Preface

The crossing of the Rhine by United States troops in March 1945 prompted Prime Minister Winston Churchill to send warm congratulations to General George C. Marshall, whom he called "the true organizer of victory." Churchill thus paid tribute to the Chief of Staff's achievement in building the Army and Army Air Forces from a combined strength of less than 200,000 men in the summer of 1939 to 8½ million in 1945. Equally important was the task of arming and equipping these forces, training them in realistic exercises, and selecting able commanders for the campaigns that lay ahead. In a sense the British leader was repeating Time magazine's accolade at the end of 1943 when it named him "Man of the Year." George Marshall, it declared, "had armed the Republic."

Marshall not only helped to name or personally did name the key commanders of the Army and Army Air Forces in World War II, but he also carried the primary role in deliberations of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff councils. He was sworn in as Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army on the date that Hitler invaded Poland and remained in that post until some months after the surrender of Japan. His leadership of the Army and Army Air Forces thus spanned the most tremendous six years of their history. As a leading representative of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in their dealings with Congress, the press, leaders of industry, and the general public, he played a more influential role than any other American or any British Chief of Staff. In the councils of the Allied Chiefs of Staff it was clear, as one British official historian put it, that he was primus inter pares. In those meetings, he was the chief American advocate of the cross-Channel strategy that was ultimately followed to victory in Europe.

The period 1943–1945 was marked by the growing recognition of Marshall by both President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill. Increasingly he drafted messages concerning strategy and operations for the President's signature. At each Allied conference he was the American whose assent Churchill rated most vital for any strategic decisions.

In these years Marshall also won unparalleled respect from the President, the Congress, and the general public because of his absolute refusal to be considered as a possible presidential candidate. His nonpolitical position led him to avoid appearing before congressional committees or at news conferences in defense of administration proposals unless they specifically concerned the Army. Like Stimson, he resisted pressures to
lend the War Department's or the Army's prestige to promote enactment of party measures. To an amazing degree he was able to prevent opponents of the President from attacking the Army and Air Forces for involvement in administration politics.

General Marshall and his associates have been severely criticized for their failure to think "politically" about military decisions in Europe. But as I shall show, their action was motivated not by disregard for political matters but by their belief that such matters belong to political chiefs of state. Marshall in particular maintained that only the political leaders could know all the factors affecting major strategic decisions, and he felt that they should be closely involved in decisions entailing the risk of substantial casualties.

Along with his conviction that political chiefs should make political decisions involving military forces went Marshall's equally strong conviction that the details of military operations should be left to military commanders in the field. He limited his own interference in combat operations, and he rejoiced that President Roosevelt refrained from intervention in these matters.

Marshall pursued an even-handed relationship with his subordinates. Although he believed that a commander should select good men and then give them his confidence, he was also prepared to proffer assistance when he thought it might be of value. Often a commander facing crises in the field found a steadying message from the Pentagon promising complete support in whatever decision he had to make.

The Chief of Staff had been notably successful in naming his field commanders. Drawing on his years of teaching officers at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, his own vast knowledge of leaders in World War I and the years between the wars, and the reports he had received from his advisers, such as the Chief of the Army Ground Forces, Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, and the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, General H. H. Arnold, he had played a crucial role in choosing the key commanders of the Army and Air Forces in World War II. He had recommended that General Douglas MacArthur be recalled to active duty and made head of the U.S. Army forces in the Far East, had proposed that he be sent to Australia when it appeared certain that he could not hold the Philippines, and then had selected him as commander of U.S. Forces in the Southwest Pacific.

