



## *Williwaws and Jitters*

**T**HE attack on Pearl Harbor sent shock waves across the Pacific that were speedily felt on the West Coast of the United States and in Alaska. While the fires in Hawaii and the Philippines still burned that first week in December 1941, the War Department and the White House were confronted with two immediate problems: control of native-born and alien Japanese in California, Oregon, and Washington and the defense of Alaska.

The astounding success of the Japanese bombing of the Pacific Fleet threw West Coast citizens into a virtual state of hysteria. The sneak attack reawakened their latent suspicions of the Japanese, fed by decades of racial antagonism and economic competition. Within a short time, local officials infected military commanders in the area with their distrust and fears. As a result Stimson and Marshall were soon faced with the possibility that the Army would be called upon to carry out mass evacuations of Japanese aliens and American-born citizens of Japanese descent.

Both men were united in opposition to the possible use of the Army during the war to deal with railroad and mine strikes, shutdown of factories, and closing of businesses. Not only were they averse to involving the Army in matters that might be deemed political, but they also did not want to divert troops from training to local peacekeeping duties. Consequently in the first weeks after Pearl Harbor they resisted requests for the use of the Army in resettling Japanese families in the West Coast area.

The demands for Army action in this situation were based on the fact that many citizens of Japanese descent—foreign- or native-born—lived near important airplane plants and defense facilities. The clamor came at a time of great pressures for Marshall. He was simultaneously trying to get aid to MacArthur in the Philippines, to work out strategy and command arrangements with the British at the Arcadia conference, to establish and to shore up the short-lived ABDA Command in the Pacific, reorganize the War Department, and to arrange for the shift of MacArthur to the

Southwest Pacific. He thus had little time to deal with a question that, in any event, properly belonged to the President and to civilian officials in the War and Justice departments.

Although it has often been assumed that Marshall was closely involved in the major decisions by which the Army took over the evacuation of the Japanese, his role was largely peripheral. But to some degree he was associated with the final decisions of the President, the Secretary and Assistant Secretary of War, the Provost Marshal General, and the Army's commander of the Western Defense Command, Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt.

Possibly Marshall's close friendship with, and reliance on, DeWitt may have been a factor in the Army's final participation in the evacuation of the Japanese. DeWitt was one of Marshall's oldest friends in the service. The son of a former general, he entered the Army during the Spanish-American War, while a sophomore at Princeton, and was commissioned in 1898, three years before Marshall, and outranked him at the time the General was named Chief of Staff. A classmate of Marshall's at Fort Leavenworth in 1906-1907 and a colleague on the First Army staff in France in the closing months of World War I (Marshall was Chief of Operations and DeWitt Chief of Supply), DeWitt was one of the two men senior to Marshall who were considered serious contenders for the Chief of Staff position in the spring of 1939. This background aided DeWitt in dealing with Washington in the early months of the war.

DeWitt, one of the few officers who continued calling Marshall "George" after the latter became Chief of Staff, was commandant of the Army War College in Washington when, in December 1939, the Chief of Staff assigned him to command Fourth Army at the Presidio in San Francisco. Of medium height and mild appearance, DeWitt deceived observers who assumed that he could be pushed around. Once set on a course, he pursued his aims with tenacity. Marshall and Assistant Secretary of War McCloy often found him obdurate.

At the time of Pearl Harbor, DeWitt also headed the Western Defense Command, a headquarters created in March 1941. Less than a week after the attack he was commanding a theater of operations. Responsible for defending the Western coastal frontier and Alaska with an exceedingly small force, he was especially alarmed because of the proximity of many West Coast airplane plants to heavy concentrations of Japanese aliens or citizens. Soon he was relaying to Washington reports of large stores of arms in Japanese-owned warehouses, illegal radio activity by Japanese, and signaling by local Japanese to ships at sea. Although later investigations minimized the importance of arms caches and questioned the reports of signaling, DeWitt's information seriously disturbed the War Department.

From the first DeWitt combined commendable zeal with a tendency to

exaggerate. Apprehensive about the activity of the enemy aliens on the long coastline, he was susceptible to pressures exerted by frantic civic leaders on anyone in authority and near at hand. He, in turn, reacted vigorously, calling on Washington for speedy action.

In the War Department the civilian most directly concerned was Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy. The military official charged with police matters was the Provost Marshal General, Major General Allen W. Gullion. Gullion, deciding early in the conflict to take a hard line toward aliens, sent Major Karl Bendetsen, Chairman of the Alien Control Branch of his office, to work with General DeWitt and Justice Department representatives. In so doing, he arranged for DeWitt to deal directly with the office of the Provost Marshal General on matters pertaining to aliens rather than following the usual command channel through General Headquarters (soon to become Army Ground Forces Headquarters). The result was that Bendetsen, able and energetic (he was rising rapidly from major to full colonel), played a key role in dealing with DeWitt, Gullion, and McCloy. In the process General Headquarters was not always kept fully abreast of developments.<sup>1</sup>

Toward the end of January, General Marshall sent Brigadier General Mark W. Clark of General Headquarters to California to discuss the problems there with General DeWitt. On Clark's report that DeWitt wanted authority to bar aliens from sensitive areas, General Marshall directed Clark to draw up a memorandum that could be presented to the President. Meanwhile Secretary Stimson was urging Attorney General Francis Biddle to set up the requested restricted areas.<sup>2</sup>

While plans for limited action were being discussed—an operation that local officials and an augmented FBI force could probably have handled—public sentiment coalesced on the more radical proposal for mass evacuation of Japanese aliens some three hundred miles east of the coast. Increasing panic led next to a suggestion for voluntary evacuation of American citizens of Japanese descent from the vicinity of military installations and then from the Pacific Coast area. It was a short step from this point to proposals for forced resettlement and internment. Faced by demands for movement of American citizens, the Department of Justice declined to act on constitutional grounds and because of lack of personnel.

