A black and white photograph of George C. Marshall riding a horse. He is wearing a military uniform and is looking towards the camera. The horse is dark-colored with a white blaze on its face. In the background, a small white dog with black spots is running. The scene is set outdoors with trees and foliage.

GEORGE C. MARSHALL THE LAST GREAT AMERICAN?

BY LANCE MORROW

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Followed by his dog, Fleet, the Army
Chief of Staff briefly escapes his military
cares by riding at Fort Myer in 1941.

GEORGE C. MARSHALL

THE

LAST GREAT AMERICAN?

BY LANCE MORROW

NO SOLDIER SINCE WASHINGTON HAS HAD HIS ROMAN VIRTUES, AND SO SIGNIFICANTLY SHAPED A PEACE

IN MY MIND, A DIAGRAM OF AMERICAN military history might begin with a parallelogram of Georges—George Washington and George Marshall; George Armstrong Custer and George Patton. A geometry of paired opposites. In some ways, George Marshall is the best of them all.

Custer and Patton are the Hotspur sides—martial peacocks, brave, vain-glorious and, in Custer's case, fatally heedless. The cavalier Georges favored flamboyant touches: Custer with his personal flag and a regimental band, mounted on white horses, playing "Garryowen" across the Montana plains; Patton with ivory-handled pistols and his warrior-mystic's déjà vu—he thought that he had fought with Alexander the Great in another life.

Well, as George Marshall said, ruefully, a democracy's leader, even in war, must keep the people entertained. Custer and Patton were performance artists who filled the stage with strut and plumage and flame. They conceived that the battle was essentially a dramatically amplified projection of themselves. Pairing Patton with Custer

is unfair, perhaps. Custer's curtain call was an act of self-immolating folly; Patton, by contrast, was a brilliant tactician and a superb combat leader who redeemed his excesses when he brought the Third Army slashing across Europe toward Hitler's throat.

The other two sides of the parallelogram, the Stoic Georges, shaped larger American business. Washington and Marshall were soldiers of maturity and gravitas: father figures, not sons. In both generals duty evolved beyond ego and broke through to a sort of higher self-effacement, an identification by which they merged themselves with their country's purposes. The Greeks might have thought Patton and Custer embodied hubris; they would have assigned Washington and Marshall to the realm of *arete*, or virtue—the self fulfilled in noble accomplishment for the state. Washington and Marshall were not only warriors but, after their wars, something more constructive than that.

As Emerson said, "Every hero becomes a bore at last." Washington and Marshall both may seem too good to

be true. But when I put Washington and Marshall side by side, and look at them against the background of the national leadership now in office, it is easy to think that I am looking at the first American grown-up—and the last.

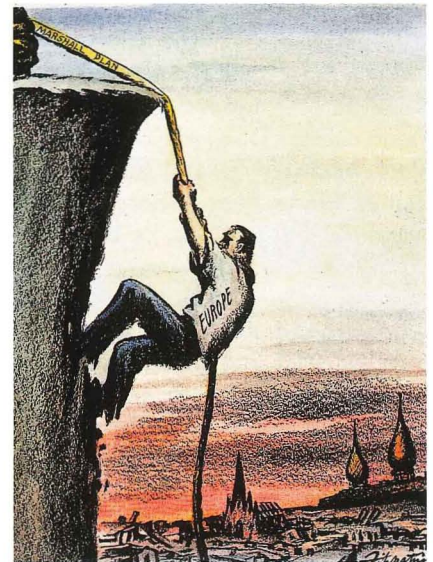
As much as any man, Marshall saved world democracy at the moment of its greatest danger. He took up his duties as U.S. Army Chief of Staff on September 1, 1939, the day that Hitler marched into Poland. He began with an absurdly ill-equipped army of 174,000 men, ranking 17th in the world behind such nations as Bulgaria and Portugal, and turned it into a global fighting force of more than eight million, an army without which the Allies could not have defeated Nazi Germany and Japan. Ulysses Grant was the first master of industrial warfare. Marshall was the first genius of bureaucratic warfare, a Napoleon riding a desk. Not martial flamboyance but logistics saved the world in 1939-45, although the world still may not be mature enough to understand that.

