issue of contention at hand. A strong military system was the foundation for a

⁷⁵ Mahon, *History of the National Guard*, 180.

⁷⁶ “Roosevelt Acts To Mobilize U.S. National Guard,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 13, 1940.

⁷⁷ Moe, *Roosevelt’s Second Act*, 253.

⁷⁸ DeWeed, ed., “Statements before the Subcommittee, Senate Committee on Appropriations, on Consideration of HR 10263, a Bill Making Supplemental Appropriations for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1941, and for Other Purposes, 76th Congress, 3d Session, August 5 and 6, 1940,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 75.

proper defense of the United States and its interests. He asserted that, “Each successive request for funds has been made on the basis of deliberate and successive steps toward the accomplishment of War Department plans which have been in preparation for a number of years. Each successive step has been considered necessary in order to meet each major phase of the constantly growing menace from abroad.”⁷⁹

Marshall made it quite clear that he was aware of the massive expenditures called for, and that it was a heavy burden to place upon the American people. However, as the world situation deteriorated, Marshall argued that, despite their best hopes, “it is clearly apparent to me, as I believe it must be to most sober-minded citizens, that we can no longer delay in embarking on complete preparations necessary to the maintenance of our national safety. We cannot afford to speculate regarding the security of this country.”⁸⁰

When questioned further on the matter of appropriations the following day, Marshall stated, “I do not see any other solution at the moment. Written history is full of the records of the destruction of peace loving, unprepared nations by neighbors who were guided by the policy of force of arms.”⁸¹ His comments, despite the obvious intent of calming any doubts over the wisdom of military expenditure, did not satisfy everyone present. Senator Gerald Nye stated, rather than asked, “Of course General, we can entertain a hope that developments abroad in the next few months will be such that we can abandon a considerable part of this program, can we not?” Marshall’s response was not one of vacillation. “Senator, I am sorry that I cannot entertain such a hope at present. My fear is not that I am recommending too much, but rather that I may find at some time in the future that I recommended too little.”⁸² Marshall’s recommendations, he reiterated,

⁷⁹ Ibid., 76.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 76-77.

⁸¹ Ibid., 78.

⁸² Ibid.

despite the cost, were being made with every intent to avoid the waste and incompetently handled expansion that had hampered the Army during World War I, while at the same time maintaining the public confidence in the nation's military capabilities.

In September 1940, President Roosevelt signed the Selective Service Act into law, and with it, a provision that would begin to call up members of the National Guard into Federal service. To explain the necessity of the measure, Marshall made a public statement on the Columbia Broadcasting Station on September 16, 1940. He noted the lack of genuine enemy states, but nonetheless stated, "it is the feeling of the War Department that the next six months include the possibility of being the most critical period in the history of the nation. Ordinary common sense indicates that our preparations should be made accordingly."⁸³ As before, Marshall reiterated that the world, and warfare as America had known it, had changed dramatically since 1917. Unlike in 1917, Marshall informed his listeners, "time is at a premium. And modern arms and equipment must be provided by our own industries—not by allies. We must be prepared to stand alone. We cannot depend on others for protection during a prolonged period of preparation."⁸⁴

Marshall recognized that the overall situation was partially understood by the general public, as previously mentioned Gallup polls showed. Americans understood how time consuming the mere process of designing and constructing necessary weapons and equipment was, but there was more to this situation than a mere shortage of tanks, artillery, and aircraft. Manpower was a crucial part of this process of war preparation. As he told congressional leaders, "We fail to realize two things: First, that the finest plane or tank or gun in the world is literally worthless without technicians trained as soldiers—hardened, seasoned, and highly disciplined to maintain and operate it; and

⁸³ Major H.A. DeWeed, Ed., "A Radio Broadcast over the Columbia Broadcasting System, from Washington, D.C., through Station WJSV, September 16, 1940," from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 85.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

second, that success in combat depends primarily upon the development of the trained combat team composed of all arms.”⁸⁵

From German sources, Marshall backed up that claim. The German success in their triumph over France was, at its core, a battle of well-trained men of all arms of the military service, be they aviators, tank crewmen, artillerists, and infantrymen. Their victory, Marshall quoted, was rooted in, “a singleness of command and purpose.”⁸⁶ The War Department had been studying the events in Europe, trying to determine why one army had triumphed over the other and noted that there were no shortcuts to forming a potent army. The only way to create a well-trained army was to have a large force on active duty. The National Guard had been activated so that it could both gain that training and experience, and also to train the new influx of selectees that would soon be filling the ranks of the army. Additional units would be activated as camps and housing was built to house them. In closing, Marshall told his audience, “If we are strong enough, peace, democracy, and our American way of life should be the reward.”⁸⁷

Monetary costs were not the only part of Marshall’s consideration. Even as he wished to avoid hasty actions, Marshall was also aware that delays in acquiring the desired material that the Army needed could create critical shortages in the future. A major part of President Roosevelt’s rearmament program involved providing war supplies to the Allied nations, believing as he did that they were paying for the costs of equipping and building the factories that the United States needed to equip the U.S. military.⁸⁸ However, planned output and the actual number of aircraft built, for instance, did not always line up. At one point, in the fall of 1940, Roosevelt promised the British

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 87.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 89.

⁸⁸ Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 252.

one half of all B-17 bombers being produced.⁸⁹ In response, and in light of the fact that only one third of the planned military aircraft were being built, Marshall asked the president if the U.S. was going to provide, “50 percent of the number produced, or 50 percent of those promised,” cautioning against giving away the material that the Army and Army Air Forces desperately needed just for training.⁹⁰

As a further example, when the British purchasing commission made various requests of American industry in October of 1940, Marshall had to explain to the president that, in reality, such purchases would hinder American rearmament. When it came to the possible American manufacturing of the British 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft cannon, Marshall noted that, “production would, (a) seriously interfere with our production, and (b) would be a very long time in getting under way.”⁹¹ Likewise, analysts thought that making British rifles and other equipment, being of a radically different design than used by the United States, would have a major, negative impact on the delivery of American equipment. Marshall believed, “The difference here is between 2 years and 10 months, and between the serious interference with one of our most important requirements, .50 caliber anti-aircraft machine guns (as well as caliber .30 machine guns), and a unified production program.” As he had noted to congressional leaders at other times, Marshall believed that time was not on their side, and that to further impede the mass production of so many desired items would be unacceptable. Compromise, however, was necessary, and given that the British were

⁸⁹ Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 67.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ “Memorandum, October 19, 1940,” *The Marshall Papers*, Vol. 2, 334-335. The British insisted on retaining their own, indigenous equipment over adopting American equipment and artillery. This memorandum would indicate that Marshall was more willing to divert deliveries of American artillery to the British rather than have British orders delay deliveries of American guns to American troops. The British, under Marshall’s suggestion would have modern, American 105mm howitzers in approximately ten months, rather than it take perhaps two years for an American factory to be able to finally deliver 25lb field guns to the British government. Likewise, it was feared that British requests for .303 caliber rifles would impede the delivery of American machine-guns and other munitions which the Army was so desperate for. Mr. Carpenter, a factory manager for Remington Arms, was of the opinion that it would take two years for an American factory to be built and finally begin delivering British rifles. Rather than leave the British emptyhanded, it was suggested that, in regard to providing small arms, that Remington’s sporting rifle plant in Illion, New York might make rifles using .30 caliber rifle tooling from the government’s Rock Island Arsenal.

willing to use American equipment by early 1941, Marshall was willing to support expanded loans equipment sales under lend-lease, provided that it did not cripple the armed forces as earlier proposals would have.⁹²

Despite increases in monetary allocations, there were often still shortfalls in many areas. When needed, Marshall was not afraid of approaching his opposite in the Navy, Admiral Stark for his thoughts on a crucial matter. After previous discussions with President Roosevelt, Marshall still wished to investigate the matter of potentially building bases in British possessions. Marshall wished to renew his request for naval assistance. “As I understand it, the Navy has funds available which enable them to go ahead with the initial moves in the matter, meaning surveys, preparation of plans and design. \$30,000 of these funds were loaned to us. Those have been exhausted, so we shall have to disband our organization or get more money within a few weeks.”⁹³ Marshall, before broaching the subject with the president, wanted Stark’s impression of the subject. He explain that, “War Plans is requesting that the Army make a separate request for \$25,000,000 allotment out of the President’s fund, \$15,000,000 of which to be contract authorization. I dislike to become involved in a separate move in this matter, so I would appreciate your giving me your reaction.”

Marshall, although recognizing the political realities of peacetime, was still unafraid to challenge congressional leaders regarding their lax attitudes towards national defense. Just to maintain the compromises on rearmament and conscription he had worked so hard to achieve, Marshall had to work tirelessly to inform congressional leaders of the genuine needs of the armed forces. In July 1941, Marshall had to address the issues of the extension of service for the reservists and other personnel that were being mustered out en-masse

⁹² Pogue, *Ordeal and Hope*, 69

⁹³ “Memorandum for Admiral Stark, November 8, 1940,” *The Marshall Papers*, Vol. 2, 347-348. At this time, it is not known as to whether or not a response from Admiral Stark still exists.