In this confused period General DeWitt was appalled by the tasks involved in moving from their homes an estimated 117,000 Japanese, of whom 70,000 were American-born. As late as January 24, 1942, he thought that arrangements made by the Department of Justice and the FBI would be sufficient; five days later he indicated his willingness to assume responsibility for evacuating the Japanese. DeWitt's initial failure to recommend mass evacuation of aliens convinced General Gullion and members of his staff that he was weakening in his stand.<sup>3</sup> The Provost Marshal General was needlessly disturbed. In a memorandum for the

record, on January 31, DeWitt had indicated that "sentiment was being given too much importance in total defense matters." On February 3 Stimson noted that DeWitt was "clamoring" for action.<sup>4</sup>

The civilian heads of the War Department were wary. Schooled in a great conservative tradition of law, Stimson believed that constitutional rights of American citizens won by generations of Anglo-Saxons should not be denied to any Americans. McCloy, also trained in law, was aware that the Department of Justice was skittish on mass evacuation. "I feel concerned," he told DeWitt in a phone call, "that the Army . . . should not take the position even in your conversations with the political figures out there that it favors a wholesale withdrawal of all Japanese citizens and aliens from the Coast, for the reason that it may get us into a number of complications which we have yet not seen the end of."<sup>5</sup>

DeWitt put up a strong argument: he was responsible for the security of the West Coast, and he did not intend to be a scapegoat, as General Short had been for Pearl Harbor, he told McCloy. He could not escape the impact of local hysteria, and he had reason to be jittery. Perhaps it was too much for him to distinguish between measures to protect the West Coast and those necessary to quiet the jangled nerves of the local inhabitants. Finally he warned McCloy that unless the Army took strong action against Japanese-American citizens, the local Anglo-Saxon citizenry would rise.

When Marshall discussed the question with DeWitt on February 3—the day of the DeWitt-McCloy conversation—the West Coast commander said that Governor Curbert L. Olson was still considering the possibility of shifting Japanese from critical defense areas without moving them great distances. The Chief of Staff listened carefully, made a few comments, and then apparently discussed the matter with Secretary Stimson and General Gullion.<sup>6</sup> After this Marshall was almost completely out of the picture.

Actually the future of the Japanese for the next two years was substantially settled between February 2, when DeWitt began conferences with Governor Olson and state Attorney General Earl Warren, and February 11, when the President in effect turned the Japanese problem over to the Army. Thereafter the question was how and when measures would be taken.

At times during the discussions it was hard to be certain of the Army's views either in Washington or San Francisco. In summing up the situation February 4, Colonel Bendetsen concluded, "No one has justified fully the sheer military necessity for such action." DeWitt, however, showed the way the wind was blowing by predicting that no matter what the Department of Justice said, local citizens intended to take matters into their own hands. Agreeing with this analysis, General Gullion informed McCloy two days later that "no half-way measures based upon

considerations of economic disturbance, humanitarianism, or fear of retaliation will suffice" 7

There were also more moderate voices in Washington. General Clark thought that Californians were unduly alarmed. He saw no chance for the Japanese to make sustained attacks on the United States. Secretary Stimson continued to stress the Constitution. It would put "a tremendous hole in our constitutional system" to say we cannot trust our citizens, he told McCloy. But by now the Assistant Secretary of War had become uneasy over what the enemy might dare. If the Japanese could establish their dominance in the Pacific, he thought they might try an invasion.<sup>8</sup>

To make certain of the President's attitude on the Japanese question, Secretary Stimson and Assistant Secretary McCloy went to the White House on February 11 with four specific questions, the two most important being whether Roosevelt was willing to authorize the Army "to move Japanese citizens as well as aliens from restricted areas" and whether the Army should undertake withdrawal from the entire strip as DeWitt had initially recommended. Roosevelt instructed the War Department officials to do anything they thought necessary under the circumstances. McCloy promptly told Bendetsen, "We have *carte blanche* to do what we want to as far as the President's concerned." Here at last was specific authorization of evacuation at the highest level. Roosevelt recognized that there might be unfavorable repercussions but said that action was dictated by military necessity. He had qualified his statement by saying, "Be as reasonable as you can." 9

On February 11 General DeWitt was asked to draft recommendations relative to the evacuation of the Japanese. At the last, having momentary qualms about Marshall's attitude, he telephoned General Clark to ask "whether GHQ and the Chief of Staff have been thoroughly informed." Obviously unfamiliar with recent discussions, Clark replied that he doubted if they were going to remove citizens. No longer dubious on this point, DeWitt declared: "They've just got to. We must get them away from vital areas." 10 The following day he produced his draft of proposals for the evacuation.

On the same morning that DeWitt checked with Clark, Marshall's attention was caught by Walter Lippmann's regular news column. The Chief of Staff found it sufficiently interesting to pass on to Stimson—who forwarded it to McCloy. Alarmed by the enemy alien problem, the columnist saw imminent danger for the Pacific Coast from both within and without. That coast, officially a combat zone, might at any moment become a battlefield. In his best pundit's style, Lippmann asserted, "Nobody's constitutional rights include the right to reside and do business on a battlefield. And nobody ought to be on a battlefield who has no good reason for being there. There is plenty of room elsewhere for him to exercise his rights." 11

General Clark was not fully aware of West Coast pressure that continued to increase on DeWitt and the President. On February 13 members of Congress from the Pacific Coast states recommended "the immediate evacuation of all persons of Japanese lineage and all others, aliens and citizens alike, whose presence shall be deemed dangerous or inimical to the defense of the United States from all strategic areas." Manchester Boddy, publisher of the Los Angeles *Daily News*, wired Attorney General Biddle on February 16 that the local Japanese situation was deteriorating rapidly and that he feared "irresponsible" action on the part of local citizens. Significantly he added that the first job was to get aliens in a concentration camp and then decide later on their ultimate destination.<sup>12</sup>

Roosevelt was receiving similar advice. Talking to him on the seventeenth, Stimson found the President "all right" on necessary West Coast action. Later that day the Secretary met with McCloy, Bendetsen, Clark, and Gullion to discuss instructions for DeWitt. Although Mark Clark was prepared to implement any presidential directive, he opposed allowing the West Coast commander "to absorb, like a sponge, many divisions for this purpose, because by so doing it would sabotage our expansion of the Army for offensive purposes." Stimson did not like the proposed wholesale evacuation plan but finally decided that DeWitt should be authorized to move out Japanese aliens and citizens if their removal was essential to protect critical installations. After checking with the Army Ground Force commander, Clark proposed telling DeWitt that he could use such troops as he could make available from those currently assigned to his command—with the exception of the 27th Division and the 3d Division Reinforced, whose training GHQ did not want disrupted. Summarizing the discussion and proposed action, General Clark wrote for the record: "I then telephoned to General Marshall and gave him the report on the meeting, the instructions that were to be sent by the War Department and the troops we recommended General DeWitt be authorized to use. General Marshall said all right." The Chief of Staff was now committed with the rest.<sup>13</sup>