Could anyone else have done the job as well as Marshall? No. Was Marshall indispensable? The question has no answer, except perhaps a quotation from the *Tao Te Ching*: "The Master doesn't talk, he acts, when his work is done, the people say, 'Amazing: We did it all by ourselves!'"

The recent anniversary of the Mar-



April 1945: triumphant Red Army soldiers wave a flag over the ruins of Berlin; in a 1947 cartoon (right), Europe hauls itself up from a "rubble heap" with help from the Marshall Plan. West Berlin was rebuilt, but the U.S.S.R. and its satellites refused Western aid.



shall Plan notwithstanding, as a soldier George Marshall is half-forgotten now, or four-fifths forgotten, as he knew he would be. That was part of his virtue. There was a moment around Thanksgiving of 1943 that might have changed everything and propelled Marshall into higher historical orbit. Franklin Roosevelt needed to settle upon the general who would lead the Allied invasion of France and the reconquest of Europe. Everyone assumed that Army Chief of Staff George Marshall would get the job he had magnificently earned.

On his way to meetings in Cairo and Tehran, Roosevelt discussed the question with Dwight Eisenhower, then the commander of Allied forces in North Africa and the Mediterranean. As they flew over Tunisia, the President thought out loud: "Ike, you and I know who was Chief of Staff during the last years of the Civil War but practically no one else knows, although the names of the field generals—Grant, of course, and Lee and Jackson, Sherman, Sheridan and the others—every schoolboy knows them. I hate to think that fifty years from now practically nobody will know who George Mar-

shall was. That is one of the reasons why I want George to have the big command. He is entitled to establish his place in history as a great general."

Eisenhower listened in silence. He, of course, wanted to command the invasion but, like everyone else, assumed the job would go to Marshall. In Cairo in early December, FDR tried to get Marshall to state a preference. Marshall said only that he would do what the President wanted him to do.

Days later, FDR made his decision. He reasoned that no one else could deal with Congress as effectively as Marshall did—no other soldier would have Marshall's immense moral authority and credibility. No one else knew the world military situation so well. As the Cairo Conference ended, Roosevelt told Marshall: "I feel I could not sleep at night with you out of the country."

It was done. Marshall accepted the decision without question or comment. Both Roosevelt and Marshall were correct in predicting that being kept at his desk in the War Department would deprive Marshall of the honor in history that he deserved.

History is not fair. Marshall was a

greater man than Dwight Eisenhower, yet it was Ike who went to the White House for eight years. Marshall was a greater general, and a better man, than theatrical and self-promoting Douglas MacArthur. Yet MacArthur lives on more vividly in whatever remains of American historical memory. Despite the offer of seven-figure publishers' advances, Marshall refused to write his memoirs after the war; to do so, he suggested, would require him to tell the full story, and such truth-telling would sometimes wound old colleagues.

His concern for others was usually concealed behind an on-duty, crisply serious command manner that rarely permitted warmth or familiarity to show. The jovial Franklin Roosevelt on several occasions called him "George," but Marshall rejected it as not suitable from his Commander in Chief. He had a sense of humor, but one so rarely indulged, and so sly and dry that others could miss the point. At a World War I armistice celebration, a French attaché and a British observer debated the postwar distribution of Germany's colonies. When the Frenchman generously proposed giving Syria to the

United States, Marshall declined: "America is opposed to any colony that has a wet or a dry season, and an abnormal number of insects." He allowed, however, that Bermuda would be acceptable. The Englishman was not amused.

