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Marshall— Democratic General

By George Creel

One of his subordinates called General Marshall "the best damned man I've got." Every American, when he learns the facts, might well say the same



WHEN the order is given for a supreme assault on the European continent, it will come from George Catlett Marshall, as generalissimo of the Allied armies. He will hold this position in recognition of his military genius, administrative ability and gift of leadership. Strong words, but every one a direct quote from high sources both in England and the United States.

People point to General Marshall as proof that a benign Providence watches over America, pushing forward the right man at the right moment. Back in the summer of 1939, when a new Chief of Staff had to be appointed, modest, unassuming Marshall seemed to be buried out of sight. He was outranked by twenty major generals and fourteen brigadiers. Yet the Great White Father reached down through that mass of gold braid and tapped the thirty-fifth in line.

In this particular decision, Providence played no part. It was the voice of the Army, raised in chorus, that guided the President in his selection. Every member of the high command put by his own hopes and ambitions, and pointed to tall, straight, steady-eyed Marshall as the man best fitted for the job.

From the day that he first wore a uniform, George Marshall has been a marked man. Not a West Pointer, for his father was the only Democrat in a Pennsylvania district, his brilliant record at the Virginia Military Institute won him a commission. Later he graduated from the United States Infantry School and the

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Army Staff College, both open only to young officers of exceptional ability. Serving in the Philippines, he enthused General Franklin Bell to the point of prophesying that Lieutenant Marshall might well become "the greatest military genius since Stonewall Jackson."

Sent to France in 1917, he was straightway assigned to staff duty with the First Division and soon rose to be Chief of Operations for the First Army. General Pershing gave him the job of withdrawing troops from the Saint-Mihiel salient to new positions for the Meuse-Argonne offensive. A task of magnitude, for to be done successfully, it had to be done secretly. And Marshall delivered! In fourteen days he moved a million men and their equipment, right under the noses of the Germans, without arousing their suspicions.

After the armistice, General Pershing chose him as his aide, and there were four years of intimate association with that great soldier. Nevertheless, the good old seniority rule and Marshall's own invincible modesty made promotion slow. It was only in 1936 that he pinned on the star of a brigadier general, and not until 1938 that he came up out of the shadows of the hinterland into the bright sun of Washington.



Marshall at the Virginia Military Institute

First as Assistant Chief of Staff on the War Plans Division, then as Deputy Chief of Staff, he performed with his usual brilliance. But the public had never heard of him when he was raised to the highest command.

General George Marshall's handling of a job unprecedented in military history has won him the admiration of all the United Nations.

Unprecedented is the only word for it. General Marshall has to deal with nine theaters of operations, directing an overseas force scattered over six continents; not battle plans alone, but the equally important business of providing each theater, and clamoring allies as well, with the necessary supplies, assembling these supplies at ports of embarkation, finding the ships and then hurrying them over 56,000 miles of protected communication lines, every mile a gantlet. On top of this, there are the home front with more than 7,000,000 selectees to be clothed, fed, trained and conditioned, and the necessity of close co-ordination with Congress, Navy, State Department and White House: a crushing load, yet General Marshall takes it in his stride.

Watching him work is like watching the drive of a perfectly tuned, high-pow-

ered machine. Mental discipline, supplementing natural ability, has placed every faculty at his immediate call, and he operates without waste motion. Every morning, precisely at 7:30, he enters the Pentagon Building, driving over from an old-fashioned, rambling Army house in Fort Meyer. Every afternoon at 5 o'clock, after a packed, jammed day that ought to leave him stretched flat on the floor, he walks out as spruce, erect and serene as when he arrived.

No one has ever seen him show evidence of pressure, and never yet has the quiet of his office been shattered by shouts and desk-pounding. About the only time he ever showed signs of mounting blood pressure was when a friendly columnist mentioned him as a Presidential possibility in 1944.

"That *did* upset him," confided a grinning general. "As a boy, I drove mules in Missouri, but the chief used a lot of words that were brand-new to me."