When questioned in a Senate committee as to whether or not he was requesting for reservists and National Guardsmen to be sent to overseas stations, Marshall explained that, “There was no implied suggestion in my report that troops be dispatched to any particular area. My recommendation pertained solely to the high necessity of having the Army ready for immediate service.”⁹⁴ Senator Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. of Massachusetts asked, “In other words, it would give the Regular Army the use of these men on extended service, if necessary?” Marshall was quick to reiterate just how reliant the army was upon these men. “If the term of service for the National Guard and of the selectees is not extended, our present trained forces will largely melt away.”⁹⁵

The National Guard and the selectees had become such an integral part of the army, that some organizations, like the Corps of Engineers would be, reduced to one fifth their authorized personnel.⁹⁶ Overall, more than sixty percent of the enlisted personnel of the entire army and seventy-five percent of the officers would be released from active duty if their term of service was not extended beyond the year previously agreed to. Marshall testified that, when the original Selective Service Act had been passed, it had been altered to ensure its passage. “We wanted eighteen months, and one year was a compromise,” Marshall explained.⁹⁷ When questioned on the matter of whether or not the reservists and selectees were obligated under the law to continue, he had to again reiterate that such a provision was included in the act provided Congress saw fit to approve such an extension.⁹⁸

Marshall’s frustration was evident when he said later that month, “The answer is plain, as I see it. Are the national interests imperiled? Does a national emergency exist? As I said before and as

⁹⁴ DeWeed, ed., “Statements before the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, on Retention of Selectees and Reserve Components in the Military Service Beyond One Year, July 9, 1941,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 127.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

I say now again, in my opinion a national emergency decidedly does exist...”⁹⁹ Marshall was making a direct appeal to congress in the face of growing national division over war preparations and the draft.¹⁰⁰ By law, Congress was required to declare a national emergency that would affect the readiness of the armed forces, and Marshall believed it was incumbent upon Congress to do so regardless of current opinion.

Several congressional leaders were, in fact, sympathetic with Marshall’s aims. The chairman of the House committee on Military Affairs, during the same day of testimony, asked Marshall, “General, if I understand your position, it is simply this: That you are trying to build an armed force sufficient for the adequate and proper protection of the United States and Western Hemisphere and that unless legislation is enacted you have military problems arising that you cannot solve without it.”¹⁰¹ Marshall’s response was short and to the point. The congressmen had grasped the problem completely.

Marshall admitted openly that misinformed public opinion was behind so much of the opposition to rearmament and military expansion. As he had said before, the nature of the threats facing the nation differed from prior wars both in technology and speed. He argued that, “People do not see the difference between a force in France in 1918, in a stabilized sector, and the fast-moving tactics of the new World War.”¹⁰² The modern military had changed greatly. It was a complex machine, that, in battle, would cover vast distances. Marshall pointed out the differences between an army and a naval vessel, and that an army functioned in such a way as that it had to be handled in a very different manner. He appealed to one of the representatives on the committee, stating, “Mr.

⁹⁹ DeWeed, ed., “Statements before the House of Representatives Committee on Military Affairs, on Consideration of HJ Res. 222, Joint Resolutions Declaring a National Emergency, Extending Enlistments, Appointments, and Commissions in the Army of the United States... and for Other Purposes, 77th Congress, 1st Session, July 22, 1941,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 147.

¹⁰⁰ Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope*, 149.

¹⁰¹ DeWeed, ed., “Statements before the House of Representatives Committee on Military Affairs, July 22, 1941,” 155.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Faddis, I think you will agree with me, that you never saw a button on a battlefield. There, communications are not welded or built into the structure. They are scattered over the face of the earth... You do not see the artillery unit that is supporting you. You may never see it in your lifetime, yet it is the unit that has to pour down the artillery fire at the place and time you need it.”¹⁰³

Regarding the National Guard, Marshall was arguing that the state troops would need to be held in active service. “Now, today, we do not want to let them all go out at once. I am now speaking solely on the National Guard organizations. If the National Guard is set home now, it is automatically necessary to create new units, and if that decision is made, it will change our military policy. It will eliminate the National Guard from further serious consideration as a factor in National Defense.”¹⁰⁴ In very simple terms, it would undermine the entire plan for national defense and a substitute force of trained men would have to be created from scratch. In response to a suggestion that the drafted and National Guard units be handled as separate issues, Marshall explained, “Practically all of the National Guard units have from thirty to fifty percent of selectees in their ranks.”¹⁰⁵ Essentially, the National Guard, the Reserves, and selectees were now integrated into the wider army, and to release them would cripple the its ability to react to any future emergency.

Marshall asked that Congress permit him to maintain the current force that he had built up. He explained, “that the most effective service you can render the National Defense at this time is to permit us to create a united army, that I can treat is an army, and eliminate the forced special consideration of various groups.”¹⁰⁶ Marshall closed in summary, stating and reiterating to these civil authorities that, “the way to go at this matter is to recognize the emergency and do it boldly,

¹⁰³ Ibid., 155.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 165.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 166.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 167.

and squarely, without quibble or circumlocution. We are in the most serious situation, and I cannot believe that we will benefit by any evasion of the fact. An army is at best a very difficult instrument to create, and to maintain at high efficiency. A scrambled army, an inefficient army is both costly and a dubious investment.”¹⁰⁷ Although Marshall essentially achieved his aim of maintaining the army as it had been built, such a measure was a divisive issue. The Selective Service Extension Act was passed in September by the margin of a single vote in the House of Representatives.¹⁰⁸ The armed forces would need every man they had by the year’s end.

The attack on Pearl Harbor of December 7, 1941 surprised the nation and the military. It fell to Marshall to notify President Roosevelt of the damages that Army installations had suffered, and he began to confer with both his aides and the heads of the other services to meet the crisis as it developed. Admiral Stark had made it his desire to immediately improve the defenses of Oahu and the Hawaiian Islands. Marshall was quick to inform him that the situation had become quite critical, noting, “the present situation also makes mandatory dispositions that will insure protection of the Panama Canal and of certain critical establishments and regions in Continental United States that are now exposed to the possibility of immediate air raids.”¹⁰⁹ The mainland would need to be defended, for if critical industries on both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts were damaged, then it would be difficult to turn back the Axis tide later.

There were both logistical and practical limitation to what could Marshall could allocate to the defense of the Pacific garrisons. “Your recommendations,” he told Stark, “contemplate immediate dispatch of strong garrisons—air and ground—to Molokai, Maui, and Hawaii as well as Oahu. Troops are readily available, but the armament required could not be provided without

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 3.

¹⁰⁹ “To the Chief of Naval Operations, December 12, 1941,” *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, vol. 3, *“The Right Man for the Job,” December 7, 1941-May 31, 1943* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1991), 15-16.

seriously depleting and in some critical areas practically denuding our defensive arrangements elsewhere.”¹¹⁰ Resources were simply spread too thin to help in the way that Marshall wanted to.

The planned deactivation of the reserve and National Guard units in mid-1942 was likewise put on hold. The crisis of the moment was such that, what Marshall had been hoping to avoid, the hasty mobilization of hundreds of thousands of fresh men at the expense of the seasoned units, was the only option left to him. With the tentative shipping of “four divisions to Ireland, one division to Hawaii, possibly three or more divisions somewhere in the Northwest African theatre, and possibly other divisions to Brazil,” Marshall told the Secretary of War Henry Stimson on December 26, 1941, that the National Guard would have to be withheld indefinitely. “Under these circumstances,” he stated, “I have given instructions that the planning be readjusted on the basis of continuing the National Guard in service, of creating new divisions to the extent permitted by available shelter, and as a necessary adjustment, permitting the increase of troops on active duty beyond the provisional estimated figure of 2,250,000.”¹¹¹

Despite the shock of the Pearl Harbor attack, and the depressing first half of 1942, Marshall did not waver in his belief in the Allies’ eventual victory. Even if he voiced his doubts or seemed worn down from exertion, he showed it to few people. Such faith was demonstrated in early April of 1942, when Marshall was in discussion with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, regarding planned operations for the invasion of Western Europe, codenamed at the time as Operation Sledge Hammer.¹¹² Less than a month and a half prior, an Allied naval task force had been smashed by Japanese forces at the Battle of the Java Sea, with more ships being lost in subsequent actions a month later.¹¹³ Victory was not a foregone conclusion in the Pacific, but Marshall, among other

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ “Memorandum for the Secretary of War, December 26, 1941,” *The Marshall Papers* Vol. 3, 39-40.

¹¹² “To Winston S. Churchill, April 28, 1942,” *The Marshall Papers* Vol. 3, 175-176.

¹¹³ Samuel Elliot Morrison, *History of United States Naval Operation During World War II* Vol. III: *The Rising Sun in the Pacific, 1931-April 1942* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1958), 358.

Allied leaders still believed it prudent to stay the course and plan for their eventual counterstroke against the Axis powers.¹¹⁴ Now that the United States was involved in the war, it would be up to his subordinates, men Marshall had mentored before the war, to carry out the plans that he had drafted.

¹¹⁴ Stoler, *George C. Marshall*, 89-90.

Chapter 3

Marshall as Mentor and Commander

George C. Marshall would command the army of the Second World War through its officers. Hundreds of general officers from that conflict served directly under him between the First World War and the early stages of World War II. Several, like J. Lawton Collins, Manton Eddy, and Omar Bradley, were mentored both as students and as faculty at the interwar Infantry School, while Dwight Eisenhower, for instance, would not see direct service under Marshall until World War II. Marshall displayed both a professional attention to his subordinates and a personal interest in their well-being and that of their families. In both memoirs and surviving correspondence, officers attested to Marshall being a professional, no-nonsense, and yet fair and generous commander.

Of those who would serve under him, Marshall's subordinates were almost always struck by his standard of excellence. Marshall had been posted to China in 1924, and for the first two months of his tenure as the 15th Infantry Regiment's executive officer, was the acting commander.¹ The 15th's mission was to protect Western economic assets and diplomats from potentially volatile warlords who roamed the Chinese heartland. A future corps commander during World War II, Matthew B. Ridgway first served under George Marshall in Tientsin (present day Beijing). During the period of Marshall's acting command of the regiment, Ridgway was forced to shadow and, if need be, turn back a force of over 12,000 men approaching Tientsin. With a mere two men, he spent a whole day on horseback, watching the column work its way across the Chinese countryside. "I went back that night to report my day's observations to Lieutenant Colonel Marshall. He merely nodded. It was a routine contact."² Marshall had simply expected Ridgway to act with cool resolve towards the duties he had been given.