Marshall had called Brigadier General Dwight D. Eisenhower to Washington almost immediately after the attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor, had made him Chief of War Plans a few months later, and before spring had ended had sent him to the United Kingdom as commanding general of U.S. forces in that theater. Eisenhower's key position and his own abilities had brought him the post of Allied Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean and had prepared the way for his appointment as Supreme Commander. General Omar N. Bradley had been a protégé of Marshall's since the days at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, when,
under Marshall's leadership, he had been a favorite instructor. In addition to advancing Bradley to division and corps command, the Chief of Staff had proposed him to Eisenhower for a special "eyes and ears" assignment in North Africa and later named him for army and then army group command in northwest Europe. Courtney Hodges, Mark Clark, Walter Bedell Smith, William H. Simpson, J. Lawton Collins, Alexander Patch, Lucian Truscott, and Matthew B. Ridgway were other outstanding commanders whose careers Marshall fostered. In the CBI, General Stilwell owed his selection by Secretary of War Stimson indirectly to Marshall's recommendation, and General Albert C. Wedemeyer could trace his position as Deputy to Lord Louis Mountbatten in the Southeast Asia Command and as Chief of the China theater to Marshall's warm endorsement. Although General Arnold had a major hand in naming his chief subordinates in the Army Air Forces, General Marshall had given his support to Kuter and Norstad. Among the officers who remained in Washington, he had given strong backing to the commander of Army Service Forces, Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell, to the Deputy Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Joseph T. McNarney, and to the two chief assistants in the Operations Division, Lieutenant General Thomas T. Handy and Lieutenant General John E. Hull.

In the effort to show Marshall's role in World War II history, I have striven constantly to find the man. Reticent about his personal life, he submitted reluctantly to probings of his private thoughts and emotions. For this reason, I have had to depend heavily on the recollections of those who worked most closely with him during the world conflict.

During these years Marshall experienced one major personal disappointment and one major personal tragedy: He did not get the role of Supreme Commander to lead the cross-Channel invasion of Europe—to which, in some senses, his entire Army career had pointed and for which he had argued tenaciously, in the face of British doubts, at conference after conference. And shortly before the Normandy landing, his favorite stepson was killed in action in Italy. But on neither of these events did Marshall dwell—at least so far as the record goes.

I have grasped at many personal notes and comments—much more numerous than is generally supposed—which show his concern for good friends, such as Arnold and Hopkins, in times of illness, his constant vigilance on the welfare of troops, his intuitive skill in dealing with those under his command, and his recognition that men fight better who understand why they are in conflict. Especially in this present era with its strong distrust of the Army, its leaders, and its goals, I have felt it imperative to give a full portrait of a great commander, who loved his profession, who honored it for its service to the Republic, and who attempted to build a postwar force that would be acceptable to the American public.

Marshall had recognized the dangers faced by the Army in peacetime. He had seen that it was the special task of the Army to win the trust of the Congress and of the nation at large. He had sought their approbation
by frank discussions with the committees before which he appeared, expert briefings of congressional representatives and of the press, candid revelations to investigating committees, and his determination to find and punish derelictions and failures in the Army before the problems reached the floors of the Senate and the House of Representatives or appeared in a newspaper column.

Aware of the costs of waging war and the great price of success, Marshall never forgot that the ultimate cost of victory lay in the loss of men’s lives. In one of his last recorded interviews he said that he saw to it that the President was reminded weekly of casualties with the losses listed in vivid colors. It was essential, he declared, to remember the sacrifices. Because it is easy to get hardened to them.

In Marshall’s war service we find the perfect blend of soldier and civilian. He was aware of the importance of the profession of arms that he had followed since the turn of the century and of the Army’s contributions to the nation. He was equally aware that he was a servant of the Republic and that he was accountable for his actions in war as well as in peace.

