XIII

Streamlining for Action

WEEKS before Arcadia General Marshall had called the War Department the poorest command post in the Army. Within hours after war began he told the members of his secretariat that "the time was long past when matters could be debated and discussed and carried on *ad infinitum.*" He ordered them to "get action where action was needed with or without reference to the deputy chiefs of staff but . . . with a brief note to the [Chief of Staff] on the action taken in his name." [1] This was the opening move in a whirlwind campaign that was to shake the War Department as it had not been shaken since the turn of the century.

The General demanded "a drastically complete change, wiping out Civil War institutions" in the agency.[2] The General Staff, established in 1903 as the War Department's planning and coordinating organization, had, he said later, "lost track of its purpose of existence. It had become a huge, bureaucratic, red-tape-ridden operating agency. It slowed down everything." [3] To cure these ills he decided in late November to order General McNarney back from London to head a committee to reorganize the War Department.

Since 1940 there had been clear signs that the machinery meant for use in case of war was geared to a World War I situation, not to the new conflict that loomed on the horizon. It was painfully evident that the War Department was not up to the demands of a rapidly growing Army and Air Force. General McNair had been reminding Marshall for several months that General Headquarters must make radical changes, and General Arnold was pushing the Air Force's claims for greater autonomy. Amid the General Staff divisions, the Chiefs of Arms, the Technical services, and the nu-

merous commands and agencies that appealed to him for decisions, Marshall was drowning in a sea of papers.

Students of the War Department's organization on the eve of World War II have estimated that at least sixty-one officers had the right of direct access to the Chief of Staff and that he had under him thirty major and 350 smaller commands. Over a period of years a number of semi-independent agencies and offices, as jealous of their privileges as a clutch of feudal barons, had grown up. As a result the Chief of Staff and his three deputies were completely submerged in details. General McNarney graphically described the situation: "If a decision had to be made that affected an individual doughboy it had to be referred over to the Chief of Infantry, get his recommendation on it, and back to the General Staff section; it went up to one of the Secretaries, General Staff, and they had at least eight assistant secretaries . . . who did nothing but brief papers so that they could be presented to the Chief of Staff and . . . the three deputy chiefs of staff." [4]

In the end it was the Air Force that brought matters to a head. Since 1940 support had been growing in Congress and the press for an independent air corps. Urging patience on proponents of the idea, Marshall and Arnold continued to make adjustments that gave a larger share of autonomy to the Air. "I tried to give Arnold all the power I could," said General Marshall in 1957. "I tried to make him as nearly as I could Chief of Staff of the Air without any restraint although he was very subordinate. And he was very appreciative of this. My main difficulties came from the fact that he had a very immature staff. They were not immature in years, because they were pretty old, but I used to . . . say [they were] antique staff officers or passé airmen—passé fliers, I guess—because they were not trained at that kind of staff work and they were busy taking stands . . . about promotions. They were already getting more rapid promotions than anybody else. . . . But his staff was always agitating about that. And the less [rank they had] the more they were busy talking about a separate air corps. Well, that was out of the question at that time. They didn't have the trained people for it at all. . . . When they came back after the war, the Air Corps had the nucleus of very able staff officers but that wasn't true at all at the start.

"I gave Arnold his head as much as I possibly could, but my

main trouble was when his staff would get him in trouble. He would always take it very well. In fact, Arnold's disposition to cooperate with me was a very wonderful thing. Because I had to be rough time after time. And he was splendid about the matter and there weren't many difficulties. . . . He had great success in getting the following of the young airmen. They all liked him, they all respected him, and they [felt] he represented their interests. . . .

"Arnold's role was a very difficult one because he had a budding air force. It had a terrific expansion rate to it. And the upper stories of the Air Corps had a great many of these elderly pilots who were not trained in staff development. They had kept away from that in a sense in order to make certain that they didn't lose their flying qualification pay. It was very hard to handle because they would always be senior to any group that we would form to study some particular set of circumstances.

"These young fellows hadn't yet come into any great prominence, like 'Tooey' Spaatz, Vandenberg, and other fliers of that category. So we had a hard time. . . . I know one young officer [General Laurence S. Kuter] who right now is in a leading position in the Air Force. I was very much impressed with him when Arnold brought him in as a major. I said why don't you make that fellow [a general] and he said he couldn't, he would lose all his staff. They would all quit on him if a man that young was made. And he just couldn't do it. So the next list that came in, I just wrote the officer's name on it. Within one month he was a lieutenant colonel. A month after that he had his first star. General Norstad, who is now the supreme commander [in Europe], was another one of the young men I regarded with great respect. . . ." [5]

In the late summer of 1941 General Arnold and Brigadier General Carl Spaatz, Chief of the Air Staff, recommended three separate commands, directly responsible to the Chief of Staff, to control the ground, air, and supply forces of the Army. Suggested months earlier by Colonel William K. Harrison of the War Plans Division and ruled too drastic by his chief, General Gerow, the idea now struck a responsive note.