Colin Powell and Norman Schwarzkopf, heroes of a 42-day video war, made millions for their memoirs. Marshall belonged to a pretelevision, almost Plutarchian, order. In some ways the burden that he bore was greater than that of Churchill or Roosevelt, because Marshall was the man who turned policy, mere ideas, into men and steel, into facts. He was held more mercilessly than the others to the standard of reality. After World War II, Churchill, who had worked closely with Marshall and often quarreled with him over Allied strategy, said of the Chief of Staff, "Succeeding generations must not be allowed to forget his achievements and his example."

Franklin Roosevelt's Presidential

career fell into two acts—the Great Depression and World War II. Marshall played his two acts in the opposite order, from war to peace—first as the organizer of global battle, then as a preeminent statesman of the postwar period. During the 1930s, when America was basically isolationist and largely pacifist, Marshall, along with some others, had the historical imagination to anticipate war on a scale that would have seemed to most Americans an apocalyptic fantasy. It took great daring and steadiness to prepare for such an apocalypse. Again, after the war, he led America out of isolation with the Marshall Plan.

Marshall's two great acts intersected one day in 1947, fifty years ago this June. Harvard University president James B. Conant presented to George Catlett Marshall a doctor of laws degree, *honoris causa*. The honor, Conant told the audience of 8,000 in Harvard Yard, went to "an American to whom Freedom owes an enduring

debt of gratitude, a soldier and statesman whose ability and character brook only one comparison in the history of this nation." Conant understood the symmetry: the comparison was of course to George Washington.

By June 1947, the relief attending victory two years earlier had been lost in new anxieties. Churchill, deposed as prime minister and leading the loyal opposition, rumbled: "What is Europe now? It is a rubble heap, a charnel house, a breeding ground of pestilence and hate." The wartime alliance with the Soviet Union had all but disintegrated; the threat of Communist regimes in Europe and the Mediterranean was real. And now, in 1947, Marshall had a new assignment, Secretary of State. Marshall mistrusted eloquence; he said that he was bad with words, and in any case thought an officer should express himself through his deeds. Looking out at Harvard Yard, he adjusted his reading glasses, and began: "I need not tell you that the world situation is very serious . . ."

With that, Marshall set forth the outline of the European Recovery Program or, as everyone soon began calling it, the Marshall Plan. As the Cold War began, he set in motion the program that would save Western Europe from economic and political chaos, and from the totalitarianism that was overtaking mainland China and the Eastern Bloc countries. With Marshall pushing it in Congress and elsewhere, the plan was finally adopted despite notable opposition. "I worked on that," he later said, "as if I was running for the Senate or the Presidency."

He not only testified before Congress, he traveled the country patiently explaining. It was no giveaway program, he told businessmen; countries that wanted financial support had to come up with feasible plans for economic recovery. The aid had a fixed time limit and a fixed cost ceiling; it would be administered by an American businessman, not a bureaucrat, and there was plenty of accountability. Without a thriving Europe, who would we buy from and sell to? Without parliamentary democracy on the Continent,



In 1884, kid brother George already looked serious. Looking more serious still in 1900, he was a leading cadet at VMI.

*"It was about time
for somebody else to swim
for the family."*



what chance was there for continued peace? Twice in 50 years, he reminded isolationists, America had gone to war to keep Europe free of "single-power domination," clear proof of how much Europe mattered to America.

Beyond that, in a vision of a future we understand better now than we did then, he noted that modern communications, vastly expanded during World War II, had made the difference between rich and poor nations more glaringly visible than in the past, a recipe for future trouble unless something could be done about the disparity. In the four years between 1948 and 1952 the Marshall Plan channeled some \$13 billion in reconstruction aid and technical assistance to 16 European countries. For that Marshall received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1953.

A SMALL-TOWN BOY

AS SOLDIER AND STATESMAN, MARSHALL served eight Presidents in a 50-year career. He was born on the last day of 1880, only 15 years after the Civil War, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, in a primarily agricultural nation of 38 states. His career—young lieutenant in the Philippines at the turn of the century, General Pershing's chief of staff in World War I, organizer of victory in World War II, Secretary of State as the Cold War hardened—personified the American transformation from small-town insularity to global preeminence. The arc of his life was also the nation's trajectory. He molded his life and work to his duty and nation—and those four things became indistinguishable.