The next move was to ensure the legality of the action. On the sixteenth General Gullion asked the Attorney General for a formal authorization. The following day Stimson and the Attorney General met with their advisers to discuss the matter. By now the Secretary of War had gone a little further down the road "towards a solution of a very dangerous and vexing problem." He had "no illusions as to the magnitude of the task and the wails which will go up."<sup>14</sup>

The resultant draft of a proposed Executive Order was shown to the President on February 19. The Attorney General explained that it was based not on any legal theory but on the fact that the actions of certain groups might lead to serious disturbances. Later that day Roosevelt signed the directive, Executive Order 9066, which was then forwarded to DeWitt.<sup>15</sup>

Marshall did not initial the War Department order. During the day, however, he asked Gullion for a summary of developments and was informed that DeWitt's authority was now limited only by the restriction on the number of troops he could use. At this point DeWitt was still assuring Washington that he was not going to have any mass movement, since he had to be sparing with his troops and not divert too many of them for this purpose. But several developments were in progress that were to change his mind.<sup>16</sup>

The decisive factor may have been a report on February 21 from the commandant of the 11th Naval District to General DeWitt declaring that the situation of the Japanese in Southern California was critical. Many were being forced by local pressure to move before new housing or means of support were provided. Next day DeWitt was informed that the Governor of Washington was issuing orders for evacuation on his own authority. A wire to governors of all states west of the Mississippi revealed that the chief executives of twelve of them did not want Japanese and would accept them only as wards of the Federal Government and under armed guard.<sup>17</sup>

Secretary Stimson could not completely suppress his basic dislike of the proceedings. He instructed DeWitt to go ahead with the partial evacuation that had been ordered and to stop talking about broader action for a time. DeWitt, he added, already had enough to keep him busy.

The War Department was getting drawn in more deeply than its officials wanted to be. It was one thing to shift people to new jobs and new homes; it was another to have to keep them under guard—unemployed—and to furnish housing, food, and clothing. Secretary Stimson was pleased when Attorney General Biddle proposed that a single civilian head handle the problem of resettlement. Following this lead, the President set up a War Relocation Authority, with Milton Eisenhower as its chief, to supervise this task.<sup>18</sup>

Seriously concerned about the evacuation, Stimson sent McCloy out in mid-March to ensure that the movement was made "with all humanity possible." A week later the Assistant Secretary of War reported to the War Department Council, which included Marshall and Stimson, that the evacuation was being carried out in good order and that DeWitt had shown good judgment and common sense. He noted, perhaps without irony, that the situation in Hawaii was being handled differently. There, with a population half-Japanese, it was not practicable to undertake a shift because the number involved was too great. Not only was the remainder of the local population less apprehensive, but the Army and Navy, fearing a labor shortage, opposed evacuation to the mainland.<sup>19</sup>

Demands for mass evacuation of all enemy aliens continued to spread. The situation became ludicrous in April when Attorney General Biddle reported to the President that Lieutenant General Hugh A. Drum was trying to move Italian and German aliens from the East Coast. Although

Stimson fulminated about the foolishness of the rumor and said that Biddle should be ashamed to repeat such a story, it persisted. More sensitive to German and Italian counterpressures than to those of the Japanese, Roosevelt reacted promptly. On May 5 he directed Stimson to take no action without consulting the White House.<sup>20</sup>

While carrying out his assignment, General DeWitt made an effort to keep the evacuation movements humane. But the uprooting of families and their resettlement in camps created great hardships and bitter feelings. Now committed to this policy, DeWitt stubbornly declined to reconsider it. Nearly a year later he told a House of Representatives subcommittee that he disagreed with the false sentiment of those who wanted to return the Japanese to the West Coast. He said that he would oppose their return "with every proper means at my disposal."<sup>21</sup>

Like many other decent, fair-minded men, DeWitt had managed in a year to come full circle—from preferring to depend on civilian agencies to prevent sabotage of military installations, to suggesting a reasonable pull-back from the West Coast, to advocating mass evacuation of all Japanese. In subsequent investigations he found it difficult to justify his actions on the basis of military necessity.

Throughout this affair General Marshall's position was atypical. Normally Marshall was consulted at every step by military and civilian authorities on broad problems in which the Army was deeply involved. Although the great pressure of other duties at the moment made it difficult for him to intervene regularly in discussions that were mainly political, it was still remarkable that he was consulted so little. Only the fact that the Secretary of War and the Assistant Secretary of War were fully involved in the decisions makes it understandable.

The time came when General DeWitt feared that he had lost the Chief of Staff's confidence. In the spring of 1943, when Marshall informed DeWitt that he would be shifted to another post, the Pacific Coast commander asked if he was being transferred—as rumor had it—because of his handling of the Japanese evacuation. The Chief of Staff positively denied this charge. Marshall explained that he had recently worked out with Admiral King the establishment of a Joint Army-Navy College. The Chief of Naval Operations had agreed to the proposal but had suggested that the college be located at Newport. Marshall pushed for a Washington site and the appointment of DeWitt, who had been a commandant of the Army War College and a graduate of the Naval War College, as its head.<sup>22</sup> It was to this command that DeWitt was being shifted.

In later years Marshall declared that the evacuations had been made to avoid violent West Coast reaction rather than because of military necessity. Asked for comments on the relocation controversy, he replied: "We were in very great difficulties there because there were large numbers of Japanese almost next door to the airplane factories, particularly in Los Angeles. . . . And the people out there . . . were just bitter in their



feeling that the Japanese should not be allowed to stay there. They were suspicious . . . of everybody Japanese. Therefore it reached such a point that it seemed to be the only thing we could do short of a semiriot or terrible occurrence out in California to put these people in an internment camp. . . . It was a very trying duty and trying necessity" <sup>23</sup>

Despite Marshall's assertion that it was necessary to relocate the Japanese, he was equally convinced that men of Japanese ancestry who wished to fight for the United States should be allowed to do so. But he exercised tactfulness in their deployment:

I knew that it was quite unwise and quite unfair to send them to the Southwest Pacific where they would be in contact with their own people . . . So we sent messages to commanders in Europe and, as I recall, I may be wrong about this . . . Eisenhower's staff people declined them. Then I offered them to General [Mark] Clark and his reply was, "We will take anybody that will fight." So I sent this battalion [of Nisei from Hawaii] over to him. Then we organized another one in California, and we finally built this up into a regiment [442d Infantry]. The division [to which] we first attached this battalion in Italy was opposed to it . . . the prejudice was so deep against the Japanese. [But, later, when they] found I was going to take [the battalion away] and build it up into a regiment, I had political pressure from Congress not to take this battalion away . . .