¹ Pogue, *Education of a General*, 228.

² General Matthew B. Ridgway, *Soldiers: The Memoirs of Matthew B. Ridgway* (New York: Harper Brothers, 1956), 36.

Collins, another future General and Chief of Staff, would first meet Marshall at the Infantry School at Fort Benning. As a junior instructor in the Weapons Section beginning in the late summer of 1927, Collins had heard rumors about how difficult working under then Lt. Col. Marshall could be. Having begun a lecture with a humorous anecdote, Collins had seen Marshall enter the back of the classroom. “All I had read or heard about him had drawn him as a grave, humorless man, all business,” Collins recalled. Somewhat afraid of delivering the punchline regarding a senatorial visit to a training base in World War I, he noted, “I was far too committed, so plunged ahead.” His fears proved unfounded, noting that, “When I came to the denouement Colonel Marshall laughed as heartily as anyone in the class.”³ Collins found Marshall amiable and approachable, both as a superior and as a neighbor in the officers’ quarters. Collins saw that Marshall displayed a genuine warmth not just to him, but also to his wife and children. Even as Marshall displayed a high degree of professionalism, he possessed an endearing, humane quality.

Professionally, Marshall was open for improvements to both the Infantry School, and the doctrine that it taught its students. Collins noted that Marshall, “was always accessible. Anyone with a new idea, a new method or procedure, could get a hearing and was encouraged to come up with a specific project to develop his theory.”⁴ Marshall, in Collins’ mind, made the Infantry School a forward thinking and problem-solving organization that, nonetheless, remained grounded. “Not that he advocated casting aside all doctrine and techniques that had proven sound,” Collins’ reasoned, but Marshall was clear that such assertions and beliefs could be validly questioned in the pursuit of new developments.⁵ Marshall upheld, “the system of having approved or preferred solutions to problems presented to student classes, but one of Marshall’s earliest directives to the faculty was

³ Collins, *Lightning Joe*, 49.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵ *Ibid.*

that any student's solution to a problem that differed markedly from the "approved" solution, yet made sense, would be published to the class."⁶

Under Marshall, it was not merely tactics or warfare that came to be discussed. A "informal study group" was formed to include Collins and other faculty, in which they would handle special tasks or discussion and meet in Marshall's home. They would discuss a book or other topic brought up in a previous meeting, ranging from, "geopolitics to economics, psychology, or sociology with reference to military problems."⁷ This study group is just one aspect of how Marshall approached the problems and reforms of the interwar period. Likewise, in a display of delegation to Collins, Marshall asked him to look at revising the army's close order drill within the realms of recent paralleled French reforms. Although Marshall supported Collins' recommendation to reform infantry drill, it died in the higher echelons of the Army.⁸ Later, when Marshall became Chief of Staff, he implemented the changes Collins had recommended.

Omar Bradley, in looking back on Marshall's days at the Infantry school, called Benning the "nursery school" for generals. One of the former students, Bradley remembered, had stated that some two-hundred American generals who would see service during the war had been Marshall's students at some point in their careers, among them Collins and Bradley.⁹ With his four year tour at Benning drawing to a close, Collins' and another student, Charlie Bolte, were approached with the last bit of personal advice Marshall would give them during their stay. As Collins recorded, Marshall told them, "If a war is ever in the offing, don't let them stick you on staff duty, as was done with me!"¹⁰

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., 50-51.

⁸ Ibid., 54.

⁹ Bradley, *A General's Life*, 73.

¹⁰ Collins, *Lightning Joe*, 54.

Collins was stationed in Hawaii at the beginning of the war. Following a long campaign as commander of the 25th Infantry Division in the South Pacific, he was granted leave in the States over Christmas, 1943. Visiting his wife in Washington D.C., Collins also reported to the chief of staff. Marshall, Collins recalled, “congratulated me on the performance of the 25th Division and had me tell him briefly the highlights of our operations.”¹¹ Marshall had broached the possibility of giving Collins a corps command with General Douglas MacArthur, but as he told Collins, MacArthur had said, “But Collins is too young!” Marshall disagreed; even though Collins was only forty-seven years old, he was confident that the youthful commander could manage a corps.¹² Collins’ leave was a permanent assignment. He would not return to the South Pacific. Marshall directly intervened and brought Collins back from the Pacific theater because he wanted to give the seasoned Major General a place in the upcoming invasion of Western Europe. On January 26, 1944, Collins departed the United States to take command of VII Corps in Great Britain.¹³ It was in England that Collins was reunited with Omar Bradley, then commander of U.S. First Army.

Bradley was Missouri country boy of humble origins who had received his collegiate education at West Point. A tall, bespectacled figure, Bradley had graduated in the class of 1915.¹⁴ Bradley had missed overseas service during WWI but, like Collins, served under Marshall between at the Infantry School between 1929 and 1932.¹⁵ “I had worked closely with Marshall at Fort Benning for three years. I knew his wife, Katherine, and his stepchildren. I knew he valued my judgement and professionalism,” Bradley said. He was later assigned to work under Marshall in Washington D.C. in 1939. “And yet I was still in awe and some fear of the man,” he admitted, “I was never at ease when I made a presentation. No matter how well I knew my subject, he was apt to

¹¹ Ibid., 176.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 178.

¹⁴ Bradley, *A General's Life*, 36.

¹⁵ Ibid., 64.

ask pertinent questions on something I didn't know. I was almost certain to be tripped up every time." Almost every time, Marshall would become angry at Bradley's gaffs. "Never shouting angry," he clarified, "merely icy cold and withdrawn. He kept all of us keyed up to a nerve-racking degree."¹⁶

Bradley would add that, "Outwardly, Marshall was austere, cold, aloof, succinct, prudish. There was an impenetrable glass shield around him. He had no intimate friends. Except for George Patton, who he had known well in France, he never addressed anyone by his first name; and I never knew anyone, except his wife who called him by *his* first name." Although some of this was attributable to not being good with names, Marshall as a whole, did not suffer fools, noting as Bradley did, that, "He frowned on excessive drinking, silly behavior, off-color stories and marital infidelities." In spite of his professional demeanor, Bradley stated that when off duty, "Marshall had a discernable warmth and moderate sense of fun. He loved to ride, fox-hunt, to stage elaborate pageants and parades, to gather officers and their wives for tea and cakes, to entertain and write to children he knew."¹⁷ It is clear that both Collins and Bradley shared a similar picture of the man.

Marshall delegated tasks and duties to his subordinates and expected that they be able to solve such problems effectively on their own. On one occasion, Marshall handed Bradley a bureaucratic mess involving a stalled shipment of rubber tree seeds en-route from Southeast Asia to Brazil. With the seeds about to go bad in the hold of the ships stalled in Panama, Marshall had scrawled a note for "B-17's" on the documents. In twenty minutes of working with General Hap Arnold, Chief of Staff for Air and Juan Trippe of Pan-Am Airways, Bradley had come up with a solution where Arnold ordered available planes to Panama to see to the delivery. As Bradley put it,

¹⁶ Ibid., 83-84.

¹⁷ Ibid., 65.

echoing Marshall's treatment of Ridgway in China, "My reward for this performance was a grunt and a nod. He expected no less of us."¹⁸

With the office of the chief of staff becoming hectic by 1940, Marshall asked Bradley to look into the record of a subordinate and either clear or deny him an appointment to the War College, telling him, "The decision is yours."¹⁹ Bradley took a look at the man's record, and other than a brief stint under Marshall, this officer's career had been lackluster, certainly undeserving of a placement in the War College. Nervous of how his decision would be received, he went to Marshall's office the next morning. "Sir, I have studied this man's record and I recommend he not be sent to War College." Marshall's response was an angry one, but not for the reasons Bradley expected. "What are you doing coming in here and making a *recommendation*? I told you the decision was yours!"²⁰ When granted by Marshall, he expected responsibility and authority to be wielded.

When the war started in December of 1941, trusted men were granted even more responsibilities. Matthew Ridgway, because of his close relationship with Marshall, was tasked with preparing memorandums for government officials. He recalled that, "it was all paperwork. One of my extra duties... was to prepare a summary... of the battle action of the previous twenty-four hours."²¹ To ensure that the reports were on the president, chief of staff, and secretary of war's desks by eight o'clock every morning, he would begin his work day at five o'clock, but would not be able to sleep until almost, "ten or eleven at night, a routine," he admitted, "that left me a little hollow eyed."²² Marshall recognized Ridgway's hard work, and, in the spring of 1942, Marshall

¹⁸ Ibid., 85.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 86.

²¹ Ridgway, *Soldier*, 49.

²² Ibid.

ordered Ridgway to the 82nd Division as assistant division commander under Omar Bradley. When Bradley was ordered to rebuild the 28th Division, Ridgway took command of the 82nd.²³

Ridgway's military career included leading the 82nd Airborne Division in combat, commanding XVIII Airborne Corps in the European Theater, and theater command over U.N. coalition forces during the Korean War. Furthermore, he commanded NATO forces in Europe and was appointed Chief of Staff in 1953.²⁴ Ridgway, like Collins, saw Marshall's hand in his career. In his memoir of the Korean War, written in 1967, he dedicated it to Marshall, saying, "Whose character and achievements in war and peace have been surpassed by no wearer of the uniform of the United States, save only our first Commander in Chief, George Washington."²⁵

Perhaps one of George C. Marshall's most obscure and yet most productive subordinates during the Second World War was Manton Sprague Eddy. The son of a Chicago insurance salesman, Eddy was born in 1892. As the oldest of four sons, Manton learned leadership from an early age. By the time he hit high-school age, Manton was a tall, scrappy individual with a short temper. It was not his temper that would get him expelled from the Chicago school system, but his participation in an un-authorized high-school fraternity.²⁶ His parents placed Manton and his brother Jack into the Shattuck Military Academy of Faribault, Minnesota in the fall of 1909. Being older than most of his peers at Shattuck, Manton blossomed under the regimen, even as he came to despise the hazing and duplication of West Point traditions. "Matt" as he was called, came to appreciate the basics of sound military tactics, and graduated with honors in 1913. Due to the

²³ Ibid., 54.