Physical fitness, of course, is one of the answers to General Marshall's smooth, easy drive. At sixty-two, he has the spring of a man in his thirties. An enthusiastic hunter and angler, all through the years he has lost no chance to whip trout streams and follow bird dogs through autumn fields and woods. Summers always found him at his cottage on Fire Island, where he swam and fished and browned his bare back in the sun.

No Escape from Duty

Now that Fire Island and hunting trips are out of the question, he has a five-acre place near Leesburg, Virginia, where he tries to spend his Sundays digging, pruning and pottering about in old clothes. All through the day, however, the telephone rings, and messengers go looking for him, for he is in constant touch with his office.

"Somehow," he sighs, "they always pick a time when I'm up in a tree. Running up and down the ladder is giving me the hip development of a kangaroo."

As a result, his chief reliance for regular exercise is a before-dinner canter on Prepare, a spirited chestnut gelding. Except for official affairs (and he does his darnedest to get out of these) he dines quietly at home with Mrs. Marshall. Sometimes there is a movie in the evening at the Post Exchange, and sometimes a book, but he hits the hay regularly at 10 o'clock and falls asleep the minute his head touches the pillow. Worries are never carried to bed.

On reaching his desk, the Chief of Staff gives first attention to the "log," meaning the high lights of the radiograms and cables that have come in overnight. The progress of the war on all fronts, the demands of our own generals and the appeals of allies, each convinced that his own need is the most pressing.

After digesting the log, he clears his desk of immediate personal matters, dictating in a clear, pleasant voice that never stops to fumble for a word. This done, he is ready for Major General Thomas T. Handy, Chief of Operations, General Henry H. Arnold, boss of the Army Air Forces, and Major General George Strong, head of Military Intelligence. These are the men who aid and advise with respect to overseas operations. Tom Handy and his experts concentrate on tactics and strategy; General Strong's famous G-2 is the eyes and ears of the Armed Forces, reporting on the enemy; and "Hap" Arnold, the robustious, has everything that relates to aircraft at his finger tips.

Brought up to the minute on every development, General Marshall makes his decisions. Quite obviously, those he makes

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Marshall can laugh, too. Above, he's with Mrs. Winston Churchill.

today cannot be discussed, but a sample can be drawn from the past. Before and during the British retreat to El Alamein, General Marshall was under terrific pressure to help out in the Middle East. At the same time, it was urgent that we build depots, lay railroad tracks and make harbor improvements in the Persian Gulf, providing a shorter, swifter, safer way for Russian supplies than the deadly Murmansk route.

Without hesitation, General Marshall stripped the home front of equipment, but refused to stop the flow of men and material to the Persian Gulf. The decision was justified by events. Our tanks and guns, bombers and fighters, enabled the British to drive Rommel back, and the Persian Gulf route contributed in no small measure to the sudden halt of the German thrust in Russia.

In the huddles with his "overseas team," the Chief of Staff follows every engagement shot by shot. Naturally a kindly man, he is as cold as a lizard when it comes to incompetence. Theater commanders are under orders to shift and demote as their judgment suggests, and already there are instances where high officers have been removed in the heat of battle. Here, in General Marshall's own words, is what he expects of his leaders: "Military skill, physical stamina, strength of character and flexibility of mind. Not only for the day but for the duration. The success or failure of a campaign, and the welfare of innumerable lives, are dependent on decisions made by commanders. It is not enough for them to *be* good. They've got to *stay* good."

These conferences with Handy, Strong and Arnold may run for one hour, two or three. As messages pour in through the day, these men may be called back time and again. Anything of supreme importance is relayed to General Marshall at his home, no matter how late. Usually, however, the morning huddle is over in an hour or two, and then it is the turn of the "home-front team" composed of Lieutenant General Joseph T. McNarney, Lieutenant General Brehon Somervell, Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair and the omnipresent Hap Arnold. In these four men lies the secret of General Marshall's orderly, unhurried days.

At the time of Marshall's appointment on September 1, 1939, the Army was more thoroughly bureaucratized than any other department of government, and that's saying a lot. Every branch had its divisions and subdivisions, each with independent powers and unrelated functions.