I will say about the Japanese fighting then in these units we had. They were superb! That word correctly describes it: superb! They took terrific casualties. They showed rare courage and tremendous fighting spirit. Not too much can be said of the performance of those battalions in Europe and everybody wanted them . . . in the operations, and we used them quite dramatically in the great advance in Italy which led up to the termination of the fighting there.

I thought the organization of the additional battalions was very essential because we felt that unless we did something about the Japanese in this country, we would have a very hard time afterwards. I don't mean [with] the Army, I mean the civil population. As a matter of fact, even with their brilliant performance, some communities rather blackballed the men when they came home as veterans <sup>24</sup>

West Coast alarms over the Japanese danger in the closing days of 1941 soon extended from internal dangers in California, Oregon, and Washington to the external threat to Alaska and the Aleutian Islands. A half-forgotten Far Western frontier was thrust back into America's consciousness.

Before World War II Alaska for most Americans was a frozen mystery. Cold, distant, basically unromantic despite the efforts of Jack London and Robert Service to trumpet its charms in their writings, the far-off territory often seemed to offer Stateside Americans a remnant of stubborn truth in the old libel of "Seward's Folly." The services tended to think of it as a potentially crucial outpost, ill fortified because of the difficulty of persuading Congress to take seriously the defense of what appeared to be an icebound wasteland. Even the Army and Navy, hard put to get an

adequate force for mainland United States and key Pacific bases, tended to neglect this isolated vastness where distances alone might suffice for protection.<sup>25</sup>

Marshall had become aware of the area's potential in the late 1930s, when he commanded at Vancouver Barracks, Washington State. After becoming Chief of Staff in 1939, he kept closely in touch with Alaskan defenses through General DeWitt, whose responsibilities for West Coast Army and Army Air Forces activities included Alaska. Their plans were carried out by Brigadier General Simon B. Buckner, Jr., a strapping, impetuous Kentuckian, son of a famous Confederate general and former Kentucky governor, appointed by Marshall commander of United States troops in Alaska in 1940 and chief of the new Alaskan Defense Command the following year.

The new Chief of Staff also discovered that the Army's only tactical force in Alaska consisted of 400 men near Skagway. The Navy, equally weak, had a seaplane base at Sitka and a radio station and Coast Guard base at Dutch Harbor in the Aleutians. At that time fog was the area's best defense. Before the year ended, the Navy had begun constructing bases at Sitka and Kodiak and the Army an air base at Fairbanks. Defense efforts were spurred by the vague fear that the Russians might be strengthening Siberian bases that could threaten the Aleutians and the Alaskan mainland. There had even been a flutter in the late summer and fall of 1939, after the conclusion of the Russo-German alliance, lest the two powers might act together against the United States. But there were so many pressing defense needs that General Marshall's efforts to build air and ground installations at Anchorage in the spring of 1940 were set back temporarily when a House of Representatives subcommittee dropped the item from the proposed budget.

Congressional reaction to the fall of France brought a hasty restoration of the Anchorage project. Meanwhile General Marshall had ordered the establishment of a permanent ground force in Alaska and directed that a temporary garrison force of 3100 be dispatched at once. In March 1941, as a result of increased tension in U.S.-Japanese relations, the Chief of Staff earmarked additional ground forces for Alaska. He increased the allotment for Buckner in July when the fear arose that Japan might take advantage of Germany's attack on Russia to send forces into Siberia.<sup>26</sup> By September, Marshall had assigned more than 20,000 men to the Alaskan Defense Command. In fact he had moved so rapidly that some of the men arrived before housing was ready. Critics in Congress complained that men were living in tents constantly blasted by icy winds.

Struggling to build up the defenses of the Philippines and Hawaii, Marshall was unable to ship the aircraft for which DeWitt and Buckner pleaded. In mid-1941 the Air Forces in Alaska had fewer than forty planes. Aircraft scheduled by Marshall for delivery in late 1941 and early 1942 had not arrived at the time of Pearl Harbor.<sup>27</sup>

For a short time after war began in the Pacific, it seemed that Alaska might play important offensive and defensive roles. Washington officials dug up available maps, ancient and full of uncharted areas, of the Aleutian Islands, lying like a hundred-odd pebbles scattered in the freezing wind from the mainland in a 1200-mile arc almost to the Japanese Kuriles. The fifteen larger islands might serve as additional outposts against the enemy, as links in the ferrying operations for American Lend-Lease aircraft to the Soviet Union, or as wayside stops to American bases in Siberia that could be used against Japanese targets in case Russia and Japan went to war.<sup>28</sup>

Both the energetic Buckner and his Navy opposite number, Captain R. C. Parker, commander of the Alaskan Section of the 13th Naval District, declared at the end of January 1942 that recent events pointed more significantly than ever to "the strategic importance of Alaska as a dominant influence in determining the eventual outcome of the conflict." To defeat Japan it would be necessary to strike at her home territory, but of the previous approaches only the one through Alaska had not yet been cut.<sup>29</sup> As Chief of War Plans, Eisenhower summarized for Marshall the wishes of the Alaskan commanders: (1) negotiations with the Russians for air bases, (2) reconnaissance of bases and air routes, (3) rapid completion of airfields under construction, (4) prompt reinforcement of the Alaskan area, (5) construction of seaplane bases westward, and (6) aggressive action without delay against Japan.<sup>30</sup>

The proposals were attractive. But at a desperate period in the Philippines and the South and Southwest Pacific, the demands for a quick offensive build-up in Alaska had little chance of acceptance. Admiral King believed that a Japanese attack on Alaska or the Canadian West Coast, except for minor submarine and air raids, was "highly improbable." Until the Soviet Union was willing to permit American aircraft to operate from bases in Siberia, extensive unoccupied air facilities in Alaska and Aleutians would, he thought, constitute more of a liability than an asset.<sup>31</sup>