Marshall's Pennsylvania origins had the savor of a manageable, self-sufficient and essentially innocent universe, congenial to boyhood, a sort of powerful Emersonian center from which Tom Sawyer might have gone forth into the greater world. The self-confidence instilled by such a childhood was one of those crucial (but usually obscure) sources of national energy as the United States moved out into the world for the American Century. It was the sort of boyhood that a representative American like Charles A.

Lindbergh enjoyed and that Henry R. Luce, a missionary's son in China, dreamed of from afar, and forever missed. The soil of such childhoods nourished the myth of American bounty, generosity, blamelessness and immunity from evil in the world. Theodore Roosevelt fired these assumptions at the world as if they were cannonballs; Woodrow Wilson would turn them into a sort of missionary theology.

George Marshall was descended from John Marshall, the third Chief Justice, and from some of the oldest blood-proud families of Virginia—Catletts, Picketts, Taliaferros. His father, a prosperous Uniontown businessman, used to brag about the genealogy. The son reacted with embarrassment and irritation. "I thought that the continued harping on the name of John Marshall was kind of a poor business," he commented later. "It was about time for somebody else to swim for the family."

In a speech he gave years later in Uniontown, just before World War II, Marshall explained that he decided on a military career only after 1899, when, at 18, he watched the triumphant return from the Philippines of Company C of the Tenth Pennsylvania Infantry Regiment: "No man of Company C could make a purchase in this community. The town was his. . . . It was a grand American small town demonstration of pride [that] reflected the introduction of America into the affairs of the world beyond the seas."

That bright moment—America's foreign adventure celebrated to the sound of John Philip Sousa—would arrive, several generations later, at the darker end of the trajectory when the soldiers arriving back, singly, from Vietnam received no welcome home except a glare, a complicated silence, or the taunt: "Baby killer!" (I have sometimes wondered what George Marshall would have done if, born 30 years later, his Commander in Chief had asked him to be the Westmoreland or the MacNamara of the American war in Vietnam. Marshall was, after all, a soldier impeccable in his loyalty and punctilious about obeying orders.)



A heart-shaped, floral float conveyed Dutch gratitude to Marshall in 1948.

Young Marshall wanted to go to West Point, but both Pennsylvania senators were Republicans and Marshall's father was a Democrat who supported William Jennings Bryan. Marshall decided upon the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) in Lexington, Virginia, which generations of Marshalls had attended.

His older brother, Stuart, VMI class of '94, was against the choice. The brothers did not get along. Marshall recalled: "I overheard Stuart talking to my mother; he was trying to persuade her not to let me go, because he thought I would disgrace the family name. Well, that made more impression on me than all instructors, parental pressure, or anything else. I decided right then that I was going to wipe his face, or wipe his eye."

Marshall had his revenge. He not only distinguished himself at VMI, emerging in his final year as unanimous choice for first captain, the highest ranking cadet officer, he also courted and, after graduation in the class of 1901, married a Lexington woman, Lily Coles, six years his senior, whom Stuart had courted when he was a cadet.

OFF TO MINDORO

THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR WAS over; Spain had relinquished Cuba, ceded Puerto Rico and Guam to the United States, and sold the Philippines to us for \$20 million. But now the

bloody Philippine Insurrection prompted the United States to expand its permanent army to 100,000. Marshall, a tall, lean, plain-handsome 20-year-old with sharp blue eyes and an air of crisp reserve, won a commission as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Early in 1902, he said goodbye to his bride and set off for Mindoro Island in the Philippines, to begin a military career. It ended 49 years and seven months later at the retirement of Secretary of Defense George Marshall with the permanent rank of five-star general.