Gerow thought Marshall could solve his problem by reorganizing General Headquarters. Having tinkered with the workings of that headquarters to give it control over organizing certain task

forces for proposed operations in the Atlantic, General McNair disagreed. The air representatives also insisted that only a full-scale reorganization would meet the demands of a rapidly growing air and ground force. This pressure from Arnold and McNair as well as his own desire for a more effective organization led Marshall to come to grips with the problem early in 1942.

Asked why he had settled on General McNarney as the man to put the reorganization into effect, General Marshall replied: "I selected him because he had been an outstanding member of the War Plans Division, was familiar with General Staff procedure and, of course, with the Air Corps, had been close to active operations, at least of the air; had seen British governmental machinery at work, had been in Moscow and Cairo." [6]

Marshall may also have been influenced by an incident that had marked his first meeting with the airman some months before. McNarney had brought in a plan for the General to consider. When the Chief of Staff suggested some change his subordinate disapproved, McNarney blurted out, "Jesus, man, you can't do that!" Marshall shot a startled look at him but said nothing. On the way out of the office the air officer mentioned the incident to the Secretary General Staff. Colonel Ward reassured him, saying, "Don't worry. He likes for people to speak up." [7]

It was not candor alone that won McNarney the assignment. Marshall needed a tough hatchetman with a rhinoceros hide and the nerve to push through the reorganization in the face of the rugged infighting that was almost certain to follow. He was not mistaken in his man. Slight of build, dark of feature, singleminded, a man of few words and those plain-spoken, General McNarney let nothing get in his way when given an assignment. Pennsylvania-born, a classmate of General Eisenhower's at West Point, he was commissioned in the Infantry in 1915. Entering the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps the following year, he helped organize and command several observation groups in France in World War I. Between wars he combined command and staff work with study at the Command and General Staff College and the Army War College. He served one tour in the Intelligence Division and then came to the War Plans Division at the time General Marshall became Chief of Staff. As a member of the Joint Army-Navy Planning Committee, he got a chance to show his toughness by trading epithets with the redoubtable Admiral Kelly Turner. In the spring

of 1941 he had gone to London as chief of staff to the Special Observer Group. It was from there that he was summoned near the end of November. He left London on December 6 and was on the way to Lisbon to catch a plane for the United States when he heard the news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He arrived in Washington, without his luggage, just in time to be sent to Hawaii as an Army member of the Roberts Commission investigating the Japanese attack. Not until the commission returned to the United States and finished its report near the end of January 1942 did he learn why General Marshall had sent for him.[8]

Realizing that the reorganization was doomed if he gave its opponents time to organize, General Marshall depended on careful planning, minimum publicity, and complete ruthlessness in execution of his plan. He called McNarney in on January 25 and said that too many people were reporting to him. "It was taking too long to get a paper through the War Department. Everybody had to concur. About twenty-eight people had to pass on matters. I can't stand it." He asked for "some kind of organization that would give the Chief of Staff time to devote to strategic policy and the strategic aspects and direction of the war." [9]

It was not a task to be undertaken lightly. The plan Marshall was considering meant downgrading the General Staff divisions, eliminating the Chiefs of Arms, subordinating to a supply chief the Chiefs of Services, and abolishing General Headquarters. A great many proud officials would have their prerogatives diminished or abolished. They were individuals with powerful friends and traditions on their side. If Congress intervened and the press raised an outcry, the resulting battle might be bloody.

For decades the Chiefs of Infantry, Cavalry, Field Artillery, and Coast Artillery—major generals—had exercised great power in training and equipping troops assigned to their particular arm. Jealous of their rights, they insisted on being consulted about any order that might conceivably pertain to their special preserves. They stood for hallowed service loyalties and a special parochialism that made change and speed and development especially difficult to achieve. Integration of the arms and the services into a fighting force was what Marshall wanted and he intended to get it, at the expense of cutting away much that was deeply embedded in the War Department's past.