In view of the cautious reactions to the Alaskan proposals, mounting Air Forces shortages, and lack of progress in negotiating with the Russians for air bases, General Eisenhower recommended in mid-March that General Marshall adopt a "watch and see" policy. For the present, he suggested, American forces in the area should limit their action to the strategic defensive.<sup>32</sup> In accepting Eisenhower's reasoning, Marshall insisted that the Alaskan commanders understand fully why he must disappoint them. "Otherwise," he warned, "there is considerable discouragement involved, which is unfortunate for people in isolated regions" <sup>33</sup>

For a time in March, Washington leaders uneasily speculated on steps they should take in the event the Japanese withdrew part of their forces from the Central and South Pacific to strike northward. Early in that month Marshall and Stark, at Roosevelt's request, began studies of (1) an allied offensive to pull the Japanese forces southward, (2) the use of Chi-

nese territory by the Soviet Union and the United States for an offensive against Japan, and (3) the opening of the Aleutian Islands route to Kamchatka and Siberia.<sup>34</sup>

As there was no way to make useful proposals on Soviet-American collaboration without fuller information on Russian installations in Siberia, the Joint Planning Staff urged that the President intervene with Moscow to ensure greater military cooperation between the two powers. Receiving a discouraging report on these efforts at the end of March, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed that "the United States could not make any plans regarding possible action unless full and complete information were first forwarded by the Russians as to what facilities in Russia would be made available for U.S. forces." The President noted their statement and returned it without comment.<sup>35</sup>

Meanwhile Japan's forces fanned outward in triumphant sweeps. In late April, General Marshall alerted DeWitt that the Japanese were concentrating naval forces near Truk and that it seemed probable that they would strike at targets in the Central or Southwest Pacific.<sup>36</sup>

As part of a main attack against Midway the enemy bombed Dutch Harbor, Alaska, on June 3-4 but not heavily enough to knock it out as a base. As a defensive measure the Japanese occupied two of the westernmost islands of the Aleutians, putting troops ashore without opposition on June 7. Two American civilians were found on Attu; ten U.S. sailors at a weather station in Kiska were captured.

Despite the decisive defeat of the Japanese fleet by the U.S. Navy at Midway, the subsequent Japanese moves in the Aleutians stirred apprehension in the States. As a practical matter the distance from the nearest Japanese base in the Kuriles to Attu was 650 sea miles and to Kiska by sea another 378. It was another 2200 miles by air and 2600 miles by sea from Kiska to Seattle. Although not seriously concerned, Marshall as a matter of caution ordered some ground forces, antiaircraft guns, and field artillery from the West Coast and from some of the less exposed locations in Alaska to those such as Nome that were more open to attack. The air forces were also beefed up. Leaving the reinforcements for the moment on a defensive basis, the War Department now considered other possibilities.<sup>37</sup>

The next question was whether the Japanese planned to move northward against the Russians. This possibility, plus the President's recent talks with Molotov about the second front and the renewed vigor shown by United States naval and air power at Midway, favored closer collaboration with the Russians in Siberia. But the negotiations broke down after a few months. Besides suspecting American motives, the Soviet leaders opposed giving up their neutrality vis-à-vis Japan. For the Americans the failure meant that emphasis had to be shifted back to ground activity in Alaska.

In mid-June, Admiral King informed the Joint Chiefs of Staff that he

had the President's permission to discuss the Japanese threat with Russian military representatives. General Marshall proposed that Roosevelt ask Stalin to permit Russian military officials in the United States to conduct staff conversations with American representatives. Also at the recommendation of the War Department the President suggested to Moscow that an air-ferry route be set up from Alaska to Siberia. He further asked that the Russians authorize a survey of Siberian air facilities by an American air party.<sup>38</sup>

Stalin's cooperation was restrained. He agreed to a survey so far as it would expedite delivery of Lend-Lease planes to Soviet crews in Alaska but was silent on possible air operations in Siberia. Taking this limited response for agreement, the President named Air Force Major General Follett Bradley as his representative to Moscow.

General DeWitt was intensely interested in driving the Japanese from their bases in the recently occupied Aleutian Islands. With the indefatigable zeal and excitability that had led him to ring the industrial cities of the West Coast with everything available in the early weeks after Pearl Harbor, DeWitt flooded Washington with proposals for retaking Kiska and for occupying and fortifying intermediate islands that had to be secured as a base for this attack.

Like most commanders, DeWitt saw the needs of his area outweighing those elsewhere. Therefore he brought to his proper role of securing his command a nagging urgency that Washington did not always welcome. He worked hard to organize close cooperation among Army, Navy, and Air Forces commanders in the Alaskan area and to get necessary resources for his attack. Admiral Cooke, admiring DeWitt's persistence, told General Handy that they should put him in charge of the cross-Channel planning if they wanted to get action.

Although Marshall and King meant to carry out DeWitt's plans eventually, they still gave higher priority to tasks in the South and Southwest Pacific. Aware that the problems of weather and terrain in the windswept, mist-shrouded islands of the North made naval and air actions extremely dangerous, they were less eager than DeWitt for the fray.

To block the enemy move eastward and set the stage for the capture of Kiska, DeWitt proposed in mid-July the occupation of the island of Tanaga, 160 miles east of Kiska. The Navy, which would have to support the landing, preferred Adak Island, some 50 miles further east, because it had a better harbor. The opposing arguments collected from commanders in Alaska and in California now went forward to Washington for a decision. Learning from Army representatives that it would take longer to build an airfield at Adak than at Tanaga, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided on occupation of the latter. This decision, in turn, was reversed when Admiral King, on the advice of the commander of the North Pacific Force, Rear Admiral Robert A. Theobald, concluded that the navigational hazards in attacking Tanaga were too great. With no choice left

him DeWitt went along with the Navy. Finding near the end of August that the island was unoccupied by the enemy, the Army put 4500 men ashore. Within a few weeks, Adak-based planes were raiding Kiska.