Perhaps only at the close of the Civil War did the fighting men of North and South have as high a standing in the minds of the public as the fighting forces enjoyed in 1945. It was not only for their deeds in action against the enemy but for the spirit in which the battle had been waged that they were esteemed. As much as any other commander, George Marshall represented that spirit at its best.
everyone’s role at certain conferences and in certain decisions, and I have occasionally given only limited space to contributions of some of Marshall’s colleagues. I have given scant attention to some matters that affected Marshall only peripherally or that show little of his character and leadership. I have been forced to conclude that biography is not the same as history and that one may sometimes better grasp the nature of one’s subject by subordinating the details of historical narrative to the impact of the individual on a given conference or on a precise event. Such focus on a specific character—keeping the limelight on one performer throughout the entire drama—may lead at times to upstaging equally prominent or even more prominent performers. But any neglect of Roosevelt and Churchill has long since been corrected either by their admirers or by themselves; Leahy, Arnold, King, Alanbrooke, and Cunningham have told their stories. The excellent British and U.S. official histories have also helped redress any imbalance. As for Eisenhower, MacArthur, Montgomery, de Lattre de Tassigny, Bradley, Truscott, Krueger, Clark, Ridgway, de Gaulle, Brereton, Eden, Slim, Stilwell, Bedell Smith, we have detailed personal accounts to fill any gaps or correct any omissions in this account. Inasmuch as I have lived with General Marshall’s papers since 1956 (and indeed with many of them since 1946, when I began writing the Army’s official volume on Eisenhower’s Supreme Command), I am of course more cognizant of his services and his explanations for his actions than I am of those of any other World War II leader—save General Eisenhower for the 1944–1945 period. As a result I have a bias in favor of my subject. This I can mitigate only by a presentation of the evidence that led me to my conclusions. I can only cite my healthy regard for the careful eye of critical theses writers of a later era—a breed whose latent threat and severe accounting makes more honest men of all of us who deal with history.

This volume owes much to the generosity of many friends whose gifts helped to pay for the over-all program of building the collection of documents, periodicals, and books at the George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia, and the writing of the biography with all the costs of research, interviewing, writing, and editing that such an effort entails. It also owes much to hundreds of people who have furnished material in various forms for our collection and the writing project. On pages 587–90 I have listed the names of many of the major contributors of money and material. It has not been possible to list all those whose assistance and good wishes have helped our program. At least we can say that our activities would not have been possible without them and that they have the eternal gratitude of all of us who work with the George C. Marshall Research Foundation.

It is proper to recall the crucial early efforts of the late John C. Hagan, Jr., as the original President of the George C. Marshall Research Foundation, the great contributions of General of the Army Omar N.
Bradley, who served as president of the Foundation, 1959–1969, and since as chairman of our board, and the current energetic leadership of Lieutenant General Marshall S. Carter. In the 1961–1964 period our fund-raising efforts were headed by Joseph D. Neikirk, the executive vice president of the Virginia Military Institute Foundation. Since 1965 these efforts have been in the highly capable hands of Royster Lyle, Jr., whose assumption of many of the administrative tasks associated with the running of the Foundation has made it possible for me to devote much of my time to writing and research.

A special word must be said about the great contributions made by the late Miss Eugenia Lejeune, Archivist-Librarian of the Marshall library, whose work in collecting and organizing the collection of documents and books in the period 1957–1971 left a permanent imprint of excellence on our research program. The assistance of other members of the staff in Arlington and Lexington, is acknowledged on page 589.

In the editing of the initial drafts of this book I was aided by Joseph R. Friedman, Editor-in-Chief of the Office of Military History. Working on the chapters in his spare time, he continued the fine craftsmanship he had expended on earlier volumes of mine on which he worked. His knowledge of the period covered by this volume, which he gained as editor of numerous books in the “U.S. Army in World War II” series, as well as his sound advice, has been of great benefit in many ways.

For the final drafts of the book, The Viking Press secured the services of Phyllis Freeman, a skilled editor who brought a questioning eye to the manuscript. She has suggested means of improving organization and style, has caught some embarrassing errors, and in various ways has helped to produce a better book.

For the general editorship, I wish to thank Alan D. Williams, of The Viking Press, whose cogent suggestions for improving the book have been gratefully incorporated. His understanding of the problems of an author who has other duties to perform has been most helpful in a period of great pressures.

I hope that all those closely associated with me at the Marshall Foundation and Marshall Library, who have helped make this book possible by their understanding and their shouldering of some of the burdens I would have otherwise had to carry, will feel compensated—at least in part—by this volume, in which they had an important share. I wish to close with a special word of thanks to my wife, Christine, my severest critic and strongest well-wisher, whose longsuffering patience and rugged common sense have sustained me during the writing of this book.

Forrest C. Pogue

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