Careful preparations won much of the battle before the show-

down was reached. Marshall told an old friend: "I timed the matter so that two of the Chiefs of Arms and the Adjutant General's tours would expire, and fortunately the two remaining Chiefs of Arms were suited perfectly to more important positions. . . . Chief of Infantry Courtney Hodges, in charge of all Schools, Training Centers, etc., and Joseph A. Green, Coast Artillery, to command the anti-aircraft forces. They would have been too loyal to have opposed in any event; however, with such future prospects there was slight possibility of any opposition." [10]

Because much of the preliminary planning had already been completed, McNarney was soon proceeding at top speed. His assistants, Lieutenant Colonel Kuter (who was shortly to jump to brigadier general) of General Marshall's staff, Colonel Harrison, who had drafted the initial reorganization plan, and Lieutenant Colonel Otto Nelson, who had written his thesis at Harvard in 1940 on the organization of the War Department, were chosen for their expert knowledge and ability to work under pressure. In less than a week they had their recommendations for thoroughgoing change in General Marshall's hands. A few days later they informed him that the President under recently granted war powers could put the changes into effect by Executive Order.

After approving the general outline the Chief of Staff had the plan explained on February 5 at a full-dress meeting attended by the chiefs of the General Staff divisions (G-1, G-2, G-3, G-4, and War Plans), representatives of GHQ and the Air Forces, and the deputy chiefs of staff. The Chiefs of Arms and Services were carefully excluded. General Marshall followed the arguments closely, defending the cuts in the General Staff as necessary to the success of the program, and insisting that the new arrangement would not interfere with the development of weapons. He gave those present forty-eight hours to file complaints and appointed an executive committee with McNarney as chairman to put the plan into effect.[11]

Marshall wrote a friend: "It might amuse you to know that this committee, to which I gave complete power, was referred to as the 'Soviet Committee.' Also, what the public is not aware of, we had completed the major portion of the proposed organizational readjustment before the plan was even submitted to the Secretary of War or the President." [12]

When the changes were fully outlined they were explained to the Secretary of War, who gave his general approval. With solid War Department backing General McNarney drove full speed ahead. At a meeting on February 16 with representatives of the General Staff divisions, General Headquarters, the Army Air Force, and the offices of the Under Secretary of War, Adjutant General, Inspector General, and Judge Advocate General, he defined the role of the committee in a manner that cut off argument and full discussion: "It is not a voting committee. It is not a debating society. It is a committee to draft the necessary directives. It will prepare directives and such other papers as may be necessary so that the new organization may be prepared to function as early as March 9, 1942, if so ordered by the Secretary of War." [13]

The audacity of his approach and the full authority of the Chief of Staff removed the major roadblocks to the most sweeping reorganization of the War Department since Secretary of War Elihu Root had undertaken the job in 1903. Only under the pressure of war and the shock of Pearl Harbor would it have been possible to stifle the heated protests of the officers whose authority was being eliminated or sharply curtailed. Only because he believed ruthless changes were vital to the effective waging of war did General Marshall demand the immediate adoption of a program that might otherwise have been debated for months.

The Chiefs of Arms, whose established prestige might have gained them a day in court, were ignored. All but one protested orally. The fourth, Major General Robert M. Danford, Chief of Field Artillery, sorrowfully and with great dignity, filed a brief. General Marshall returned a kind reply and received a second moving appeal. The Chief of Staff was not moved, inasmuch as Danford's arguments for preserving branch consciousness in the War Department were "largely my arguments, paradoxical as it may seem, justifying the necessity for change." He forwarded the letter to General McNair, also a field artillery officer, and Secretary Stimson, who had commanded a field artillery unit in World War I, for comment. Both officials upheld General Marshall.[14]

The word went out that efficiency, tighter control, reduction in the number of General Staff officers, and a wholesale cut in the number of individuals having direct access to the Chief of Staff from some sixty to about six were essential to a successful war ef-

fort. General McNarney moved relentlessly toward his target date. He had given himself three weeks. On February 28 he received President Roosevelt's approval of an Executive Order authorizing the changes. It was formally published in a War Department circular on March 2 and become effective on March 9.

In his zeal McNarney almost alienated Roosevelt's support. Instructed by General Marshall to get the President's approval, the airman took the paper personally to a White House secretary to get the President's signature. His insistence on priority treatment overimpressed the young lady. She broke in on the President while he was in the dentist's chair to say she needed his signature at once. Shortly afterward an irate President complained to General Marshall. The Chief of Staff defended his subordinate, saying, "When I find people who get things done, I won't fire them." The President calmed down and approved the changes.[15]

They were drastic indeed. General Headquarters was eliminated completely. A new Operations Division (OPD), set up in late March in the place of the old War Plans Division, was to serve General Marshall as a command post for directing the war. "It really is GHQ," he told a friend.[16] Three of the General Staff sections, G-1, G-3, and G-4, which formerly had combined staffs of 304 officers, were cut back to twelve officers each and restricted to planning functions. The operational portion of the G-2 Division (Military Intelligence Service) was allowed to keep a large staff, but its planning section was sharply reduced.