One of Marshall's attractive qualities as a leader was his refusal to condescend or bully; perhaps his relations with his older brother taught him that. A briskly intelligent reserve was an ingredient in his authority: no nonsense, but no overbearing power displays, either. He had a huge temper, which he eventually learned to control. He understood perfectly the way that, within the context of Army hierarchies, discipline could function through a democratic subtext of respect given and required. Once when he came upon one of his officers berating an enlisted man (who no doubt deserved it), Marshall called the officer aside and said, "You must remember that the man is an American citizen just the same as you are."

In the Philippines he soon established an ironclad but low-key style of command. When he was leading his seven-man patrol single file across a jungle stream one day, one of the men yelled "Crocodiles!" The patrol stampeded for the bank, trampling Marshall as they went. "It wasn't a time for cussing around," he recalled, years later. Instead, he picked himself up, waded forward, ordered the men to fall in, then, at the head of the column, marched them back across the stream and then back again into the water and so across in proper military fashion. Then he held a rifle inspection.

In November 1903, Marshall was ordered back to the United States. Now began his long seasoning years—hard work in the obscurity of a peacetime army given over mostly to the waiting games of police duty, mapmaking and necessarily theoretical military exercis-



During the fighting in Italy in 1945, Marshall finds time to visit the U.S. Fifth Army. Later an impassive Marshall takes a "backseat" beside an ebullient Eisenhower at a victory celebration. In 1943, the two discuss plans with Winston Churchill.



es. An army at peace is an animal in hibernation; the seniority system congeals promotions. Garrison duty ritualizes spit and polish, and tedium.

Marshall was posted for a time at Fort Reno, in Oklahoma, on the north fork of the Canadian River. The Army's old rationale for Plains duty had by now expired; whites had all but completed their settlement, and the suppression of the Indians. From Fort Reno, Marshall set forth by wagon and mule train to map 2,000 square miles of the southwestern-Texas desert, some of the harshest landscape in America.

Because of the seniority system, Marshall would not be made a first lieutenant until late winter of 1907 but, in 1906, was admitted to the Army's Infantry and Cavalry School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Such schools were to become battlegrounds between the Army's older conservatives and its younger reformers, who saw that, because of new weapons, the internal-combustion engine and Marconi's wireless, the nature of war had fundamentally changed. Agility, mobility, communications and firepower were about to alter its metaphysics.

It was Marshall's eventual mastery of the new realities—the need for rapid thinking and improvising, for a sure snapshooter's instinct in the field, supported by formidably organized pipelines of logistics and manpower—that

made him at last the controlling wizard of World War II. Marshall biographer Ed Cray assesses the historic cost of the transition in military thinking and the resistance of the military Old Guard to new ideas earlier in the century: "The successive bloodbaths blindly ordered by superannuated British and French generals at the beginning of World War I would validate the reformers, but the cost would be a generation of Europe's young men."

Ranked first in his class at Leavenworth, Marshall was promoted to first lieutenant and went on to Leavenworth's Army Staff College. In the years that followed, up until 1917 when he shipped out for the war in France, he established a pattern of distinguished performance at frustratingly low rank. At the age of 34, in 1915, and still a first lieutenant, he told the commandant of VMI that the "absolute stagnation in promotion in the infantry has caused me to make tentative plans for resigning as soon as business conditions improve somewhat." He soon thought better of it.

Marshall distinguished himself notably as a staff officer who, in a series of large-scale military maneuvers—on the Texas-Mexico border, in Connecticut, in the Philippines—proved a brilliant improvisationalist capable of moving whole armies with remarkable deftness. After the Batangas maneuvers



in the Philippines in January 1914, an Army legend has it, the commanding general called his staff together to cite Marshall as “the greatest military genius since Stonewall Jackson.” At Fort Douglas, Utah, in 1916, the commander, Lieut. Col. Johnson Hagood, paid Marshall an astonishing compliment on his efficiency report: “This officer is well qualified to command a division, with the rank of major general, in time of war, and I would like very much to serve under his command.”