²⁴ Ibid., 260.

²⁵ "Korean War Book Dedication, 1967." USAHECA, Matthew B. Ridgeway Papers, Box 40, Folder 7.

²⁶ Henry Gerard Phillips, *The Making of a Professional: Manton S. Eddy, USA* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), 17.

school's standing with the U.S. government, Manton Eddy was entitled to, for his efforts, a commission in the U.S. Army.²⁷

After serving on active duty and seeing combat in France during the First World War, Eddy was first exposed to George Marshall and his mindset while a student at the Advanced Infantry Course in September of 1929. Then Lt. Col. Marshall was instituting widespread changes to the curriculum. The “zeal” of the infantryman was to be emphasized under new doctrine and training, but Marshall believed other changes were necessary.²⁸ With the Army being whittled down to little more than a cadre for national emergencies, Marshall encouraged his students to not just be warriors, but to be teachers who could pass on their knowledge to the citizen soldiers who would fill the ranks in the event of a future war. The final project, a monograph, was intended to give students the opportunity to express a clearly defined problem with tactics or training, and to determine the correct response to the problem.

Borrowing from his experience in France with the 39th Infantry Regiment during the First World War, Eddy's twenty-minute lecture sought to show how his regiment had been adversely affected by poor leadership. When under overall French control, his regiment had adhered to sound tactics and military principles. When the division later operated without such supervision, high ranking officers had neglected basic military philosophy, resulting in the 39th Infantry suffering high battle casualties. As Eddy's biographer, Henry Gerard Phillips, stated, “Major Eddy's monograph reflected Marshall's progress in changing the way tactics were taught at the Infantry School. Instead of merely showing by a historical example how observance of the principles of war favorably affected an action's outcome, Matt also showed how failure to observe them caused high casualties and failure.”²⁹ From interviews conducted with Marshall's biographer, Forrest Pogue, Phillips

²⁷ Ibid., 20.

²⁸ Ibid., 55.

²⁹ Ibid.

would argue that Eddy's monograph secured his future in the army and likewise made a profound impact on the future Chief of Staff.³⁰

Eddy bounced from one assignment to the next between 1930 and 1940 and was considering retirement when he saw that he had not been selected for the 1940-41 Army War College. A friend, the Assistant Secretary of War Louis Johnson, intervened on Eddy's behalf and brought the perceived oversight to Marshall's attention. The Chief of Staff intervened and ensured that Eddy was added to the class roster, even though due to national emergency, the class of 1940-41 was cancelled.³¹ Nonetheless, Eddy was promoted to Major General and given command of the 9th Infantry Division. Eddy's wartime relationship with Marshall was equally amiable and professional. Marshall, as indicated in the wealth of personal and military correspondence between himself and Eddy, continued his mentorship throughout the war. Simply put, Marshall looked after his division and corps commanders as they trained and mentored their own subordinate before they fought the battles overseas.

In a letter, dated July 14, 1942, Marshall forwarded to Eddy the compliments of officers who had made an inspection tour at Fort Bragg. As they had stated, and Marshall included for Eddy's benefit: "We were particularly impressed with the soldierly posture and neat dress of the troops of the 9th Division... Saluting throughout the post was prompt, smartly rendered, and appeared spontaneous. At the railroad station in Fayetteville, each of us was struck with the outstanding military appearance of the large numbers of enlisted men awaiting trains and with their prompt and correct observance of the requirements of military courtesy."³² Marshall went on to state that, "such

³⁰ Ibid., Editorial Note.

³¹ Ibid., 70.

³² "George Marshall to Brigadier Manton S. Eddy, Commanding General, 9th Infantry Division, Fort Bragg, North Carolina, July 14, 1942," The George C. Marshall Foundation Archives, Lexington, Virginia, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 38.

reports are gratifying to me personally, and are indicative of vigorous leadership.”³³ Although this was before the 9th Infantry Division was committed to overseas combat service, Marshall had further occasion to review the troops of the Ninth in Morocco, with their hard-earned discipline earning them the reputation as some of the best soldiers in the US Army.³⁴

In October of 1944, now as commander of XII Corps, Eddy wrote to Marshall after the Chief of Staff had visited the front in France. His letter is rich with personal anecdotes, not intended for official consumption, but speak of a good, personal friendship between the two men. Eddy began with a simple line of, “I wish to thank you for the reading material which you so kindly sent me.”³⁵ The bulk of the letter was devoted to explaining a simple “souvenir” that Eddy was shipping to Marshall for his amusement, a fragment from an artillery shell which, “struck the place you slept during the night of 9-10 October.”³⁶ In closing, Eddy stated, “I enjoyed seeing you again very much. There were some interesting photographs taken on the occasion and as soon as I can secure prints I will forward them to you. Warmest personal regards.”³⁷

Despite the commitments facing him as Chief of Staff, Marshall nonetheless took the time to respond to Eddy’s October letter on November 9, 1944 with a quick note of his own. “I have your letter of October 17th and I am looking forward to receiving the unusual shell fragment and photographs which you are sending. Thanks for your thoughtfulness.”³⁸ Marshall stated his satisfaction at both seeing and discussing in person the combat conditions that Eddy worked under.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ George Mittleman, *Eight Stars to Victory: A History of the Ninth U.S. Infantry Division* (Columbus: F.J. Heer, 1948), 84.

³⁵ “Major General M. S. Eddy to General George C. Marshall, 17 October 1944,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 38.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ “George C. Marshall to Major General M. S. Eddy, November 9, 1944,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 38.

In the postscript, Marshall concluded with a brief note, that stated, “I see from reports today that you are driving ahead again. The Lord be good to you.”

In December, in a note addressed to both Manton Eddy and the men of XII Corps, Marshall reassured Eddy, and by extension, his subordinates, that, “you are daily, if not hourly, in our thoughts during this bitter fighting.”³⁹ The brief nature of the note does not diminish the apparent sincerity that was intended. In closing, he reiterated his praise of a month earlier, saying, “May you find some cheer in the coming season, and may the good Lord watch over you and guide you to final victory in the New Year,” and signing himself as, “Faithfully Yours.”

Marshall’s friendship with Eddy extended to his personal ties to the Eddy family. General Eddy was eventually relieved of command of XII Corps for health reasons. Henry Phillips attributed this breakdown in health to the lack of rapport with the predominantly cavalymen who ran Third Army under George S. Patton. Eddy’s last couple of months in XII Corps were marked with constant clashes with the staff of Third Army. Cavalymen, it was assumed, had little respect for an infantryman, even one of Eddy’s stature and success.⁴⁰ The stress of the strained command and professional relationships led to Eddy’s physical collapse on April 17, 1945. Hypertension rendered Eddy a weak, headache ridden, shell of his former self. Doctors who examined him saw that he was running the risk of a stroke and would need to be relieved of command for his own safety.⁴¹

Personal correspondence between Marshall and both Eddy and his wife would indicate that Marshall had taken a hand in ensuring Eddy’s well-being. In a letter dictated April 23, 1945, Marshall followed up on the news of Manton’s relief to his wife, Mamie, with reassurances that every effort was being made to preserve the general’s health and that his condition was not as life

³⁹ “George C. Marshall to Major General M. S. Eddy, December 20, 1944,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 38.

⁴⁰ Phillips, *The Making of a Professional*, 184.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 186.

threatening as perhaps had been thought. “It has been necessary,” Marshall noted, “for him to give up his command for the time being because of high blood pressure. However, this should not cause you any alarm at all, for there is no danger to him involved.”⁴² Marshall was not only seeing to Eddy’s safe return to the United States, but also making provision for Eddy’s recuperation at White Sulfur Springs resort, with the intent that Eddy be joined by his wife at the earliest possible date.

Mamie responded with a handwritten card, thanking him for his “kind note,” stating that, “It was very reassuring, arriving after his cable to me telling of his hospitalization.” She accepted his invitation to White Sulfur, saying, “Hoping for the pleasure of seeing you to thank you in person.”⁴³ From White Sulfur, Eddy wrote to Marshall, thanking him for, “all that has been done for me since my arrival here in the States on 24 May, especially for your kind invitation to Mrs. Eddy and my daughter to stay here at this beautiful place.”⁴⁴ Eddy was quite confident that he could quickly recover and return to service within a month. He was eventually proved right. Eddy was promoted to Lieutenant General, returned to Germany in an administrative capacity, and retired from the Army in March of 1953.⁴⁵

Of any of Marshall’s understudies, it can be argued that Dwight D. Eisenhower was the only one that eclipsed his former commander. For his oversight of the victorious Anglo-American military machine that liberated Nazi occupied Europe, Dwight Eisenhower achieved a reputation that has been maintained with time. British biography Piers Brendon noted that, even among his allies in Britain, “private personages to private soldiers, really did like Ike.”⁴⁶ Born to a humble Kansas family in 1890, Eisenhower would be accepted into West Point in 1911, joining the same

⁴² “George C. Marshall to Mrs. Manton S. Eddy, April 23, 1944,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 38.

⁴³ “Mrs. Mamie Eddy to George C. Marshall, April 26, 1945,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 38.

⁴⁴ “To General George C. Marshall from M. S. Eddy, May 26, 1945,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 38.

⁴⁵ Phillips, *The Making of a Professional*, 206.

⁴⁶ Piers Brendon, *Ike: His Life & Times* (New York: Harper & Row, 1986), 1.

class of 1915 that included Bradley.⁴⁷ Rising to the rank of General of the Army, a rank he would share with Marshall, Eisenhower would be elected as the 34th President of the United States in 1952, and held the office until 1961.