Instead of the numerous agencies and commands that once had access to the Chief of Staff, three commands were substituted: Army Ground Forces under General McNair, Army Air Forces under General Arnold, and Services of Supply (later called Army Service Forces) under Lieutenant General Brehon B. Somervell. Army Ground Forces swallowed the staff of General Headquarters and what was left of the Chiefs of Arms. It was to control administration, organization, and training of ground forces. In return it gave up any part in planning operations for overseas theaters. The Air Forces headquarters was to have similar control over air units plus the development and procurement of aviation equipment. The Services of Supply organization was to have nearly everything else. In addition to being the procurement and supply agency for the Army, taking over many duties formerly assigned to the office

of the Under Secretary of War, it handled personnel, communications, hospitals, the training of service troops, the direction of recreational and morale services, the supervision of military justice, the delivery of mail, the spiritual welfare of troops, and on and on. Nearly everything not obviously part of the other two commands was funneled into Somervell's domain. His sprawling headquarters grew swiftly in size and power until it became one of the most powerful agencies in the country.[17]

In picking General Somervell to head the Services of Supply, General Marshall chose one of his most gifted subordinates, a lean, dynamic engineer, who had gained recognition between 1936 and 1940 for turning the Works Progress Administration agency in New York City into an efficient organization. Called to Washington late in 1940 to speed up the Army construction program, which was falling behind at a time when draftees were beginning to flow into the service, he had won a reputation as the kind of tough, uncompromising, ruthless expediter that Marshall needed for a nasty job. "He was efficient; he shook the cobwebs out of their pants," General Marshall declared after the war.[18] Somervell's temper and his tendency toward empire building created trouble, but his ability to get projects moving made up for the faults. "Of course I had to fight Somervell down or he would have taken the whole damn staff," said Marshall. And the Chief of Staff had to ride herd on his protégé's temper. "I told him once not to insult the Navy. I said, by God, don't do it again." [19]

Absolutely cold-blooded in removing officers who failed to deliver and capable of running down those who got in his way, Somervell pushed reorganization plans to rapid fruition. Taking as his motto, "We do the impossible immediately. The miraculous takes a little longer," he reveled in rough assignments, driving through projects without rest and without regard for costs.[20] As long as his efforts helped win the war he received General Marshall's backing. In later years, the wartime Chief of Staff left no doubt about the value of Somervell's work: "He was one of the most efficient officers I have ever seen. And he got things done in Calcutta as fast as he did in the meadows there around the Pentagon. Whenever I asked him for something he did it and he got it. He was very forcible. He reformed, and I am using the word accurately, he reformed the adjutant general's department and others. He found conditions

there were just intolerable and naturally they were all bitterly against him. And I think all the [postwar] reorganization so far as supply and services were concerned was built on avoiding any future development of a man like General Somervell. If I went into control in another war, I would start out looking for another General Somervell the very first thing I did and so would anybody else who went through that struggle on this side." [21]

Three days after the reorganization of 1942 was completed General Marshall revealed the strategy he used to put it through: "I started on reorganization a year and a half ago to see what might be done—or rather to work out a means of doing it, as there was not a great deal of doubt in my mind in general what the basis of organization should be. Of course the difficulty was how to bring it about without so much . . . discussion and opposition within the Army and on the Hill and in the press that I would be stirring up a most unfortunate morale situation at a critical moment and also would be defeating my purpose." [22]

No such radical surgery on the War Department as that announced in early March could be performed without blood-letting and violent reactions. Some of the displaced never forgave General Marshall. Others were convinced that the General Staff system had been improperly used, and that the Army lost valuable benefits that would have followed from keeping the older organization intact. General Marshall never regretted the change. In his view the reorganization made possible the effective waging of war by leaving him free to concentrate on strategy and major operations abroad.