Unfortunately Army-Navy differences over command arrangements, handling of operations, and selection of targets resulted in a comic contretemps that threatened to disrupt the close interservice cooperation promoted by Marshall and King. Already at odds with the somewhat pompous, irascible Theobald, the irrepressible Buckner was moved by disagreement over Tanaga to precipitate an incident that enraged the Navy commander and deeply embarrassed General Marshall. Either seriously misjudging the Admiral's sense of humor (Theobald was once described as "having one of the best brains and worst dispositions in the Navy") or, more likely, out of sheer boyish exuberance, Buckner relaxing over a drink with Theobald and several other officers read a piece of doggerel poking fun at the Navy's fears of risking operations in the Alaskan mists—fears that the Army commander, now an old hand, would have been the first to agree were justified. In true Gridiron Dinner style, he had the Admiral saying:

In far Alaska's icy spray, I stand beside my binnacle  
And scan the waters through the fog for fear some rocky pinnacle  
Projecting from unfathomed depths may break my hull asunder  
And place my name upon the list of those who made a blunder.

.....  
The Bering Sea is not for me nor for my Fleet Headquarters.  
In mortal dread I look ahead in wild Aleutian waters  
Where hidden reefs and williwaws and terrifying critters  
Unnerve me quite with woeful fright and give me fits and jitters<sup>39</sup>

After seething over the incident for two days, Admiral Theobald decided the matter was of major importance and fired off a letter to Buckner filled with nineteenth-century politesse, eschewing all future social relationships, and countenancing only contacts required by military duty. The whole exchange, complete with Buckner's poetry, was sent by the Admiral to his Chief in Washington. Marshall was disturbed when King placed the dossier on his desk. Although he admired Buckner, the Chief of Staff deplored his poor judgment. He directed DeWitt to investigate the affair at once with the view of replacing the Alaskan commander if necessary.<sup>40</sup>

Buckner was in greater jeopardy than he realized. He had violated one of Marshall's unswerving tenets—the necessity of cooperating with other services in outlying bases and distant theaters of operations. In recent months the Army Chief of Staff had either refused to name certain officers to posts or had relieved others because they could not work well with officers of other American services or of other nations.

DeWitt handled the case with great skill. At first inclined to agree with Marshall that the Alaskan commander should probably be relieved, he

explored the matter carefully with Theobald. Despite his ruffled feelings, the Navy commander opposed a relief based on his protest. DeWitt then called the two men together and was able to report to Marshall afterward that their differences had been settled and no reliefs should be made at that time.<sup>41</sup>

Marshall was doubtful. Passing on the correspondence to Admiral King, he said that at the moment he was not in accord with DeWitt and that he thought Buckner should be transferred after pending operations were completed. He also believed that at some later date the Air and Navy commanders should also be shifted. King suspended the argument by saying that in view of DeWitt's recommendations, "it would seem that a 'wait and see' attitude is in order." Marshall commented to DeWitt, "My feeling . . . is that however much you have patched up affairs there is no escaping the fact that Buckner's reasons were based on lack of faith in Theobald's willingness to engage an enemy except under conditions so favorable to us that they were unlikely to develop. However much they have patched up their differences no man can forget such implications."<sup>42</sup> For the moment DeWitt allowed command arrangements to stand as they were.

When bickering began later in the year over future targets, General Marshall considered replacing Buckner and also looked into suggestions for a separate Alaskan Department. Partly as a means of restoring harmony, Admiral Nimitz in early January 1943 shifted Theobald to another command, sending in his place one of the great fighters of the Navy, a positive, decisive commander, whose reputation in the Pacific was as highly respected by the Army as by his colleagues of the sea—Rear Admiral Thomas C. Kinkaid.

Despite his distress over the feud Marshall still had high regard for Buckner's organizing abilities. In February when he was seeking a replacement for DeWitt, soon due for reassignment, he asked him whether he thought Buckner could fill his place. Pleased to find DeWitt in agreement with the idea, Marshall still feared that the Navy would find it hard to forget "the implications of his jocular assault on Theobald."<sup>43</sup> Ultimately Marshall selected Lieutenant General Delos C. Emmons for DeWitt's post. Since Buckner was working closely and with minimum friction with Kinkaid, Marshall left him in Alaska until September 1944, when he placed him at the head of the Tenth Army. As commander of Army and Marine divisions, cooperating smoothly with the Navy in Pacific operations, the Kentuckian directed the successful assault on Okinawa and met his death there in the closing days of the battle in June 1945.

By late September 1942 Buckner and Theobald had composed their differences sufficiently to resume planning for an attack on Tanaga. However Army and Navy planners in Washington were now mulling over the occupation of Amchitka, 200 miles west of Adak and some 90 miles east of

Kiska. General DeWitt again championed an attack on Tanaga. Replying to a query from Marshall whether it was practicable to substitute Amchitka for Tanaga, DeWitt cited a recent reconnaissance report that building an airfield on Amchitka was believed to be a major engineering task requiring at least two months. Unless directed otherwise, he would proceed with the occupation of Tanaga. Marshall, who also knew of the reconnaissance report, called DeWitt's attention to the fact that its author disclaimed his technical qualifications to judge the feasibility of an airbase on Amchitka and to his recommendation for another survey. "Would it not be worthwhile," Marshall asked, "to have another reconnaissance made by an officer who is qualified to give us a good estimate of the time and means required for such a project?" DeWitt promptly informed Marshall that Buckner had been directed to arrange with Theobald for a second reconnaissance. But still unconverted, he reiterated that Amchitka should not be occupied until after Kiska had been reduced.<sup>44</sup>

Early in December, DeWitt regretted having to report that the reconnaissance party had been waiting for a month for Theobald to move it to Amchitka. According to Buckner, the Admiral would not agree to the survey until Japanese intentions to the west were clarified. He was apprehensive about indications of a forthcoming attack on Adak or on certain other islands, including Amchitka. DeWitt appreciated Theobald's hesitation to undertake the survey on account of the reduced strength of his command; naturally he must hold his entire force of ships and seaplanes together to counter enemy action. In view of the dangers lurking in the Aleutians, DeWitt renewed pressure on Marshall to capture and occupy Kiska at once. Nimitz saw "eye to eye" with him on the necessity to remove the Japanese threat on Kiska. There was no question, continued DeWitt, that they would attempt to improve their position in the western Aleutians by a determined effort to seize other islands. Every day wasted would make it more difficult to gain control of the "entire Aleutians area."<sup>45</sup>