Unlike many of the men who would be promoted to high rank in the Army during World War II, Eisenhower had never spent the sort of quality time with Marshall or been given the sort of mentoring and instruction that other men like Collins, Ridgway, or Eddy had as part of the Infantry school. Rather, at the end of 1941 and the beginning of 1942, Eisenhower would be working under Marshall himself, in the high stress world of the early war planning. It was in this environment that Marshall would recognize Eisenhower's aptitude and would mark him for the eventual Allied command in Africa and, eventually, Europe. Eisenhower noted in his war memoir that on December 14, 1941, when he reported to Marshall, "It was the fourth time I had ever seen him."⁴⁸ With the Japanese military pressing attacks across the Pacific, Eisenhower recalled that, "if I were to be of any service to General Marshall in the War Department, I would have to earn his confidence: the logic of this, my first answer, would have to be unimpeachable, and the answer would have to be prompt."⁴⁹

When given the task to develop plans for, at best, holding actions and supporting the defense of the Philippines, Eisenhower came to the conclusion that the American garrison there was doomed. The sea lanes were under Japanese control, and nothing substantial could be done to save the islands. However, from a political standpoint, something still had to be done. He told Marshall that, despite being unable to hold the Philippines, "we must do everything for them that is humanely possible. The people of China, of the Philippines, of the Dutch East Indies will be watching us...

⁴⁷ Ibid., 37.

⁴⁸ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 16.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 18.

They may excuse failure, but they will not excuse abandonment.”⁵⁰ By basing troops in Australia, and securing the supply routes to that country, the United States hoped to contain the Japanese thrust. Marshall’s response was a simple, “I agree with you,” as Eisenhower recalled, adding, “His tone implied that I had been given the problem as a check to an answer he had already reached.”⁵¹

By April, following Eisenhower’s transfer to the Operations Division, Marshall and Eisenhower saw each other on a weekly basis. Eisenhower explained that, “We fell into a practice of holding at least one general review a week, during which we often sat alone to evaluate the changing situation; sometimes others were called in, so that the conference took the form of a general orientation for key members of the staff.”⁵² Throughout the planning and defeats of the early days of 1942, Marshall remained confident and unwavering. Not only was his confidence contagious, but the way that Marshall delegated tasks made his subordinates better. Marshall’s “ability to delegate authority not only expedited work but impelled every subordinate to perform beyond his own suspected capacity.”⁵³ Eisenhower’s can-do attitude and work ethic impressed Marshall.⁵⁴ Because of that trust in his capabilities, Marshall tasked Eisenhower with visiting England in May 1942, to report on the state of the American Headquarters in London.

This headquarters had been neglected to the point of it being little more than a military observation group. In Eisenhower’s words, the American staff was, “in a back eddy, from which they could scarcely emerge except through a return to the United States.”⁵⁵ The command staff was out of the loop from the current war plans, aims, and projected time-line of an invasion of Europe, and, under Marshall’s request for a report, Eisenhower stated that an officer that was familiar with War Plans and Operations divisions needed to be appointed to fill the leadership position in

⁵⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁴ Brendon, *Ike*, 80.

⁵⁵ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 50.

England. In early June, having returned to the United States, Eisenhower submitted a report to Marshall, arguing for a unified command of all American forces sent to Europe. As, “it was likely to be an important document in the further waging of the war,” Eisenhower requested that Marshall carefully read his report. Marshall’s response would alter the course of Eisenhower’s career. “I certainly do want to read it. You may be the man who executes it. If that’s the case, when can you leave?”⁵⁶ Within a few days, Marshall had confirmed his tentative selection; Eisenhower would command American forces in Europe.

Eisenhower’s headquarters was, at the time of his appointment, little more than the size of an army corps. The two American divisions in Europe, the 34th Infantry and 1st Armored, were still training and working up to combat readiness, and the equipment, supplies, and infrastructure needed for amphibious landings and combat operations were nonexistent.⁵⁷ Eisenhower’s main task was to command the joint Anglo-American invasion of North Africa, codenamed Operation Torch.⁵⁸ In describing his duties, Eisenhower noted, all aspects of logistics, planning, and shipping were being tackled simultaneously, that, “Difficulty in any of these produced at once difficulties in all the others.”⁵⁹

In September, with the planning for the North African invasion underway, Eisenhower wrote to Marshall concerning the issues of the press and military capabilities, primarily stemming around American aircraft and whether they were capable of matching those used by the Axis powers. Eisenhower, was, throughout the bulk of his correspondence with Marshall very open with his commanding officer, even to the point of discussing the implementation of ideas or proposals Marshall had made. Believing that he possessed some good rapport with American reporters,

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 53.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 77.

Eisenhower said, “Since receipt of your letter, I have seriously considered calling them in and dealing very frankly with them on this question, making my appeal on the basis that they would be helping the war effort by building up, rather than destroying confidence of our fighting forces in the tools with which they have to fight.”⁶⁰ Eisenhower’s letters at this date would seem to be marked with some level of hesitation or uncertainty, as if he was genuinely growing into his role as Allied Commander. He admitted that, “I have hesitated to do this because of the risk of getting out of coordination with the War Department.”⁶¹ Eisenhower recognized his place in the chain of command and did not want to seize the initiative where it was inappropriate.

By comparison, Marshall was quick to reiterate his support for Eisenhower. He sent a letter on September 28, 1942, covering a variety of topics, mostly regarding promotions. The bulk of the one-page letter was spent repeating that General Mark Clark would be explaining most of the details in person. However, Marshall did reserve the final paragraph for his own exhortation. Marshall’s told Eisenhower, “I can’t think of any other matters to bring up at this time except to tell you again to deal with me on the frankest basis.” In a manner similar to what he had told Bradley and others, Marshall told Eisenhower, “When you disagree with my point of view, say so without an apologetic approach; when you want something you aren’t getting, tell me and I will try to get it for you. I have complete confidence in your management of the affair, and want to support you in every way practicable.”⁶²

Eisenhower, readily kept Marshall informed throughout October. The troops were readying for the invasion, and on October 20, 1942, Eisenhower sent Marshall a long letter explaining the

⁶⁰ “Headquarters European Theater, United States Army, Dwight Eisenhower, to George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, War Department, Washington D.C., 1 September, 1942,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 43, 2.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² “Marshall to Eisenhower, September 28, 1942,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 43.

training status and command dynamics that were in place for the upcoming operation. In this letter, it would almost seem that, by this point, Eisenhower had already grown and matured in his role as Supreme Allied commander. The wording in his letter shows increased confidence on Eisenhower's part, as he recalled to Marshall his interactions with the Anglo-American alliance leadership. He was nonetheless extremely confident.

"I do not need to tell you," Eisenhower wrote, "that the past weeks have been a period of strain and anxiety. I think we've taken this in our stride and, so far as I can see, all of my principle subordinates are up on the bit and ready to go!" Other factors were still worrying, "for example what is to be done if the weather throughout the whole region simply becomes impossible along about the time we need calm seas."⁶³ In many ways, Eisenhower's openness showed just how important and groundbreaking his role was. Marshall was helping an American general structure and lead a multi-national military alliance fraught with international political and logistical dynamics that no American field commander before dealt with.⁶⁴ This was, in many ways, a learning experience with both men, as Marshall was, at the same time, involved in the strategic debates with British opposites.⁶⁵

Marshall made his mark on Allied strategy by demanding a direct invasion of Germany through Northwest Europe. By crossing the English Channel and avoiding the periphery of the German empire, Marshall believed that such a strategy could end the war the most quickly.⁶⁶ This strategy was not adopted right away, but had to be fought for, as both Mark Stoler and Andrew Roberts explained in their respective histories of Allied strategy making, *Allies and Adversaries* and *Masters and Commanders*. In his conclusion, Roberts notes that it was not until August of 1943, at

⁶³ "Eisenhower to Marshall, October 20, 1942," Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 66, Folder 43, 2.

⁶⁴ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 72, 77.

⁶⁵ Roberts, *Masters and Commanders*, 172.

⁶⁶ Bradley, *A General's Life*, 117.

the Quebec Conference, that Winston Churchill had withdrawn his opposition towards an invasion of continental Europe.⁶⁷ It was still noted that such a proposal was primarily Marshall's proposal. Stoler, on the preparations for the Quebec Conference of August of 1943, stated that, "Any British insistence on Mediterranean action should be met with the threat of greater U.S. emphasis on the Pacific and Asia, a threat Leahy and Marshall would verbalize more often than King as a means of strengthening the appearance of JCS (Joint Chiefs of Staff) unity."⁶⁸

Even with the decision being made to invade French North Africa, agreement was not a foregone conclusion. Roberts explains that the issues that were hammered out primarily involved, "where, when and how to carry out Operation Torch."⁶⁹ Differences in opinion required some mediation between Roosevelt and Churchill: "The final compromise, which was to attack at eight points along the North and Northwest African coast...came about only once Roosevelt and Churchill intervened."⁷⁰ Coalition warfare was one of give and take, where each military and civil leader made and won concessions. On some occasions, Marshall and Eisenhower were in agreement with Churchill and the British Combined Chiefs, but on other occasions, like the North Africa and Sicily invasions, Marshall found himself the only voice of opposition, requiring compromise.⁷¹

Given this backdrop, Eisenhower noted, "If a man permitted himself to do so, he could get absolutely frantic about questions of weather, politics, personalities in France and Morocco, and so on." In the end, he admitted, "a man must merely believe in his luck and figure that a certain amount of good fortune will bless us when the critical day arrives."⁷² When it came to personnel, Eisenhower was frank in the confidence he had for his subordinates, even if some like Lloyd

⁶⁷ Roberts, *Masters and Commanders*, 573.

⁶⁸ Stoler, *Allies and Adversaries*, 119.

⁶⁹ Roberts, *Masters and Commanders*, 260.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 576.