Before the new structure of the War Department was completed General Marshall took up with the President one other reform that he thought essential to strengthen the system of military command. In February he suggested that Roosevelt appoint a chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[23]

When it became clear later in the month that Stark would leave for the United Kingdom early in March, General Marshall grew concerned over King's likely reaction to the Army's having two votes to his one. "I therefore thought it would be wise if we had a chairman and one from the Navy, if one could be found that I thought was entirely impersonal and a man of good judgment," the Chief of Staff recalled later. With what Stimson described as "great magnanimity and self-effacement," Marshall nominated for

the post Admiral William D. Leahy, former Chief of Naval Operations and currently United States Ambassador to the French government at Vichy. "I thought," he said, "the Navy couldn't resist this, and from what I had learned I was willing to trust Leahy to be a neutral chairman. . . ." [24] Stimson favored the unified command idea but felt that "Marshall is a far better man than any man in sight" for the appointment.[25]

In his postwar account of his motives for making the proposal and of the manner in which the President altered the original design, General Marshall declared:

> I thought that it was very important that we, in effect, have a neutral agency because we would have had trouble with the Naval Air and the Army Air and, the Naval-Army disagreements through the years—which were . . . exaggerated [at first] . . . by the fact that the Navy had a fleet; the Army had no army. It had little detachments around the United States and in . . . places [such as] Hawaii or Panama. . . . But the Navy actually had a navy. They had an Atlantic Fleet [and] a Pacific Fleet. . . . We had nothing like that. The real term of "Army" as we used it later in the war could not be applied properly to the scattered troops we had except as an administrative reference to all the individuals who were in the military service. Therefore, I thought it was particularly important to have Leahy in the chair. . . .
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> I continued to press for Leahy being returned and made chairman of the Chiefs of Staff. The President always answered my proposals regarding Admiral Leahy by saying, "But you are Chief of Staff." But I said, "Mr. President, I am only Chief of Staff of the Army and, in a sense, of the Army Air. There is no Chief of Staff of the military services." "Well," he said, "I am the Chief of Staff. I'm the Commander-in-Chief." And I explained to him in great frankness that it was impossible to conceive of one man with all of his duties as President being also, in effect, the Chief of Staff of all the military services. That it was a superman job and I didn't think that even the exaggeration of the powers of Superman would quite go far enough for this. And I know he was not very well pleased with my statement.
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> But the trouble was he didn't quite understand what the role of the Chief of Staff would be.[26] While I was in England [on July 21] Leahy . . . was announced as . . . coming on the Chiefs of Staff.[27] But the President said he was going to be his "leg man." And when I arrived in Washington, Leahy was very much at a loose end. He didn't quite know where he stood. He called on me because he had

learned that I proposed his name. I was the one who urged his return.

I had an office fixed for Leahy over in the building where the Chiefs of Staff met [initially the Public Health Building, then the new War Department building, which became the State Department building] and showed him the chair where he should sit, which was unoccupied at the time . . . because I always sat at one side although I was the senior on the American side. I proposed to him that when the next meeting came, which I think was the next day, he just calmly sit down in that chair. . . .

I thought it was particularly important to have Leahy in the chair, and I incurred, possibly, Admiral King's displeasure, but . . . Admiral Leahy functioned from that time on [July 30] as the chairman. The matter became very much confused later on because he became more what you might call the Chief of Staff of the President, which was not my intention in making the proposal and urging that he be brought home. It was excellent to have him in contact with the White House. It would have been excellent if he had kept us straight on all of the political goings-on, like Yalta, for example. . . . But anyway, he became more the Chief of Staff of the President and less the chairman of the Chiefs of Staff as time went on. And, for example, at Potsdam he was almost exclusively engaged in attending the political meetings. I know on one occasion we had been trying to get an answer out of the Russians regarding certain things we wanted them to concede. The Navy was particularly anxious for some stations . . . up near Petropavlovsk. The Russian Chief of Staff finally made a written statement of the commitments they would make on this thing. When we went to the next meeting they expected an answer and we didn't have the paper. It had gone to Admiral Leahy and he was away with the President. We had to answer all of these comments without having seen the paper.

Even though Leahy's time was more completely given to attending the President in his political meetings, nevertheless it was quite essential to have the arrangement as it was, because it would never have done to have tried to have gone right straight through the struggle with Admiral King in a secondary position and me as the senior where I was also the senior of the Air. It was quite essential that we have a neutral agency, and Leahy, in effect, was that so far as the Army and Navy requirements and positions were concerned.[28]

The reorganization of the War Department and the changes in the Joint Chiefs of Staff came during a trying period for General Marshall. Demands piled up for men and supplies from every cor-

ner of the globe. Under the new War Department organization the Chief of Staff could leave the details of training and supply to other hands and turn his attention to the making of strategy. It was to be a busy season as British and American political and military leaders virtually commuted between London and Washington in an effort to plot a successful course of action for 1942.