

Notes 85N, Copy 2

General T. T. Handy

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Interview with General T. T. Handy, former deputy chief of staff of U. S. Army during World War II, by Forrest C. Pogue at General Handy 's home on Runnymede Place, Washington, August 21, 1956.

I began by asking General Handy for suggestions on interviews with General Marshall. I asked if he felt that the General would prefer very detailed questions based on documents or those involving reminiscences. He said that the General was in a reminiscent mood and would probably prefer that approach. Later, perhaps he would respond to the other. He thinks the General must be ready to talk now, inasmuch as he formerly said he would not since it would require the whole story and that would bring up recriminations. Would have to give political background and what President and others said to him. Pointed out that General could soon tell whether the man interviewing knew what he was doing and then be difficult. Said General would talk as long as he was interested and then drop it when he was through. Saw no reason why he would not be willing to talk about MacArthur and other topics. Thinks I should have no trouble. Of course, you must study the man you are interviewing.

Early in the interview, General Handy spoke of going back into History of some of the conferences. He said that he had recently been reading Matloff's recent manuscript and that it was good. (Talked of going to the Algiers conference, following the Washington conference of 1943. Conference called SHARPENER. Bedell asked Ismay why they had come. Ismay said I think the Mahster wanted to sharpen some pencils. Bedell. Said you know the reason. It was clear that the P. M. wanted to change the decision at Washington. Hoped to pressure Ike some. P. M. never stopped trying).

This brought us to the Mediterranean and ANVIL. Gen Handy said that people who criticize strategy always forget the perspective. What if we had changed down there? Churchill got rough. Most of the British talked very rough. Abe Lincoln (Brig Gen G A Lincoln) compiled a wonderful "Castigation of ANVIL" which consisted of things the British said about the operation. Gave copy to Stinson who was delighted. Stinson said he would use it at Quebec but didn't. Gained force because it was put together after things were going well and Task Force Butler was running loose.

North Africa was a chancy plan. I didn't like it. Very few did. It worked, but we took a big chance. (Gen Patton was brought in by the Old Man to talk about plans. He began to talk big and loud. When asked about his plans he said he would take the God Damn landing craft and ran it right up the German's asses. Said if he had any trouble with Navy he would just kick them overboard. Gen Marshall heard about all this and said if George didn't keep his mouth shut, he would be back in the desert again. This was a reference to fact that earlier Patton had been brought in from Desert Training Center to plan for sending a division to the Middle East. Patton said he needed a corps. Finally Marshall just sent him back to the desert and Mutton changed his tune. Thinks that Gen Marshall liked Patton, but intended to keep him in line).

Gen Handy, who served under Patton in 2d Armored Division as a battalion commander, said that he got along with Patton and this was reason Patton would sometimes write him. He says

that Geoffrey Keyes could keep Patton in line better than anyone; that the slapping and other things happened when Keyes wasn't with him. Says he thinks it was well for Patton's reputation that he died early. Would have ruined himself.

I asked if he thought Patton was best as army commander. He says that Patton would probably have done well at any level; that he was brilliant and could adjust; that much of bad boy business was acting. Handy said he was on promotion list which Patton held up by popping off in 1944. But Marshall not willing to let that keep Patton from fighting. Handy thinks Patton probably the best fighting man we had. (Said Patton let him see part of his Diary, and would nay send it on to Mrs. Patton. Much of it was worse than that which was published).

Marshall never had a clique. Never a gang. No one could work an angle with him. As long as you did your work well, that was all right. He could be rough when he wanted to be, and could raise hell. And he could freeze you. But he would listen for long periods when he was being briefed and it was astounding what he could remember. I remember that once on the Hill he gave specific answers to a number of questions based on material he had picked up over a number of weeks from briefing officers.

Marshall liked for people to know what they were going to tell him. He would ask sometime why some people didn't come to the point. I told him they were afraid of him. That always made him mad. When he argued the point, I told him I had been afraid myself, and wasn't quite over it.

(Handy was in WPD at time that Marshall came in, in 1938. Handy knew him slightly. Went away for a time and then came back. In War Plans. Said he told Marshall once I never expected to be Deputy Chief of Staff--I thought you would want an air man, and then I thought you wouldn't want anyone from V. M. I. Marshall said if he had known I was he wouldn't have picked me.

(Marshall not the man who picked Ike. Doubts if he knew him. We needed someone who knew the Philippine area; Gerow sent for Ike. They had known each other earlier.)

Very few of Marshalls old friends in OCS. Probably Hap Arnold the only one. Marshall hadn't known Somervell.