⁷² "Eisenhower to Marshall, October 20, 1942," 2.

Fredendall did not bestow a “natural confidence” in their capabilities as commanders.⁷³ If Eisenhower had thought any were glaringly incapable of playing their part in Operation Torch, he stated that, “I would get rid of him instantly because I am not going to trust any part of this expedition to a person, who, in my opinion, is not up to the job.” After covering other administrative difficulties, Eisenhower closed with a word of encouragement for his boss. “Whenever I’m tempted to droop a bit over the burdens cast upon us here,” he wrote, “I think of the infinitely greater ones you have to bear and express to myself a fervent wish that the army may be fortunate enough to keep you at its head until the final victory is chalked up.”⁷⁴

Marshall, as the pressure mounted shortly before the launching of Torch, quickly reiterated both his written and the implied moral support that he was giving Eisenhower. “In the mounting of TORCH I have had the War Department do everything in its power to provide what you have asked for,” Marshall told Eisenhower in a cable in late October.⁷⁵ However, in his desire to be realistic, Marshall wanted Eisenhower to understand that, in the rush to give Eisenhower the necessary men and material, troops at home had been affected. “We have stripped units of men,” Marshall explained, “reduced eight or nine divisions to such low levels in personnel that it will require from six to eight months to restore them to their former state of efficiency, and we have scalped the troops in this country for equipment to meet your requirements. I intend to see that this attitude is maintained in the approved program for the buildup of your forces by succeeding convoys.”⁷⁶

Marshall suggested, that given how drained the military was for service troops, that Eisenhower take measures to alleviate the problem himself in North Africa using the population there, requesting rather than directly ordering, “that you would take some driving personality and

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ “To Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower Radio No. R-2593, October 30, 1942,” from *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 3, 417-418.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

see what can be done quickly to build up SOS (Service of Supply) forces composed mostly of the natives of that region, with American or possibly even French commanders or chiefs for sub-positions.”⁷⁷ Marshall thought that American pay would ensure the pacification of the region, while also alleviating the manpower situation. At the same time, Marshall was gracious, believing as he did in Eisenhower’s capabilities. “I suppose you have had all of this in mind,” Marshall admitted, “but it is impressed on me because of the drainage, almost the emasculation of our troop setup here in the States in order to provide the massive U.S. SOS for the United Kingdom and all of the SOS and kindred units that we have had to deliver to you.”⁷⁸ This was another way in which trust and suggestions from Marshall built up the men under him. Eisenhower, from what records would suggest, promised to abide by the request.⁷⁹

Military affairs did not merely include strategy and logistics, but also incorporated a growing element of publicity and the need to not just think about a subordinate’s well-being in combat but also rewarding their excellence in command with public recognition. In their correspondence, Marshall demonstrated an understanding of the impact that publicity, or the lack thereof, could have upon the legacies of his subordinates. Eisenhower had overseen the invasions of North Africa, Sicily, and Italy, and the U.S. Army was seeing large scale combat in France as the major Allied partner following the Normandy invasion of June 6, 1944. “I find that no mention has been made in the press as to the names of any U.S. OVERLORD Commanders below Bradley except for some air men including Quesada,” Marshall told Eisenhower in an “eyes only” message dated June 23, 1944, believing as he did that excellent performance in combat would justify some

⁷⁷ Ibid. Service of Supply was the Army’s blanket organization for seeing to the logistical needs of the entire Army. Such troops would be used for general laborers, port stevedores, and whatever miscellaneous tasks that combat and other organizational personnel could not be tasked with due to a negative impact on their own duties.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

publicity for these men.⁸⁰ “Would it not be within the bounds of security, particularly since the division numerals in most cases have already been given time after time, to begin the mention by name of some of the commanders,” Marshall suggested. “I should suggest for example that Collins’ name might be introduced into the fighting for Cherbourg, Gerow for the original landing, together with the names of the 3 Division Commanders in the lead off on the beaches and particularly the Commanders of the 101 and 82 Airborne Divisions.”⁸¹ Marshall believed that it would be in bad practice to release all of the relevant names at once, but that such releases needed to be doled out as the situation dictated.

Marshall chose to use the word “resentment” when describing the attitude that had developed among active and retired army officers regarding the delay of public commendation, stating that, “there has been heavy fighting for a considerable period of time and the units themselves have been identified, so little mention is permitted, if any, of the leaders, with the consequent increased references to a few higher officers.”⁸² Naming Omar Bradley in particular, Marshall noted that such resentment was not in Bradley’s nature, but as a result of neglect, “he is being placed in a false position.” Recognizing as he did that Eisenhower was doing what he could to reward his subordinates, Marshall had approved Eisenhower’s recommendation for Oak Leaf clusters to accompany prior awards given to Collins, Bradley, and Leonard Gerow.⁸³

As Eisenhower eased the press restrictions following Marshall’s cable, it is interesting to note the matter was brought up again a month later.⁸⁴ “The release of the names of corps and division commanders has had a happy effect in the home press,” Marshall told Eisenhower, “though

⁸⁰ “To General Dwight D. Eisenhower, June 23, 1944,” *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 4, “*Aggressive and Determined Leadership*,” June 1, 1943-December 31, 1944 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 489-490.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, Editorial Note.

you still have one corps commander secreted away, for what reason I don't know."⁸⁵ Marshall believed that the root cause lay with Bradley's lack of a publicity methodology. "Have Bradley turn in the name of a regimental or battalion commander or other leader every 2 or 3 days, and not once a year, who has displayed very aggressive leadership with his unit and send us his name and the designation of the unit and what they did," Marshall suggested.⁸⁶ Marshall believed that some, on the basis of jealousy, would likely oppose the unilateral decision making involved, but given his no-nonsense personality, Marshall said, "This carries no weight with me whatever." Morale was such an important part of Marshall's equation for victory that he would rather an imperfect solution be reached rather than no solution at all. If the entirety of the American army in Europe was receiving the just rewards for their labors, labors, successes and sacrifices, then the army would be better prepared to stay the course to victory.

As this was going on, Marshall on the same day took the time to respond to the widow of General Teddy Roosevelt Jr., rendering his subordinate and former comrade one final service. Roosevelt had died of a heart attack following his promotion to Major General while leading troops in combat. "I learned late last night of Ted's death in France," Marshall told her, wishing her the fullest measure of sympathy.⁸⁷ The two men had first met, the Chief of Staff recalled, in France during July of 1917 while serving with the 1st Division. Marshall told Roosevelt's widow that the, "heavy fighting around Cantigny and later at Soissons, built up in me a great admiration for his courageous leadership and his willingness to give his all to the Army and for the country." He noted that, as in the previous war, Teddy had demonstrated that same leadership in the Second World War. Marshall did not mince words when it came to the widow's grief. "I know you are a woman of great courage," he told her, "but this blow will nevertheless be a very hard one for you to bear.

⁸⁵ "To General Dwight D. Eisenhower, July 14, 1944," 522-523.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ "To Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., July 14, 1944," 522.

However, you have so very much of which to be proud in husband and sons and Ted has left for you and for the country such a wonderful example of good citizenship and in courage and self-sacrifice that you may find a solace for your grief.”⁸⁸

Throughout the remainder of July, 1944, Marshall brought to Eisenhower’s attention multiple issues, projects, and recommendations, while still leaving his subordinate room for action. On July 17, Marshall sent Eisenhower a memorandum with the names of two generals who would and could be available for combat command, again giving Eisenhower freedom of action.

In rotating War Department General Staff personnel, I am willing to release Major General Ray E. Porter, G-3 of the War Department for Divisional Command only. He had highly successful operational experience in Tunisia.

Also I am willing to release Major General Miller G White, at present G-1 of the War Department, for a high personnel assignment. Possibly you might desire his services as G-1 of the American Army Group as I noticed your first G-1 was Beach Commander on Utah.

In both of the foregoing cases I am merely trying to give the men an opportunity for service in an active theater. There is no implied obligation on your part whatsoever to request their services.⁸⁹

Similarly, when informing Eisenhower of a congressional delegation en-route to the British Isles for the purpose of inspecting Army hospitals, Marshall stated his reasons for the visit. Congresswoman Frances P. Bolton was to author a report which, it was hoped, would, “probably reach the women of America to reassure them as to the treatment of their wounded. Personally, I feel that this is a worthwhile project considered from that standpoint.”⁹⁰ Marshall’s directive was that Eisenhower would, “provide her with every feasible opportunity to see as much as possible concerning the care and handling of the wounded that may be consistent with your military situation.”⁹¹ However, any further privileges, such as a visit to France, were up to Eisenhower’s

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “To General Dwight D. Eisenhower., July 14, 1944,” *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 4, 525.

⁹⁰ “To General Dwight D. Eisenhower., July 23, 1944,” *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 4, 532-533.

⁹¹ Ibid.

discretion. Eisenhower exercised his discretion and assisted Bolton in her visit and even allowed the representative to visit the field hospitals in France.⁹²

Marshall requested additional communication from Eisenhower at the end of July. Some British commanders felt that they were not hearing of Eisenhower's plans or intentions until after they had been carried out. "They have suggested," Marshall told him, "that periodic appreciations," would be helpful for understanding the overall situation. For instance, it was noted that not even Marshall had heard about Operation Cobra under Bradley's command until after it had taken place, and that from the Secretary of War rather than through direct channels.⁹³ Marshall's language throughout the cable was one of request, rather than direct command. He requested that Eisenhower keep him informed, but in keeping with his discretion as he thought appropriate. Interestingly, it would seem that the independence of action that Marshall had given Eisenhower was less bothersome to the Chief of Staff than it was to others in the chain of command.⁹⁴ To his credit, Eisenhower, in receiving his superior's message apologized in a telegram on August 2, 1944. "I am sorry," he wrote, "that I have not kept you more fully abreast of future plans as I did in North Africa."⁹⁵ After explaining in detail the state of the front in Normandy, he wrote, "I am very hopeful as to immediate results, and believe that within the next two or three days we will so manhandle the western flank of the enemy's forces that we will secure for ourselves freedom of action through destruction of a considerable portion of the forces facing us."⁹⁶

The war was decidedly going in the Allies' favor when the U.S. Army was surprised by the German offensive in the Ardennes region of Belgium on December 15, 1944. Front line troops,

⁹² Ibid., Editorial note.