An Integrated Command

A harassed Chief of Staff, instead of dealing with one authoritative head, had to hold regular forums. Ancient prejudices made for jealousies and rivalries, every branch being convinced of its superior importance, with hidebound conservatives frowning on mechanization and resisting any enlargement of the air branch. Faced with the job of transform-



The general is a devoted husband. Here he helps Mrs. Marshall don heavy socks at a football game. He dines with her as often as possible

ing a peacetime force of 150,000 into a ready-for-war army of millions, General Marshall set up three principal commands under his control: the Army Ground Forces, the Army Air Forces and the Army Service Forces.

General Marshall knows every ranking officer in the regular military establishment, having studied and appraised them throughout his forty-three years in the Army. He knew the men he wanted to head these three great commands. Without hesitation, everything that pertained to the building of a citizen army was put under General McNair. Hap Arnold, that stormy petrel who stood shoulder to shoulder with Billy Mitchell in the fight for the recognition of airpower, was given a free hand in the development of "the greatest air force in the world;" the job of assembling the means of war within the United States, and their transportation to combat areas, was assigned to hard-driving, hard-hitting Somervell of the Engineers; and to General McNarney, great soldier and master organizer, went the job of *integrating* the three commands, doing away with old jealousies and rivalries, and seeing to it that the whole machine is kept in balance. As a result, the *Army* of the United States is today a *unit*.

Another important part of the Marshall day involves co-ordination. In the first World War, he saw Allied armies brought to the edge of disaster time after time by lack of a unified command. Out of this bitter memory, one of his first insistences was the creation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to assure complete co-ordination of America's war effort. This body is composed of General Marshall himself, Admiral Ernest King, Commander in Chief of the Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral William D. Leahy, the President's personal Chief of Staff, and General Arnold.

Era of Good Feeling

Co-operation between the Army and the Navy is worked out at regular meetings. There is no trace of the old feeling that had much to do with the tragedy of Pearl Harbor, where Admiral Kimmel and General Short each went his own bull-headed way.

There is also a Combined Chiefs of Staff that ties together the British and American war effort. Field Marshal Sir John Dill, formerly Chief of Staff of the armies of the United Kingdom, now has his station in Washington.

While purely military conferences make up a large part of the Marshall day, they are far from filling it. Daily consultations with the Secretary of War, whose office adjoins, is a fixed rule. The Chief of Staff respects and defers to Mr. Stimson's broad experience in public life, and the Secretary

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makes no secret of his regard for General Marshall's military genius.

There are also frequent summonses to the White House, for the President follows the war no less closely than General Marshall. There are calls by senators and representatives, and interviews with representatives of the State Department, the Treasury and other high officials. In the beginning, General Marshall spent a large part of his time before congressional committees, but the Congress has come to have such confidence in his judgment that he is no longer deviled by these inquisitions.

A principal reason for this confidence is General Marshall's democratic recognition of the truth that the war is not the war of the Army, the Navy or the Administration, but the war of a whole people. The most remarkable thing about a very remarkable man is his utter lack of brass-hatism. Mark the care he has taken to report regularly to both the Senate and the House on every detail of America's war effort. Not perfunctory talks, but full and frank expositions.

Ask General Surles, who runs the Army's Bureau of Public Relations, and he will admit that the Chief of Staff is "the best damned man I've got."

A "soldier's soldier" in the estimation of the Army, George Marshall is even more a "citizen's soldier." Forty-three years in uniform, and yet he has escaped the usual "professional deformation." He can not only talk with civilians in their own language, but he can also see things from the civilian point of view. Even during the years when Congress denied adequate appropriations for the Army, no one ever heard him snarl at "rotten politicians." He saw the unwillingness to prepare for war as proceeding from a democracy's hatred of war, and even while regretting it, he understood.

In the black days when it seemed that nothing could stop the forward sweep of Hitler's Panzer divisions, only General Marshall, of all the military crowd, refused to lift his voice in angry denunciation of pacifists, isolationists and politicians as responsible for unpreparedness.