Selection of Marshall as Chief of Staff.-Handy said he was at low level when this was done; had little knowledge. Says FDR once said, "Drum drummed himself out of the job." That was by politicking. Drum's brother a priest; Drum a Catholic. Jim Farley and other New York politicians pressured Roosevelt in favor of Drum. Doubts if party politics involved in Marshall appointment. Thinks Pershing was big factor. Pershing always thought Marshall should be chief of staff. Used to say that if they didn't promote Marshall pretty soon he wouldn't be in line for chief of staff job.

Drum pretty well ruined himself by turning down China job. Stinson didn't like the idea said was drum the man for the job.) Handy said this was hard to say. After all many men rise to responsibilities. Had ability.

Hap Arnold used to say "I like to see if a man grows on the job."

Talk about MacArthur. Ambitious man. Even in World War I he was looking toward the heights; and that included Presidency. Handy was in his division. MacArthur personally brave--very unfair to call him Dugout Doug. Instead of dodging danger, he looked for it. Recalls his saying that they could have taken Metz. Thinks if he had been division commander, they would have tried it. Willing to gamble.

I said I had the impression that between MacArthur and Marshall, the one was brilliant and flashy, the other solid. Said that was about it.

MacArthur had lots of trouble with Navy. Disturbed Marshall; he seldom said anything. No ganging up against MacArthur by Marshall or staff. Tried to give him stuff. Marshall on record as feeling that MacArthur had a bad time.

MacArthur hurt own case in Ph Is by saying there would be no war, and that they could hold two years.

MacArthur received Marshall on way back from Tehran. Very cordial. He had been Chief of Staff and at least had respect for office of C of S.

Agreed with me that MacArthur must have known political overtones of his actions in writing to Joe Martin. Said MacArthur a gambler. Had a flair; could get more out of people than most. Usually had poor staff, but could raise them above themselves. Had a gang, but they worked for him. If they liked him, they were all for him. Marshall usually changed staff until he got people who could do good work.

Doubts if Max MacArthur ever in place to give Marshall a bad efficiency rating.

Says Ike became disgusted with MacArthur in 1941.

Stimson--was getting to be an old man in 1940s. Still a good mind. Chief virtue and defect was that he had a one-track mind. Sometimes disconcerting because he was not more flexible. He favored Plattsburg officer training idea; Marshall favored officers candidate school, (Was a sound idea. Doesn't know about early disagreements between Marshall and Stimson, but knows they did not always agree.

Dill--Even Ernie King, who didn't like Britishers, liked Dill. Marshall sent officers to see him when they would come back from trips and let them tell Dill. We got much information from him. Quite often we depended on him to let us know what FDR told the P. M. Roosevelt not opposed to our knowing; just didn't have the administration organized well. Dill never given proper credit by British; he had been relieved. But it was of great importance that he was here.

Marshall worked hard to get a Chief of Staff for President appointed; forerunner of Chun of Jt. Chiefs. Helped to build up place for Leahy. Then FDR just about ruined the thing by saying

that Leahy was to be a sort of leg man. Interesting to notice something about JCS: originally just Marshall and King then Marshall brought his airman, Arnold, to meetings. King could have done the same, but he didn't care to. No formal statement of It Arnold's role. One day, Roosevelt in a speech said the Jt Chiefs were King, Marshall, and Arnold. That was something they could refer to. Not until later was there a charter for JCS. (Marshall may have suggested it for speech).

Marshall and Roosevelt did not always agree. Marshall had respect for Roosevelt's ability, but didn't always agree. Roosevelt did not bring political pressure to get certain campaigns made or changed. If we had been losing he might have, but so long as we were winning, it was good politics for him to keep the winnings team in. Refers to timing of TORCH as example of how U. did not interfere. Handy cannot understand why Fuller would make the statement that politics responsible for the decision in September to hick advance on Patton's flank.

(Comment on records. Bedell and Dyke (killed in air Accident) once had to write up minutes of a session. Dyke showed Bedell his account. Bedell said you know that wasn't what they said. Dyke said that this was what they should have said. Handy said ?I told someone lately that if you will always quote purple with what they should have said, you will have no trouble."

Simpson--ideal commander; one of the best. Competent. Remembers a story of Simpson taking over a corps where there had been dissension. Said Simpson arrived and summoned staff to a meeting outside. Had his hat on. Said there are certain rules all must observe. This is a democracy, but sometimes you must follow rules in order to preserve or gain it. There is a rule that everyone must wear his hair short. Tour commander will set the example. He then pulled off his hat and everyone saw his absolutely bald dome. They began to work together at once.

Courtney Hodges--good man. Did good job. Marshall liked him.