⁹³ "To General Dwight D. Eisenhower., July 31, 1944," *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 4, 535-536.

⁹⁴ Ibid. Operation Cobra, a massive offensive directed south of St. Lo, had broken the slow pace of the fighting in the Norman countryside and allowed the US Army and other Allied forces to break out into central France.

Eisenhower promised to keep both his superiors at home and his Allies in London informed of his plans and actions.

⁹⁵ "To George Catlett Marshall, And Combined Chiefs of Staff, Cable S 56667," *Eisenhower Papers*, Vol. 4, 2048.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2051.

believing that the Ardennes was a quiet sector, were shocked by the violence of the onslaught.⁹⁷ Eisenhower recognized that the broad nature of the attack meant that this was no minor spoiling attack, but rather a major offensive.⁹⁸ Due to the rapid nature of the German thrust, Eisenhower had temporarily put some American contingents under the command of British Field Marshall Bernard Law Montgomery.⁹⁹ Some in the British press were calling for a British commander to accept much of Eisenhower's workload, even though the crisis had passed. Marshall told Eisenhower on December 30, 1944, "My feeling is this: under no circumstances make any concessions of any kind whatsoever."¹⁰⁰ The command structure as Eisenhower had it was sufficient in Marshall's mind, and whatever the criticisms in Britain, there would be even greater backlash in the on the American home-front. He noted, "I am not assuming that you had in mind such a concession. I just wish you to be certain of our attitude on this side. You are doing a grand job and go on and give them hell."

Even in the following weeks, the British press seemed to take delight in British troops being forwarded into the largely American battle. One story, run in the *Manchester Guardian* stated that, "The Germans had gotten within two and a half miles of the (Meuse) river when the tip of their spear, some eighteen tanks," were wiped out by a joint Allied combat force.¹⁰¹ Despite an explicit statement that the "greater part of the fighting," had been undertaken by U.S. First Army, Montgomery's role was still emphasized through multiple pieces run through the *Guardian* in early January.¹⁰² However, the press was largely out of the loop regarding the strategy and tactical decisions. The *Daily Mail* claimed that Montgomery had foreseen the offensive and likewise rescued the American forces in the area, a blatant misrepresentation of the situation in Bradley's

⁹⁷ John Toland, *Battle: The Story of the Bulge* (New York: Random House, 1959), 24.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

⁹⁹ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 356.

¹⁰⁰ "To General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, December 30, 1944," *Marshall Papers*, Vol. 4, 720-721.

¹⁰¹ David Woodward, "British Tanks Dash to Meet Enemy Spearhead," *The Manchester Guardian*, Jan. 5, 1945, 5.

¹⁰² "Allied Command Changes: Two Fronts Created by Rundstedt's Ardennes Drive," *The Manchester Guardian*, Jan. 6, 1945, 5.

opinion.¹⁰³ However, Eisenhower still demonstrated his leadership over Montgomery and did not grant him any further authority. Bradley wrote, “He compelled Monty to commit to a quick, definite plan.”¹⁰⁴ Bradley’s proposed “hurry up” counter-offensive in early January was launched, with segments of the U.S. First Army pushing South under British control and U.S. Third Army surged Northward.

By March, the Allied forces were enveloping the Ruhr valley and speeding towards the Rhine River.¹⁰⁵ Even when British criticism continued, Marshall was quick to come to Eisenhower’s aid. When Eisenhower readjusted the scope of Montgomery’s offensive into Northwest Germany and thus ended any chances of Anglo-American forces entering Berlin, both Prime Minister Churchill and British Army chief Sir Alan Brooke protested.¹⁰⁶ Whereas, the previous year, Eisenhower had regarded the German capital as a noble military objective, by the spring of 1945, it was not worth the cost in American and British lives to take. As Stephen Ambrose explained, Eisenhower understood that, “the American and even more the British people were tired of the war and wanted it to end.”¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, from an American perspective, if the United States dedicated troops to taking Berlin, it would prolong the struggle in Germany and therefore delay the final effort against Japan in the Pacific.¹⁰⁸

As Berlin fell to the Russians, Hitler committed suicide, leaving the government to Admiral Karl Doenitz.¹⁰⁹ Various German regional commanders were reaching out and offering to surrender their own forces as they were surrounded and overrun, but such surrenders did not encompass the German government. Under Doenitz’s direction, he ordered the final surrender of German forces to

¹⁰³ Bradley, *A General’s Life*, 382.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹⁰⁵ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 385.

¹⁰⁶ Brendon, *Ike*, 181.

¹⁰⁷ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower and Berlin, 1945: The Decision to Halt at the Elbe* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1967), 70.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 424.

the Allies, with his representative arriving Eisenhower's headquarters on May 5. At 2:42 in the morning on May 7, 1945, Field Marshall Alfred Jodl signed the instrument of surrender to the Allied powers.¹¹⁰

Upon hearing the news, Marshall cabled Eisenhower at once:

You have completed your mission with the greatest victory in the history of warfare.

You have commanded with outstanding success the most powerful military force that has ever been assembled.

You have met and successfully disposed of every conceivable difficulty incident to varied national interests and international political problems of unprecedented complications.¹¹¹

Marshall's trust had been fully warranted in Eisenhower, noting that, "Through all of this, since the day of your arrival in England three years ago, you have been selfless in your actions, always sound and tolerant in your judgments and altogether admirable in the courage and wisdom of your military decisions."¹¹² His encouragement was likewise extended to the entire American army in an additional message, stating, "As the destruction of the forces of the Axis in Europe is completed I extend my warmest congratulations and personal thanks to the leaders and soldiers whose indomitable spirit and magnificent fighting have made this historic victory possible."

It is clear from the memoirs of those who served with and under him that Marshall nonetheless had a significant impact on their own careers. For some such as Collins, Eddy, and Bradley, Marshall demonstrated a balanced approach to teaching and leaderships that was dynamic and challenged them to display the highest levels of excellence in their own careers as military thinkers, teachers, and tacticians. For Eisenhower, it was a mentoring partnership where, in strikingly similar ways, the two of them sought to forge a multi-national coalition to win back

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 426.

¹¹¹ "To General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower, May 7, 1945," *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, Vol. 5, "The Finest Soldier," January 1, 1945-January 7, 1947 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 168-169.

¹¹² Ibid.

Europe. While Marshall sought to create the overall strategy with the British Combined Chiefs, Eisenhower was implementing such plans and commanding the coalition in theater. As such, it is hard to envision the careers of the above officers without the presence and mentorship of George C. Marshall.

Conclusion

Marshall left his indelible stamp upon the eventual invasion of France in the summer of 1944, and the successful prosecution of that campaign and the victory in Europe under his subordinate Dwight Eisenhower. In recognition of his impact upon the victory in Europe, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson told Marshall on May 8, 1945, “I have seen a great many soldiers in my lifetime and you, sir, are the finest soldier I have ever known. It is fortunate for this country that we have you in this position because this war cuts deeper into the eternal verities than any other. We have reached the milepost at the first half of this war. I may not live to see the end of the war with Japan, but I pray that you do.”¹

The war ended with Japan’s surrender following the atomic bombings and the Soviet invasion of occupied Manchuria in the first two weeks of August 1945.² Marshall wanted the lessons of the war to be implemented while they were still fresh. In his report to the secretary of war, Marshall observed of the United States that, “We finish each bloody war with a feeling of acute revulsion against this savage form of human behavior, and yet on each occasion, we confuse military preparedness with the causes of war and then drift almost deliberately into another catastrophe.”³ Idealism in a world of “hard realities” would leave the nation’s security vulnerable. “We must start, I think,” he added, “with a correction of the tragic misunderstanding that a security policy is a war policy.”⁴

With the conclusion of the conflict, Marshall had little left for him to do. He had devoted more than forty years of his life to serving his country in the army and resigned as Chief of Staff,

¹ “Secretary of War’s Remarks to General Marshall on V-E Day, May 8, 1945,” *The Marshall Papers*, Vol. 5, 171.

² General George C. Marshall with General H. H. Arnold and Admiral Ernest J. King, *The War Reports of General George C. Marshall, General H. H. Arnold, Admiral Ernest J. King* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1947), 245.

³ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁴ *Ibid.*

United States Army on November 26, 1945.⁵ Upon his retirement, well wishers from across the globe recognized his contribution to the Allied victory. John J. Heflin, of Nashville, Tennessee wrote to Marshall on November 27, 1945, stating that, “As the father of three sons who were in the army and who came through safe and sound, I feel that their mother and I are the personal beneficiaries of your skilled generalship and sound guidance.” Heflin added that his family’s respect and admiration were, “beyond a doubt shared by millions of other Americans.”⁶

Similarly, Senator Lister Hill wrote to Marshall shortly before his retirement, stating that, “With the single exception of Franklin Roosevelt, I believe that you contributed to more to the saving of our country than any other.”⁷ Even the Operations Division joined in giving their praise in their sendoff to Marshall. “Loyalty downward,” J.E. Hull observed in a letter drafted on behalf of the staff in that section, “is not found in all people. You have demonstrated it to an outstanding degree.”⁸ He lamented that, “Although we regret your leaving, we look back on our service with you as an experience of great benefit to us individually and collectively.”