Woodrow Wilson, reelected in 1916 on a promise of keeping America out of war (as Franklin Roosevelt promised to do in 1940, as Lyndon Johnson promised in 1964), ended by getting us into the war in April 1917 and sending two million Americans to France under Gen. John J. Pershing, who was fresh from chasing Pancho Villa in Mexico.

TOO VALUABLE FOR COMBAT

BY 1917, NO INTELLIGENT SOLDIER HAD illusions about the trench warfare that had been destroying Europe for three years. In one day, July 1, 1916, at the Battle of the Somme, England squandered 60,000 men, 2,000 more than America lost in 12 years in Indochina.

As the First Division’s operations officer, a job usually assigned to a lieutenant colonel, Marshall began training and organizing the inexperienced American troops at Gondrecourt in

Lorraine. He saw combat briefly as an observer along Gen. Henri-Philippe Pétain’s Verdun front. (Marshall got caught under fire, then entangled in barbed wire, and left part of his pants on the barbs as he scrambled back to the trenches.) Made acting chief of staff of the First Division, he had a memorable encounter with Pershing. The general had exploded at Marshall’s commander, Gen. William L. Sibert. Marshall, in turn, lost his temper on behalf of Sibert and blistered Pershing with a furious monologue about the condition of the troops, and inadequate supplies and transport. Marshall’s fellow officers figured Marshall had committed professional suicide right before their eyes. In fact, Pershing decided that he had at last found an officer who would tell him the truth.

Marshall hoped for a troop command. Douglas MacArthur, almost the same age, was already a full colonel and chief of staff of the 42nd Division. Marshall, however, was considered too valuable as a staff officer. He was transferred to Pershing’s headquarters at Chaumont. General Ludendorff’s offensive in the spring of 1918, Germany’s last hope of victory, had run out of gas. Marshall was ordered to plan the American part in an Allied counterattack.

Marshall’s later story in World War II—too valuable for combat, condemned against his wishes to function as a sort of military desk wizard—was prefigured in the St. Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne campaigns. Rising rapidly and now holding the temporary rank of colonel, he organized the transfer of some 600,000 American troops, and 900,000 tons of supplies and ammunition, from the St. Mihiel sector to the Meuse-Argonne battlefield, all moved by night, in secret, and without detection by the Germans. It was one of the largest and most complicated logistical undertakings of the war.

The Meuse-Argonne operation in the fall of 1918 was a kind of localized rehearsal for the global task that Marshall accomplished in World War II. It called into play his remarkable gift of dispassionate concentration upon the task at hand. His second wife, Katherine Tupper Marshall—a widow whom

Marshall married in 1930, three years after his first wife’s death—observed his behavior during the first bleak months of 1942, when the Allies were being thrown back on almost all fronts around the world. She said, “It was as though he lived outside of himself and George Marshall was someone he was constantly appraising, advising, and training to meet a situation.”

Neither the Meuse-Argonne campaign nor the logistics of America’s global war succeeded simply because Marshall had character. He possessed an extraordinary intellect, an astounding memory and what might be called a kinetic military imagination—a genius for seeing the dynamic interaction of facts in rapid motion through time.

Marshall’s focused analytical intelligence would be on display when he testified as Army Chief of Staff before Congressional committees or gave occasional press conferences. During World War II, he would sometimes invite 40 or 50 correspondents into his office, listen to a long series of questions from them, and then, without notes, deliver a half-hour monologue in which he answered each question in turn (facing the correspondent directly as he answered that man’s question) and at the same time wove all the answers into a coherent overall picture.

After World War I, America, of course, demobilized, turning away in horror and relief from foreign nightmares to an isolationism that relied upon the vast Atlantic and Pacific moats. Marshall returned to America as personal aide to Pershing. With his commander he sat in on long conversations with President Warren G. Harding. Marshall stood above partisan politics but learned how to deal with politicians and national leaders—an apprenticeship that paid off later. His years as aide to the Army Chief of Staff gave Marshall an education in the political realities of soldiering in a democracy.