Far distant from Alaskan jitters, Marshall could reassure DeWitt that King and he were "fully alive" to the need of routing the Japanese from the Aleutians "at the earliest practicable moment." As a first step toward offensive operations, they had also agreed to the early occupation of Amchitka, if the new reconnaissance proved favorable for an airbase there. But the timing of the ouster of the Japanese must be fitted into the over-all Pacific picture. Due to serious logistical shortages, particularly in the South and Southwest Pacific, and in Burma, an offensive operation in the Aleutians could not be undertaken in the near future. An airbase on nearby Amchitka could be crucial; air forces based there would completely dominate Kiska. In the breathing space gained, Marshall asked DeWitt to draw up with Nimitz a joint plan for driving the Japanese from the Aleutians, so that the required troops and ships might be made available.<sup>46</sup>



Shortly afterward the reconnaissance party made a favorable report: a fighter strip could be built on Amchitka in two or three weeks, and a main airfield with a 5,000-foot runway in three to four months. The Chiefs of Staff issued a directive for the assault on Amchitka. Bad weather prevented the first efforts to land on January 9, but three days later a combat command went ashore without opposition. Despite numerous Japanese air attacks beginning near the end of January, the fighter strip on Amchitka was in operation by mid-February. A week later U.S. air patrols were over Kiska.<sup>47</sup>

The directive on Amchitka drafted by the Navy was revised by Marshall in order to avoid overcommitment to specific operations after the island's occupation. As redrafted, the directive stated that possession of Amchitka would "render Kiska untenable as an operating base" and provide an advanced base for a "possible operation" against Kiska. While understating what the future would hold, Marshall agreed with King that a start should be made on training a force to assault and occupy Kiska. Marshall's purpose throughout was to deflate the estimates of the Alaskan commanders regarding Japanese capabilities and their requirements to meet this threat. In the letter to DeWitt in which he pledged eventual ejection of the Japanese, he emphasized that in the light of desperate fighting in the Solomons, New Guinea, and Tunisia, "we cannot afford this continual increase in Alaska." But he intimated that whatever specific assignments DeWitt might desire could be made in the event that operations in the Alaskan area were expanded.<sup>48</sup>

By February 1943 it was clear that forces for an early attack on Kiska, now reinforced by the Japanese, could not be pulled away from other commitments. In early March, Admiral Kinkaid suggested that Attu, some 378 miles westward, but more weakly held, might be taken with less effort. In fact the island, once virtually stripped of troops, had also been reinforced. On the basis of this underestimation of the enemy, which DeWitt shared, the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed to the Attu operation—provided no additional forces would be required. On March 22 they set early May for the attack. The assault, launched May 11 by a combined Army-Navy force under Admiral Kinkaid, proved to be "in proportion to the numbers of opposing troops, the second most costly battle of the war in the Pacific." In heavy fighting during which the 7th Infantry Division commander was relieved by Kinkaid for lack of aggressiveness, the Americans sustained 549 dead and 1150 wounded. Only 29 prisoners were taken of the some 2400 Japanese troops on the island.<sup>49</sup>

Once Attu was secure, Kinkaid proposed that the attack on Kiska proceed. Expecting heavy resistance, he assembled 34,500 troops, including 5300 Canadians, at the end of July for training. Despite some opposition to the operation in the War Department planning groups, the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved it and set August 15 for the attack.

In view of the severe losses in taking Attu, commanders ordered the

heaviest bombardments seen in the entire North Pacific fighting. Although little response was noted, some pilots reported anti-aircraft fire. Therefore the landing on Kiska was made in full force, and the attackers proceeded warily. After hours of inching forward, peering anxiously behind every possible hiding place, the invaders faced the ultimate in military embarrassment: the enemy had gone. Worse still, they had left before the bombardments of early August.

The epilogue could have been expected. Military campaigns have a built-in momentum. The Aleutians followed the pattern. On the eve of the landing on Kiska, DeWitt asked for an attack on Paramushiru and Shimushu islands, in the Japanese Kuriles, arguing that their capture would provide the Allies with airfields 650 miles from Hokkaido and Sakhalin and within 1300 miles of Tokyo. He believed that the troops from the Kiska operation would be sufficient for the attack.<sup>50</sup>

The War Department was less certain of the advantages. Marshall's advisers pointed out that planes on Luzon would also be within reach of key Japanese cities and that it offered "a far better base for operations." General Emmons told the Chief of Staff that an attack on the Kuriles would draw naval and air forces from the Southwest Pacific and wondered if the Allies could take troops away from the main effort, "which is assumed to be towards the Philippine Islands." Can we, during the spring of 1944, he asked, "divert the land, air and naval forces and the shipping to make this secondary effort?" Obviously he did not think so.<sup>51</sup>

More important, once the islands were taken, they must be held or there would be unfortunate psychological reactions at home and in China. "To hold them may require serious commitments of all types of combat and service forces," Emmons noted. Still he did not want to rule out the operation. He suggested that the local commanders be permitted to continue with their plans and with training but that Washington withhold final approval until the situation in Europe and the Pacific was clarified.

After the fall of Kiska the Joint Chiefs of Staff approached the next move cautiously. King was willing to consider DeWitt's proposal regarding the Kuriles. Marshall said he had considered such an operation but thought it a rather formidable undertaking for the Navy. In addition the problem of continued support after getting into Paramushiru would constitute an extremely heavy responsibility for all concerned. However he would not stand in the way. General Arnold intervened to say that anything that would advance the Allied drive westward without interfering with the South Pacific would be desirable. Having left themselves flexible, the Joint Chiefs proposed waiting until they knew how operations in the Central Pacific were progressing before making a final decision.<sup>52</sup>

In effect, active operations in the Aleutians were at an end. After leaving the decision open, King said what was really in his mind: that Attu was overgarrisoned and that if the Japanese had really given up on the

Aleutians, fewer troops were needed there. Above all, it was necessary to push operations in the Central Pacific as fast as possible. Falling into line with his argument, Marshall suggested that the 7th Division might be shifted from Kiska to the Central Pacific.