Perhaps the most interesting letter of congratulations came not from the United States or any English-speaking nation, but from China. In flowing italic script, Robert Thompson Jann wrote to Marshall thanking him for American help and arms that China had so desperately needed. “I write this letter to you only to congratulate you on your achievement in the Second World War. You the peaceful world builders fought our common enemies Japan and Germany for building a peaceful

⁵ Forrest Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Statesman, 1945-1959* (New York: Viking Press, 1987), 1.

⁶ “John J. Heflin to General George C. Marshall, November 27, 1945,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 102, Folder 1.

⁷ “Senator Hill to General George C. Marshall, November 23, 1945,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 102, Folder 1.

⁸ “J.E. Hull to General of the Army, George C. Marshall, 26 November 1945,” Marshall Papers, Box 102, Folder 1. No rank is given for Mr. Hull, and he was not found referenced anywhere else to give his specific role. If no rank is given, he likely had separated from the army at that time and wrote the letter for the benefit of his fellow staff officers at the Operations Division.

world for three years and more since Pearl Harbor.”⁹ Jann had built up many friendships with the Americans stationed in his country during the war and recognized that the help that had been sent had benefited him and his nation. He wished to express his gratitude to the American people and Marshall was, he believed, the personification of what made American industry and policy function.¹⁰

In his response to his subordinates, Marshall was quick to recognize their own achievements and to thank them for their well wishes. To an aide from the Ordnance Department from the trying days of 1940-41, Marshall said, “It is thoughtful of you to write as you did, and I want to thank you for the fine support you gave to me and the War Department.”¹¹ However, Marshall’s own service to his country was not yet through. Even though he had retired from the army, Marshall still answered the call of duty in the aftermath of the war. Marshall testified on the growing crisis of civil war in China and the causes of the Pearl Harbor attack. Later, he served as secretary of state and secretary of defense under President Harry Truman, if for no other reason than that he carried such respect with both political parties.¹² The European Recovery Program, (ERP) or “Marshall Plan,” was implemented during Marshall’s tenure as secretary of state. His hard labor before Congress mirrored his pre-war efforts, and Marshall’s unwavering commitment to the ERP and its implementation earned him the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.¹³

Marshall’s retired life was beset with declining health. Beginning in 1954, Marshall was dogged by the flu and pneumonia.¹⁴ Even though the general declined to author an autobiography, he did acquiesce to a biography, the project spurred on in 1956 due to Marshall’s frailty. His

⁹ “Robert Thompson Jann to General George C. Marshall, November 25, 1945,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 102, Folder 1, 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹¹ “Marshall to Brigadier General E.E. MacMorland, November 25, 1945,” Marshall Foundation Archives, Marshall Papers, Box 102, Folder 3.

¹² Pogue, *Statesman*, 145.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 506.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 507.

memory remained strong through 1957, when his health began to decline even further. When President Eisenhower and former Prime Minister Winston Churchill visited Marshall at Walter Reed Hospital in 1958, Marshall could not recall who they were. Churchill bade his farewell to Marshall with tears in his eyes.¹⁵ On October 16, 1959, the general passed away. In keeping with his wishes, Marshall's funeral and burial at Arlington National cemetery were quiet affairs, but were attended by former President Truman, Eisenhower, and many former associates and comrades from his life of government service. On October 20, 1959, George C. Marshall was laid to rest not far from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. As his biographer stated, "George Marshall had completed his tour of duty."¹⁶



Marshall's Grave Marker at Arlington National Cemetery 3/22/2018 – Collection of the Author

From the beginning of Marshall's career, he demonstrated an understanding of discipline and excellence, spurred on by his brother's disparagement. His career choice in the late 1890s came at a time where the army was still a small institution, where such a career would have been a dead-

¹⁵ Ibid., 510.

¹⁶ Ibid., 513.

end job prior to the Spanish American War. As a result of that conflict, the army was expanded and modernized, giving Marshall an opportunity to ply his trade.

His experience in the Philippines gave Marshall an understanding of both the importance of proper discipline and the difficulties of civilian leadership far removed from the realities of what they were administering. A cholera epidemic required that the troops adhere to strict sanitary standard. As Marshall stated, “A very little skimping could cost you your life.”¹⁷ Furthermore, American officers had been censured for severe reprisals, which, even though Marshall condemned them, were rooted in the violent nature of the war against tribal insurgents who lacked discipline or moral restraint. Governor Howard Taft had sought to grant the Philippines to full independence at the earliest possible date.¹⁸ Marshall made his own judgement, believing that civilian officials were too optimistic, while many of his fellow officers were myopic and failed to see how excessive their actions were.

As a man who trusted his own judgement, Marshall was tasked with higher command as a staff officer during the First World War. First as a captain, and later a major, Marshall solved complex logistical and command issues, even when his leadership style clashed with older, more traditional officers. This is illustrated most vividly in his work to supply the Plattsburg camps and having to justify the increased cost for supplying almost 5,000 men to a full colonel. Later, when assigned to the First Division, Marshall and his fellow officers had to determine the basic necessities of modern warfare from Allied memorandums and documents. “Today,” he wrote in 1923, “it is inconceivable that we should have found ourselves committed to a war while yet in such a complete state of unpreparedness.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Ibid., 74.

¹⁸ Ibid., 80.

¹⁹ Marshall, *Memoirs of My Service in the World War*, 7.

The war would imprint upon Marshall a key lesson that he would carry with him to the next. The United States could not blatantly fall behind other world powers and expect to catch up after the war had started, not without a heavy loss of life and not without allies to rely upon. Incompetence on the battlefield and the rushed nature of the training had resulted in many American deaths. He believed this in 1923, when he addressed a group of Massachusetts school teachers, and later, when called to testify before congress as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army, he staunchly held to this belief. As he said in 1939, “The future problems of our Army visualize no such protected period for overcoming peacetime military difficulties. We must be prepared to stand on our own feet.”²⁰ Marshall’s adherence to those lessons, earned him the respect of President Roosevelt. As Richard Moe argues, despite their differences in management style, “Roosevelt came to see in Marshall the candid, intelligent, and incorruptible professional soldier he needed by his side.”²¹ The process Marshall held to, intended to avoid the errors of the previous conflict as much as was possible, and in the divided nature of pre-war politics, Marshall had to defend that plan by making allies with the anti-Roosevelt and the isolationist factions of both parties on capitol hill.

By most measurements, he succeeded in creating the army that was needed. The army was expanded through voluntary enlistments, and funding for training exercises and new equipment helped vitalize National Defense in the aftermath of the German invasion of Poland. Marshall was forced to compromise his goals in the light of political necessity. Much of the support for his efforts, including the Selective Service Act of 1940, was reactionary. It was not until the fall of 1940 that a sizeable majority of Americans approved of a conscription measure, thus leading to its passage.²² Even then, the renewal of the act in 1941 was only passed with the margin of a single vote.²³

²⁰ Major H.A. DeWeed, ed., “Statements on the Purpose and Advantages of Army Maneuvers, November 30, 1939,” from *Selected Speeches and Statements*, 33.

²¹ Moe, *Roosevelt’s Second Act*, 30.

²² *Ibid.*, 253.

²³ Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 3.

The generals who served under Marshall were often students of his from the interwar era. Omar Bradley, J. Lawton Collins, and Manton Eddy were students or faculty at the Infantry School at Fort Benning during Marshall's tenure between 1927 and 1932. Together, they attested to Marshall's personnel mentoring to the students and faculty. Practically all respected him. Even later, Eisenhower, having never served under Marshall previously, was struck by the Chief of Staff's trust and personal skills. He observed that Marshall, "not only expedited work but impelled every subordinate to perform beyond his own suspected capacity."²⁴ Eisenhower, in return, earned his commander's trust and was appointed as the Supreme Allied Commander, first for North Africa, and later for the Allied Invasion of Europe.

Marshall's involvement in Allied strategy was linked to the invasion of mainland Europe. From the beginning of the Allied partnership, Marshall wanted a cross channel invasion that would meet the German army in battle and move into the German heartland to destroy the Axis powers' ability to wage war. It took a constant push for this strategy for it to be implemented at the Quebec conference, when Winston Churchill conceded the matter.²⁵ Marshall's strategy would be implemented under the direction of Dwight Eisenhower. Throughout the entirety of his tenure in Europe, Eisenhower received Marshall's full support and was given the freedom of action that he needed to conduct operations against the German military with an army of citizen soldiers.

As far as the troops' performance was concerned, military historian Peter Mansoor noted that the process of creating that army, "did not work smoothly, and perhaps the end result was not what army leaders had intended when they began the mobilization process in 1940. Nevertheless, American divisions... performed competently on the battlefield once they overcame the initial

²⁴ Ibid., 40.

²⁵ Roberts, *Masters and Commanders*, 573.

shock of combat.”²⁶ American commanders were unquestionably confident in the capability of their men by 1944.

At the end of the war, many people, from the secretary of war and the British prime minister, down to line officers and civilians, recognized Marshall impact and role in the Allied victory. Churchill called Marshall the “Organizer of Victory,” while many wrote to the general after his retirement thanking him for his wise leadership.²⁷ Marshall firmly believed that leadership and training were at the root of a successful army. His conviction was rooted in his own experience in the Philippines, the First World War, and in the lessons of American wars prior to his tenure in the Army. He understood the unchanging fundamentals of war, but as his tenure at the infantry school showed, he also anticipated the change in tactics and technology that would distinguish the Second World War from the First.

Marshall’s convictions and personal commitment to his country served him and his nation well in a time when sound conviction and policy was needed the most. It is quite fitting then, that given his humility, he does not possess a gaudy memorial or a distinct burial plot. Rather, his tombstone under which he, his first and second wives, and mother in-law are buried stands among those of other soldiers and warriors who had served with him. Matthew Ridgway and Walter Bedel Smith are buried within feet of Marshall’s headstone. Marshall was not a glory seeking man, but rather a soldier who sought to do his duty.

²⁶ Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe*, 266.

²⁷ Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Organizer of Victory*, 585.

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