Wedemeyer able man. Backed by Gen Marshall. However, he has since gotten a slanted view. Felt he should have had Ridgway's place. Was satisfied to stay here in 1943. Didn't want the job with Mountbatten, but Mountbatten asked for his as C of S. General called his Wedemeyer. Wedemeyer always said should be Wedemeyer.

Collins--brought along by Gen Marshall.

Stilwell--Marshall not completely for Stilwell at first for China job because he thought Chiang Kai-shek would hold against him the fact that he had been an attaché and try to treat him like that. Later, Gen M. changed his view. Drum slated for job and he said no. Drum wanted to go to Europe. Stilwell blunt and plain spoken. Gave Marshall his views. I asked about We. Stilwell's charge that he was put under censorship when he came back after relieves. Gen Handy said that he and Gen Surely met Stilwell at the plane and suggested for his own sake that he not make comments on China. Later, Stilwell came in and asked, "Is the blanket still on?" I said I suppose so. Then I asked what would you say if it were off. He began by saying Americans shouldn't crawl on their bellies before a bunch of bandits and a lot of stuff like -It wouldn't have helped him or us.

Montgomery--difficult person, but was the outstanding European commander of the war. Monty summed up for me in story of how he and Alexander came home before the Sicilian campaign. They were told not to be seen too prominently lest the Germans would know they were both gone. Alexander went to his home Monty went to theater and got acclamation. While Gen Handy was in USAFE, he had Monty up. Handy's boys put on a fine briefing. Monty praised them and then began giving his views. Handy began to realize that Monty was using the situation so he could go back and may "I have said so and so and the Americans didn't disagree." So Handy took exception to some of it, while making clear his great regard for Montgomery as a commander. Told the officers that they had had a chance to get the real information from the "horse's mouth." Someone told him he had better tell Monty what he meant; said Monty had been accustomed to being identified with another part of the horse's anatomy.

Memoirs--many not good. Thinks Truscott's one of the best. Perhaps he should have left out some of the stuff on Clark. Thinks did not have to contrast Alexander with one aide with the announcements and big staff of Clark. However did throw light on the difference between the two. Clark ambitious and dramatic; some things in common with MacArthur.

Churchill--was proud of his role as a strategist. You could say to him you are not a good historian or a statesman and he wouldn't argue. But say you are a poor strategist and he would explode. Wedemeyer said once don't you think you were wrong on ANVIL and he thought the old man would have apoplexy.

In writing of Yalta period and desire to get Russians into the war, we should remember the perspective. Handy never recalls that any high ranking officer made a point out of opposing Russian help. May have said no good reason, but made no point of it. Certainly the army wanted the Russian help. After all Japanese had showed themselves to be the most tenacious fighters of the war. If they would fight to the death on distant islands, how about the mainland? Handy and others weren't sure the Japanese would quit even when armistice signed. On this MacArthur was more accurate than we in the War Dept, Handy said. Everything pointed to need of help. We wanted to end the war not ultimately but as soon as possible. Remembers arguing with Congress on need of men. They said why do you need anymore. Army's argument was we don't want to win the war by 51 per cent. We want to win it decisively and quickly.

Marshall watched soldier gripes. Did this in particular in the OHIO period of 1941; this a time when it looked as if he would have to send the Natl Guard home that fall.

Back to perspective. We must remember that it is difficult to reconstruct. Dangerous to argue back from fact that we won to assume that the winning was assured earlier.

I remember telling some people once who were arguing we must have stockpiles to feed liberated France that we must have stockpiles to permit us to liberate France first. Many people get the facts changed around.

Butcher took advantage of Eisenhower's friendship. Should never have published all those things. Marshall angry that Butcher published things he and others had said. Would not have

talked about certain things to Butcher if he hadn't assumed that he could be trusted. Embarrassed to have these things in book.

Morgan--fine person. Marshall wanted him as chief of staff of OVERLORD if Marshall commanded. Brought him over to become familiar with use was allowed to attend briefings and to see everything. Morgan said once he learned a lot about the U. S. from the WAC corporal in his office. His expressions and reactions illuminating.

Marshall not as austere as formerly. Came to see Handy in Heidelberg after the Oslo ceremony in 1953. Was nearly sick; had hoped to Rest on the way over. Not successful. In bed much of the time in Heidelberg. Shopped some; then went up to Frankfurt. Gave a wonderful talk to staff there. Seems to like to reminisce. Thinks it well to start along those lines.

Anzio--Truman right about the badness of the operation, but not the squirrel-headed general. Was the P. M.'s opn. Eisenhower was about to leave; he preformed to have nothing to do with it. P. It, worked it out while recovering at Marrakech. Generals didn't like it.