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Maj. Gen. Orlando Ward

Denver, Colorado

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Interview with Maj. Gen Orlando Ward, formerly Secretary General Staff in Office of Chief of Staff, 1939-41, at his home in Denver, Colorado, May 5, 1957, by Forrest C. Pogue.

General Marshall was a fine leader. He handled delicate questions like the National Guard superbly. He knew the inside out of politics and government, although he couldn't always control it. He was an astute politician. He had a fine memory. We kept books for him on matters which he had to discuss with Congress. The day before he went before a Committee we went over things with him. Some of our people would go along but he would depend mostly on his memory.

I was head man in the outer office so I usually stayed there and did not go along with the General.

We were supposed to keep up with things which went through the General's office. We tried to be able to put our finger on anything which was missing. I picked Taylor and Smith among others to help me. Marshall picked Sexton (he liked a book Sexton wrote on the Philippines; General Adams showed me an autographed copy of Sexton's book which he said was the one Gen Marshall read), Bradley, Collins and others. He did not pick me. But he kept me on.

Marshall did not take his business out of the office. He had no close friends that I know of. He never wanted to talk business while away from the office. His great asset was that he knew had to keep his mouth shut. He could be tough, but also considerate. Once he stepped on me about something. A little later he sent for me and he said I've forgotten what I wanted. I said you probably wanted to apologize for what you said to me. He said that was probably it.

Lend-Lease matters were handled by Moore. We got into difficulties over handling of shipments abroad. The President would say cash on the barrel head one day and then talk about defending shipments the next. I was innocent about skullduggery in government in those days. Now that I have read Machiavelli, I find there is a difference between the ethics of an individual and a prince. I can look at the President with some leniency now. The first man in our staff to appreciate that we were really going to war as a result of our policies was James H. Burns. He was a fine officer and did excellent work. You should talk to him. Burns wrote a letter on the level of Wedemeyer's Rainbow plan. Burns was smart.

I had many good arguments with Gen Marshall. I always told him what I thought (perhaps I would have been farther ahead in the Army if I hadn't) and I never felt he held back. Of course he was interested in infantry officers and I was in artillery. In first war the artillerymen went farthest. This time it was the Infantry. I probably should have stayed with Marshall instead of leaving in 1941. All who stayed got bigger jobs--Bradley, Bedell Smith, Eisenhower Taylor, Dean (Marshall thought he was getting Russell Dean and got Bill Dean instead), Mark Clark, and many others. (DON'T PRINT THIS--one he liked and advanced was a know it all--Collins).

(I asked the General about straws in the wind in 1939-41.) I remember that there was a great deal of wandering about in the Panama Canal area of suspicious people and we were worried. (Juan Trippe might tell you something about this). There was talk about German pilots in some of the

Central American countries. In spring of 1941 there was a Japanese scare and we alerted Pearl Harbor.

I left several months before Pearl Harbor so anything I tell you is hearsay. However, I do recall that Sherman Miles and intelligence always had an aura of mystery about them. Miles was sensitive about the coded messages. I had to handle some of them, but he told me not to look at them. This was a mistake. The Secretary General Staff should have been kept informed. I had considerable authority to act in the absence of the Chief of Staff and his chief subordinates, but the problem didn't come up.

Of all the officers I know, Gen Short was the one most likely to do exactly what he was told. DON'T QUOTE ME, but it seems that the crux of the mistake on Pearl Harbor is that Washington thought that Short was ready for an attack. However his message had said I am ready for sabotage. The messages from Washington had been sent in such a way that Short felt that sabotage defense was the thing required. There was an error in handling this. There was also the fact that the Japanese surprised us.

There is always the chance that the man at the top gets God like and doesn't listen. Then he may fail to take into account all the things he is told or his subordinates may not tell him. (I am not sure that General Ward intended for this to apply in any way to Gen Marshall or to Pearl Harbor. He did not particularize and he did not give much satisfaction when I tried to see if he was relating his statements to Pearl Harbor. He added: that is the trouble with Eisenhower. I would have voted for him last time, but I wouldn't now. He doesn't listen and his subordinates tell him that he wants to hear).

Malony can tell you a lot about Hopkins. Devers knows a lot too. A Mr. Gray who went to the Air Force could tell you a lot about a study relative to dropping troops behind the enemy.