Before the end of August, the War Department acted on these suggestions. On the twenty-sixth Marshall directed that the Alaskan garrison, now at 150,000 air and ground personnel, be reduced to 80,000 as soon as shipping would permit. His move had been influenced by apprehension lest public opinion condemn him for keeping men idle under extremely trying circumstances. His view was confirmed a few days later when Assistant Secretary of War McCloy returned from an inspection tour to Alaska with "a rather disturbing report of morale conditions in the Aleutians." Some of the enlisted men, he reported on August 31, feared that they might be held in Alaska for the duration of the war with no prospects for combat service and no opportunity to return to the United States on leave.<sup>53</sup>

For Marshall the episode was typical of the problems he often faced in trying to forestall unfavorable public reactions. It stuck so forcibly in his memory that he was inclined later to exaggerate the promptness with which he had removed many of the troops:

I remember when we discovered that the Japanese had retreated from that island . . . I sent for Somervell . . . and said, "You have to get a couple of transports right away . . . up to the Aleutians or Alaska . . . and start the movement of troops from that command" . . . He said, "I haven't got any transports. Every one is scheduled for these other operations and I just can't do it." I said, "Somervell, you've got to do it because if you don't do that instanter [*sic*], there is going to be set up a tremendous demand from these men to get out of the Aleutians and out of Alaska and it is going to come with an impact that will get political very, very quickly." He said, "I don't know where in the world I am going to get them." I said, "I certainly don't, but get them, by God, get them, and get them up there right away. If you could put them there tomorrow, I would say get them there tomorrow." Well, of course, it took some time to move a transport up. Within three days the impact on the whole command was that the fighting was over. They had put up with terrific conditions there in the Aleutians, now they wanted to come home and they wanted to come home fast, and I had a congressional committee on my hands the fourth day. When I got the transports up there . . . that took off the heat. . . . Somervell couldn't see that I wanted to get it [redeployment] started immediately. I wanted the orders to be gotten out in twenty-four hours but I couldn't beat the punch on it. The instant fighting was over, the reaction was to come home. . . .<sup>54</sup>

The Chief of Staff's earlier decision to reduce the forces in Alaska had already brought anguished protests from his old friend General DeWitt, who seemed to feel that the decision was connected in some way with criticism of his own record. He complained that everyone seemed to know about his future assignment "except myself." In late August when DeWitt

sought to delay the shift in order to continue Aleutian operations, Marshall ruled that no forces were available for the proposed expedition against the Kuriles. In early September the Chief of Staff directed that activities of the Alaskan Defense Command be diminished.<sup>55</sup>

Marshall defended his action at the Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting on September 7, characterizing retention of large forces in the Aleutians as "a great burden, a heavy morale problem, and a naval problem rather than an air problem." After considerable discussion Marshall proposed that Buckner be brought to Washington for consultation. King requested that Rear Admiral John W. Reeves, commander of Alaskan naval forces under Kinkaid, be summoned as well.

Supported by Reeves, Buckner made a strong plea for an Alaska-based operation against the Kuriles. However he made clear that they could not stop at Paramushiru but must go on to Hokkaido if they were to avoid the Japanese fate at Kiska. He estimated that two Alaska-trained divisions plus two others brought in from outside would be sufficient. This action, he argued, would influence the Russians to move against Japan. He believed that the Soviets, not wanting the United States to hold the Kuriles after the war, would rush to help. The Allies should go full blast to break the present Russo-Japanese neutrality, he insisted.<sup>56</sup>

The prospect was enticing, but Washington now saw the main battle elsewhere. King spoke for his colleagues in late September when he said that the Allies, currently preparing to open a ninth front, lacked the tools for the Kuriles operation. Perhaps they could make such an effort the following summer. He too emphasized the importance of encouraging the Russians to move. "We should be more ready than we are now with 'ways and means,' " he said, "not only to aid Russia but to exploit the availability of Russian territory to strike at Japan proper which will have to be done chiefly by air from air bases within air striking distance." <sup>57</sup>

In retrospect, one may envisage that a drive through the Kuriles to Japan proper—an operation supported by land, sea, and air forces from American bases—would have been successful. In the matter of miles the narrow arc, despite fog and cold winds and ice, had its attractions. But the whole affair turned on Russian entry into the war against Japan. For Buckner two additional divisions plus the two he had, four heavy-bombardment squadrons, and a chain of air bases would have sufficed for an offensive against Paramushiru. But it would not have been enough to sustain the drive against the Japanese home islands or to hold the base if the enemy had attempted a major counterattack. At that time American forces were already engaged heavily in the South, Southwest, and Central Pacific. Only if the effort in the north were accompanied by an active Russian effort against Japan would it have been practicable to try it. And it became quite clear that the Russians did not want to break the fragile neutrality that existed there. In addition they were unwilling to permit the surveys of air bases, preparatory to establishment of airfields in Sibe-

ria, that would have made American participation realistic. Later they charged—inaccurately—that the Americans had sought fields to use against the Soviet Union. Such a suspicion existed in 1943, and it was obviously powerful enough to prevent cooperation.

In view of these factors, long-range and current planners in Washington reached much the same conclusions as General Marshall had: that the garrisons then maintained in Alaska were too large from the standpoint of both the danger involved and their possible use against the Japanese before the spring of 1945.

Admiral King was not convinced that the area was yet free from a Japanese attack. But the other Chiefs agreed with Marshall and his advisers that keeping a large force tied up in the islands would be "a concession of superhuman power to the Japanese." After further discussion the Joint Chiefs of Staff in early October 1943 voted to reduce the garrisons in the Aleutians while authorizing the construction of air-base facilities for possible attacks against Paramushiru in the spring of 1945. The 7th Division and the First Special Service Force were already earmarked for a shift to other theaters.

Although theoretically some preparations were still to be made for further attacks in early 1945, the speed-up of operations in the Central Pacific and MacArthur's drive for the Philippines markedly eroded Alaska's potential role. By the end of 1943 Army forces there had been reduced to 110,000, and Buckner was directed to cut them to half that number, which was accomplished by the end of 1944. In early 1944 General Hull of Marshall's Operations Division pointed out that later attacks on such targets as the Kuriles could be mounted from the United States without keeping large garrisons in the Aleutians. Although the possibility of an offensive by way of the Aleutians and Kuriles remained, the proposal was never seriously revived. Advances by the forces of MacArthur and Nimitz and the continued neutrality of Russia toward Japan ruled it out. Perhaps the most important feature of this continued discussion was in fixing the minds of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the importance of Russia's entry into the war to defeat Japan.<sup>58</sup>