"Democratic governments," he explained, "devote their resources to improving the standard of living of their people. When attacked by nations which have concentrated on preparations for a war of conquest, it is inevitable that the aggressors will score the initial successes."

A good sense of humor also marches side by side with his nice sense of proportion. Once when an associate was dilating on the might of Hitler's armies, General Marshall harked back to his football days at Virginia Military Institute.

Below, fishing



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"In one game where I was at tackle," he said, "the guard on the other side weighed around 250 pounds to my 170. When he lined up, I didn't feel any too happy over the outlook, but after two or three plays, I found I could outthink him. Since that day, size has never bothered me."

In considering General Marshall's departures from the purely military type—the Blood and Iron boys—there is one difference that stands out above all others. It is in his regard for human life.

In war, as soldiers explain it, there are two primary rules: (1) to kill as many of the enemy as possible; (2) to do this with the least possible loss. George Marshall stresses the second rule no less than the first. There is not a youngster who goes abroad but is the object of his deep, personal concern.

A part of the mail that goes out of his office every day, no matter how crowded that day may be, is letters to the "next of kin." As a result, the fathers and mothers of America have one consolation, at least, that can be taken to their hearts. They have General Marshall's promise that the youth of the land will not be sent to fight in foreign lands without "the best leadership, the best training, the best conditioning, the best discipline, and the best of everything else that will give them the best chance of coming back alive."

To assure prompt and thorough training, he streamlined his organization, cut red tape, junked outworn procedure, and made the test of a thing its use and not its age. The small Regular Army was ripped to pieces, so that selectees might waste no time in the training period. New divisions were set up in full around veteran cadres.

Training for Eventualities

"Don't bother about fancy formations," was the order given General McNair. "Teach them what they will need on the battlefield." What Marshall wanted and what he got was not a lot of dress-parade robots, but aggressive soldiers able to wage an offensive war on their own initiative and their own terms. The landings in Africa and at Salerno were not improvisations, for here at home, men had practiced how to get on and off a barge and just what to do after landing.

Tank crews train with the thermometer at 40 below or 140 above, mines exploding under the treads, and projectiles bouncing off the sides. There is instruction in mine planting, mine disposal and booby traps. Every maneuver is a battle rehearsal, and as the rookies charge through sandstorms, scale crags, cross streams and attack fortified positions, live ammunition screams over their heads, accustoming them to the sounds and sensations of combat.

Nothing is left to chance or the law of averages. Before a youngster is trained for a particular spot, both his physical and his temperamental fitness are determined by tests. Care is taken that no round peg goes into a square hole; and while all come out as highly trained specialists of some kind, every man finishes up by knowing something about everything connected with his task. It is no accident that in our bombers, a gunner takes over if his pilot is killed or wounded.

Along with the kind of training and conditioning that will give every soldier "the best chance to come back alive," General Marshall stresses leadership. In France—another lesson remembered—he saw General Pershing's hands tied by peacetime promotion rules that put seniority before competence. As Chief of Staff, one of his first acts was to make merit the determining factor in selecting his com-

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manders. Paraphrasing Napoleon, who said that the humblest soldier carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack, General Marshall gave it out that every man in Uncle Sam's Army had a "star in his pocket."

Dwight Eisenhower, as an instance, was a lieutenant colonel who had never been under fire, yet he was picked for supreme command in the North African theater. Out of selections made in utter disregard of seniority rules has come many a heartbreak, but every man in the Army knows General Marshall is utterly without prejudice.

Never before were the gates to promotion so wide open. As early as 1941, the Chief of Staff approved General McNair's plan for the establishment of schools to give special training to enlisted men who, in the estimation of their officers, possessed outstanding qualifications. Today, social standing, peacetime abilities and even formal education are ignored as requisites for leadership, all emphasis being laid on intelligence, character and temperamental gifts. A democratic Army!

A large volume couldn't set down all the things that George Marshall has done, but the result stands clear for the nation to see. In less than two years, he has accomplished what took the Germans ten, and under a harsh dictatorship where only military might was considered.

On thinking it over, maybe Providence *did* have a hand in George Marshall's selection as Chief of Staff.

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