Difficulties with OSS -- The arrangement Donovan wanted would have given him direct access to the President and would cause trouble with the Army.

Stimson was level-headed, but he was old. He would only deal with one thing at a time.

The retirement of officers was based on a G-1 study asking the vitalization of the Army. Marshall put it into effect.

OFF THE RECORD Lend-Lease was an awful pain in the neck. Marshall had to certify that certain items were not needed by us. He turned this over to McCloy. Question whether it was constitutional. Gave Chief of Staff Control over the President.

Navy -- The Navy hadn't been active in development of landing craft. They hadn't built them and weren't too interested.

Ask Gen Marshall about his efforts to get radar at Pearl Harbor and his trouble with the Park Service. He went white when he was talking to the Park Service man over the telephone.

On dealings with the British ask McNarney. He could tell you a lot. I went a number of places with Gen Marshall. He liked to go out and see what was happening. He would look over units and make suggestions. (Among those I went with him were Monterey, Ft Bliss and Montgomery).

Have you heard two of the good stories about garbled messages? One was a message from Marshall to Stark which was not delivered for some time. When it was traced down, it was found that the message came out Marshall to Stork. Someone thought it was code. The only Bird they knew was Byrd at the South Pole, so they sent it to him. On another occasion, Marshall sent word he was arriving by plane and wired: NO HONORS AND 12 LUNCHESES. It came out HONORS AND 12 LUCKIES. When we arrived the commanding general had drawn up the only guns he had--some 37 mm. They went pfft instead of boom. When the honors were over he came forward with a carton of cigarettes for the General.

The Air people were weak on staff work. They were not well organized. Kuter was a good man. He went from artillery to Air Corps. I think he went from my office to Arnold's.

The whole Chief of Staff set-up was not large. Size was not important. People overstress organization. Sometimes one change in personnel will make all the difference in the world. We seldom had a man who wasn't tops. The men I had with me were the finest available.

When the General was away (with the exception of some inspection trips) I tried to remain on hand. Of course I was not his deputy. He had a deputy chief of staff who acted for him. Actually it took four men to replace Gasser.

You ask how we influenced the Chief of Staff. All of us wrote suggestions. We never hesitated to take them in. It occurs to me that the whole staff made proposals. The machinery of the General Staff had been working for many years. When General Marshall became Chief of Staff he had already been in the office for some months. He knew the organization and was familiar with the men. He also knew the personnel (I used to walk home with him. He lived near the Dresden--about Connecticut and Rock Creek Park.) There was no violent turnover in personnel and no necessity of great change. He dealt individually with people, The mechanism of the General Staff was rather impersonal. Of course the fact that there was a new boss was evident. But he didn't start throwing his weight around.

I drove General Marshall in one of the first jeeps. Bedell Smith handled it. I used to send in youngsters with good ideas to the General.

(Among the people to see are: John Martin, administrative assistant now, and Mr. Grey, formerly head of the file section of Gen Staff Studies).

When are they going to tell about the Japanese effort to surrender in 1945?

(I have known Gen Ward a long time. He is extremely honest, forthright, ambitious, frustrated. He was senior to Eisenhower, Bradley, Collins and many others. He feels that if he had been properly handled in North Africa he might have been a Chief of Staff--this is never said in so

many words. Instead he was relieved as commander of the 1st Armored Division. For this he blames Fredendall, Eisenhower, Patton and I think Bradley. Of Patton he has a poor opinion, feeling that he did not handle tanks particularly well in going into towns. He thinks his own tactics were better. I gather he has reservations about Marshall because he feels that Gen M. allowed FDR to do as he pleased with the Army. Gen Ward tends to be anti-British and therefore is inclined to fall for the idea that Roosevelt played their game too completely. He is too honest a person to swallow all of the propaganda, however.

(I introduced the General to Machiavelli about 1949 or 1950 and he has read every line. Now he is on Gibbon. His great view is that we must have balance of power in the world; that army officers must be taught to think politically.

(The interview was not too successful. He tended to move about too much and he declined to answer a number of questions. Some he countered with other questions. He talked about a great many current things which I have not included).

ELSEWHERE THERE IS A LETTER CONTAINING ANSWERS WHICH THE GENERAL WROTE OUT. The General has an odd sort of notebook which contains quotations, odd pieces of information and opinions. He will probably burn it as he tends to feel that he must not speak too openly on many things. An Original.