THE “BENNING REVOLUTION”

BUT MARSHALL, ALTHOUGH SUFFICIENTLY horrified by the carnage of the war, again faced a soldier’s frustration with peacetime. The nation heedlessly downsized its army to virtually sym-

bolic proportions, and he was stuck with the permanent rank of major. After five years with Pershing, and a promotion to lieutenant colonel, he became assistant commandant of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. It was there that he began training young officers in the lessons of firepower and maneuverability that formed the basis for the new Army. Tactics could no longer be static. Marshall trained officers with a view to what Cray describes as "that first aggressive thrust by an enemy increasingly motorized, with aircraft rather than cavalry to scout ahead." In one lecture Marshall said, "Picture the opening campaign of a war. It is a cloud of uncertainties, haste, rapid movements, congestion on the roads, strange terrain, lack of ammunition and supplies at the right place at the right moment, failures of communications, terrific tests of endurance, and misunderstandings in direct proportion to the inexperience of the officers and the aggressive action of the enemy. Add to this . . . fast flying planes, fast moving tanks, armored cars . . ." He was describing exactly the blitzkrieg used by Germany against France in 1940.

It was in his five years at Benning, during what became known in the Army as the "Benning Revolution," that Marshall began accumulating the roster of names—kept in his own first-class memory or else in the fabled "black book" that officers thought he maintained—from which he later put together American military leadership in World War II. Lieut. Col. Joseph Stillwell and Maj. Omar Bradley were among Marshall's instructors at Benning. It was at Benning, too, that Marshall developed the reputation—later a sometimes rueful Army legend—for ruthlessness in judging officers and sacking even the most experienced men in favor of junior officers who, in his judgment, were up to leading a modern army.

The 1930s were difficult for Marshall. He was in his 50s now, still a colonel. The Army's atherosclerotic system had



Seated in his garden at age 71, after retiring from a distinguished 50-year career as soldier and statesman, George Marshall at last manages to look relaxed.

reasserted itself. He confessed to Pershing, "I'm fast getting too old to have any future of importance in the Army." Finally, in October of 1936, Marshall made brigadier. Less than two years later, he went to Washington to become the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff under Gen. Malin Craig.

By now, history was boiling along like one of the dark-cloud montages tumbling in time-lapse photography across a movie screen. From Tokyo to Berlin, from Moscow to Chungking, to London and Washington and New York, the world situation deteriorated. Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, Roosevelt, Chiang, Mao and the Japanese all were making their preliminary moves. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia dramatized the weakness of the League of Nations and was a prelude to larger tragedy. In the Soviet Union, Stalin had launched the show trials that would result in the imprisonment or execution of millions of the U.S.S.R.'s party functionaries, bureaucrats, military officers, physicians and scholars—a social and cultural apocalypse.

And in March 1936, Hitler moved unopposed into the demilitarized Rhineland. Germany sealed alliances with Italy and with Japan, and helped establish Francisco Franco in power in

Spain. In March 1939, Hitler occupied the remains of Czechoslovakia. In September, it was Poland's turn.

When Brigadier General Marshall reported for duty at the War Department in Washington, Chief of Staff Craig, an old friend from World War I, greeted him by saying, "Thank God, George, you have come to hold up my trembling hands."

Today, World War II and its aftermath seem a Jurassic age, a remote time when giants roamed the earth perpetrating primitive deeds (Fascism, global conquest, genocide and the nuclear awakening that was the war's last act). The cast of characters (Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt, Mussolini, Mao) has an earthshaking, mythic quality. Out of the origin myth, Hitler became the baseline for the discussion of evil, as Munich became the cautionary model of appeasement.

George Marshall becomes in my mind the paradigm of a certain kind of American virtue, now all but extinct. Marshall lingers in the nation's memory, I think, with a wistful poignance—a kind of reproach.

Lance Morrow, author of Heart: A Memoir, is a Time magazine essayist and university professor at Boston University.