



RATED #1 OVERALL ONLINE BROKER BY BARRON'S*

CLICK HERE TO GET FREE LIVE STREAMING QUOTES

Print Close

INVESTORS.com

POWERED BY INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY™

MANAGEMENT

He Marshalled Might For Right

By PETER BENESH, INVESTOR'S BUSINESS DAILY

Posted 02/09/2010 05:28 PM ET



George Marshall went from Army chief of staff to secretary of state in the '40s. [View Enlarged Image](#)
entered the conflict.

Roosevelt, often chummy with friends, so respected Marshall that he never called the general by his first name. For his part, Marshall accepted no invitations to FDR's social gatherings and yacht cruises.

"Marshall felt that if he was drawn into FDR's web of intimacy, he could not be objective," Shaw said.

The Director

Marshall exercised his authority with clarity and conviction, making plans only after meticulous analysis, navigating Washington politics and complex relations with the Allies.

When President Franklin Roosevelt asked George Marshall to command the invasion of France in 1944, the president hoped his Army chief of staff would say no.

By every measure, the D-Day job should have gone to Marshall, says Brian Shaw, president of the George C. Marshall Foundation. "He was the most senior guy," Shaw told IBD. "He had led the war effort."

The assignment was his for the asking, Mark Perry writes in his book "Partners in Command."

Upon FDR's approach, Marshall told chief White House aide Harry Hopkins that he would "go along wholeheartedly with whatever decision the president made."

Marshall (1880-1959) stuck to the basic principle of his military career, that the president holds the highest rank and makes the call.

In a 1956 interview, Marshall said, "I would cheerfully go whatever way he wanted me to go."

Roosevelt decided on Gen. Dwight Eisenhower to head the invasion, telling Marshall: "I didn't feel I could sleep at ease if you were out of Washington."

Marshall stayed at the military helm in the capital, overseeing the the fighting in Europe and the Pacific. Thanks to his insight and foresight, Germany and Japan surrendered less than four years after America

He gave concise orders and expected them to be carried out.

He ignored the trappings of office that often attract people in power, refusing all decorations during the war, Stanley Weintraub writes in "15 Stars: Eisenhower, MacArthur, Marshall: Three Generals Who Saved the American Century."

After the war, Winston Churchill called Marshall "the true organizer of victory," notes University of Vermont professor Mark Stoler, editor of the Marshall historical papers.

Marshall became the organizer of the West's victory in the Cold War, Stoler told IBD. The mechanism was the European Recovery Program, known as the Marshall Plan.

Appointed secretary of state by President Truman in 1947, Marshall realized that economic chaos and deprivation could push postwar Europe into Moscow's grip.

Marshall had dealt with the Soviets during WWII. He had no doubts that Josef Stalin aimed to cover Europe with communism.



The Marshall Plan, which the secretary of state mapped out in 1947, helped Europeans such as these Berliners dig out of World War II's destitution. AP View Enlarged Image

In a speech at Harvard on June 5, 1947, Marshall unveiled his plan to revive Western Europe: "It is logical that the United States should ... assist in the return of normal economic health to the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace."

From 1948 to 1952, the U.S. invested \$13 billion in reconstruction, encouragement of free markets and creation of opportunity for people of the war-ravaged countries. Success stemmed from treating Western European governments as partners rather than supplicants.

Counter To Communism

The Marshall Plan fused humanitarianism with self-interest, Stoler says. It sparked the creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and containment of the Soviet Union — keeping communism from creeping close to America.

The plan was a cornerstone of the birth of democratic West Germany and of what would follow decades later: the European Union.

The Marshall Plan, according to Stoler, links to the collapse of Soviet communism in 1991: "It's why the West won the Cold War."

In the heat of that war, Marshall won the 1953 Nobel Peace Prize.

No one could have predicted that young George Catlett Marshall would rise to the highest rank in the U.S. Army, lead a global military alliance and chart the strategic course for the last half of the 20th century.

Born on Dec. 31, 1880, in Uniontown, Pa., Marshall experienced the family's slide into genteel poverty after his father lost the family fortune to business failures, Shaw says.

No Classroom Sprinter

"People thought him a little slow," Shaw said. "He was not a great student, but he had a great mind."

Marshall insisted on attending Virginia Military Institute after overhearing his brother, Stuart, himself a VMI cadet, belittle him.

Stuart implored their parents to keep George away from the renowned academy, saying the youngster's mediocre scholarship would embarrass the family.

That rebuke steeled George's resolve, Shaw says.

His mother never lost faith in him. She sold personal property to afford his college entrance and convinced George that education would be the key to success.

Although he didn't excel in his academic field, civil engineering, he shone in military leadership. He became first captain, commanding the entire Corps of Cadets.

As a senior, he took on another challenge, football, drawing all-star plaudits at tackle in 1900.

One characteristic that stood him in good stead as a military and diplomatic leader was his unwillingness to bluff, Shaw says.

That forthrightness had shown up early. A creek ran near his home. "Being an entrepreneurial guy, he built a boat and ferried kids across the stream," Shaw said.

One day, girls boarded and refused to pay. Marshall warned them that if they didn't pay, he'd sink the boat.

They didn't pay. He sank the boat.

"Marshall understood how to make a statement and back it up," Shaw said.

As a junior Army officer Marshall served in the Philippines, and in China he learned Mandarin.

He was a student and instructor at Army staff colleges. He sought better ways to manage the Army.

Marshall's pluck and knowledge proved invaluable in World War I.

As chief of operations, he organized the 1st Division during the sea voyage to France. Upon landing, he had a dramatic clash with Gen. John Pershing, the U.S. commander.

Pershing had berated Marshall's boss in front of other officers for the condition of the troops and their gear. Capt. Marshall protested: "There are some things to be said here; I think I should say them."

He proceeded to lecture Pershing: The problems wouldn't exist if the general had gotten the logistics right.

Marshall looked doomed to a court-martial for insubordination. Instead, Pershing transferred him to his own staff.

Marshall later became Pershing's aide and personal friend.

Pershing had Marshall organize America's greatest World War I victory, the Meuse-Argonne Offensive in the fall of 1918. The young officer transferred 600,000 troops and 900,000 tons of supplies at night without enemy discovery.

The operation, helping clinch the war's end, won him the tag Wizard.

World War I was supposed to be the war to end all wars. Marshall, a student of history and human character, "realized there would never be a last war," Shaw said.

Marshall saw that "the next war would be one of movement and maneuver, not trench warfare," Stoler said. The deciding weapons would be aircraft and tanks.

The Star

In 1939, as Europe went to war and with Japan continuing its war on China, Roosevelt bypassed 12 generals to promote Brig. Gen. Marshall to four-star chief of staff.

One reason: "Marshall was not a yes man," Shaw said.

Marshall landed his fifth star in 1944. The next year, with war over in Europe and the Pacific, he thought he could retire. Wrong.

Truman sent him to China to try to talk the nationalists and communists out of their civil war. Even Marshall's skill in speaking Mandarin couldn't resolve the conflict.

Before that mission ended, Truman tapped him to be secretary of state, giving him the opportunity to create the Marshall Plan.

Marshall's Keys

- The first American Army general to reach five-star rank, promoted in 1944.
- "When a thing is done, it's done. Don't look back. Look forward to your next objective."

© 2010 Investor's Business Daily, Inc. All rights reserved. Investor's Business Daily, IBD and CAN SLIM and their corresponding logos are registered trademarks of Data Analysis Inc. Copyright and Trademark Notice | Privacy Statement Terms | Conditions of Use