

# INTERVIEW NOTES

*November 13, 1956*

The general began with some general observations which he interrupted a time or two and then came back to. He said that certain considerations influenced the decisions of the chiefs of staff. (1) The difficulty in reaching agreements with the British before we had an acceptable army. This was marked by the small number of American troops overseas and by the quality of troops of which the British were very uncertain.

Mr. Churchill made a statement in my office, after I was in China, in which he paid me the great compliment directed to the great rapidity with which the army was organized and to the quality and efficiency of command and staff. I mention this because I was always confronted with the feeling—I think fully justified—that British agreement was limited by uncertainty as to the quality of forces we would eventually land in Europe. This opinion was seriously influenced by the performance of our lead divisions in Africa whose training was not complete. (Do not print this. Their weaknesses were those of the National Guard unit. I tried to strengthen and improve them, but you couldn't get rid of all the weaknesses.) Alexander said they were not battle worthy. Mr. Churchill spoke to us about the need of reforming our method of handling noncoms. British keep theirs apart from the other soldiers. Their system is better. Only in wartime can you get the discipline you need to keep troops in line when they are mixed in together as we do.

Another difficulty lay in the fact that many officers assumed we had power as yet untested. Particularly true with regard to Arnold. I had gone through this experience in World War I; he hadn't. The air people thought this and that and did a lot of wishful thinking. Arnold got the president enthused over an air plan when he didn't have a plane to carry it out. I was more guarded. They made every goddamn mistake known to man when they started. I have told you about our lack of spare parts. I had to find it out by myself; they didn't tell me.

British wanted Flying Fortresses. They wanted them to bomb Berlin to meet the demands of their people—I believe in their slums—to pay the Germans back. We gave them the planes—fifteen, I think. I excused it in the press against attacks by the isolationists. The law said nothing could go without my assent. I think it was unconstitutional for me to have the say

over the president, but I had to O.K. all weapons going. Frankly, to my mind it was part of the defense of America to defend Britain. I justified the fifteen plane deal, however, by saying that it was for experimenting and testing. I was a trifle insincere. By God, when they got over there, I was right in my insincerity. Everything was found to be wrong with them. They were not operationally efficient. Their defensive equipment was lacking. Actually an impressive experiment. I saw Johnson at the Flying Fortress factory and told him they had to get at it; listen to the British on what was needed. Same thing with our tank. We had a beautiful motor, but fighting arrangements no good. I had to take into consideration the overconfidence of my people. They exaggerated all the way down the line. I could not allow myself to be misled.

I asked about Roosevelt's firmer attitude being due to educational work by Stimson or Marshall. The general said that Mr. Stimson played quite a responsible part in this. Stimson said he included the cross-Channel business in his prayers. The chiefs of staff (General Marshall says this instead of JCS) had stated their position and were afraid that Churchill would inveigle the president into side shots. (He added may be 'palavered' into it is a better word.) Mr. Churchill was inveigled by himself by his apt phrase, "the soft underbelly," until it became a feasible idea to him.

Stimson's method of educating was not so much by personal visits, but by memoranda. The president didn't like to listen to Stimson's long, slow discussions. Became irritated. I persuaded Stimson to use memos. Wrote excellent legal case. Stimson would hang on to one point. He had been a lawyer. Perhaps he would work on a brief for a year. He would hammer away on one thing like that. I wanted Stimson to send McCloy to see the president, just as I sent Frank McCarthy. Stimson would say that it was his constitutional responsibility. I said here is a way of getting something done. Marshall said he went some to the president, but tried not to go too much. At first Pa Watson didn't want him to come too much. Pa wanted to be the chief military representative. Didn't have the head for it. Later, Watson and Hopkins wanted Marshall to come in. Never got too friendly with Roosevelt; made a point of never laughing at one of his jokes. Never called him unless it was important. As time went on, became stronger with the president.

Our whole idea was to keep the president on the course he had accepted. Always worried when the prime minister got near him.

I next asked Question 2 of Chapter 5 concerning bombardment being key to cross-Channel success. He said it was a necessary preliminary to attack. He then noted that nothing or very little had been made of the fact that bombardment destroyed the staffs and commands of a number of German units. It is the greatest tribute to the high efficiency of the German organization that they could endure under these conditions.

Their discipline did not break down. A good historian will pay tribute to the enemy when that is called for. I admired Grant's desire to fight and the way he kept it up. It took great courage to shoulder the load, but I was shocked to see in his memoirs that he depreciated Lee. That was the last straw.

I next asked for reactions on Cunningham, Ismay, and Eden. Cunningham, he said, was a splendid man, a real fighter, a satisfactory person to negotiate with. I was fond of him and admired him greatly.

Ismay ideal for his position. One of the most difficult assignments in the war as Churchill's chief of staff. Churchill commanded. Ismay straightened things out for us time after time. I was fond of him.

Eden—strong, shrewd man. I am ashamed to say that I was ignorant of his leadership in Parliament. I didn't appreciate him at full value. We had some difficult scenes, especially over de Gaulle. Smuts had to go get him after he had gone to bed.

Smuts—great mind; took a broad view. He would work to pacify me. I was immensely complimented when Queen Fredrika, who knew both of us well, picked the two of us as the chief leaders of the war.

I doubt if I did anything better in the war (Churchill always wanted to take the side shots) than to keep him (WSC) on the main point. I was furious when he tried to push us further in the Mediterranean. I had given up control in the Mediterranean because I thought it was proper to do so. I had been executive officer for CCS in the Mediterranean. Right after, we handed it over to the British. They were grateful. Then Churchill took pneumonia. While recuperating at Marrakech, he brought the commanders together without us and ordered things done. Didn't tell us. Got into a mess. Then tried to get us in on Rhodes. These things kept pulling us in further.

Back to Eden. I insisted on their taking over Azores without further delay. We couldn't control submarines in an area about 500-1000 miles. No way to patrol. I put it up to Churchill and said, "By God, we had to do it." Eden opposed it on the basis of political wisdom of such an act. Finally decided it could be done under an English treaty with Portugal of the 1600s.

Said he had many hectic scenes with Churchill. Could be strong and loud. Churchill, however, once he accepted a point, would not hold it against him. Would put his arms around him.

Question 4, Chapter 5—Thinks the British did not believe they needed this much. I wanted to get the thing decided on with minimum limitations.

Back to Stimson. His greatest contribution lay in his strength of character. His political indifference was such that no congressman could get at me unless he agreed. Sometimes he was on their side. Marvelous protector for me. I was in a kind of box. Woodring and Johnson (he was

worse) would send congressmen to see me to get things.

All matters of organization and strategy were under me. This unlike the navy where King kept aloof from the secretary of the navy.

Stimson protected me from the president. I don't know what we would have done with someone different. I had to have someone who was aware of the civilian implications of the army.

Here General Marshall went to a subject he has mentioned several times. We failed to see that the leader in a democracy has to keep the people entertained. That may sound like the wrong word, but it conveys the thought, he added. People demand action. We couldn't wait to be completely ready. Churchill always getting into side shows. If we had gone as far as he did, we would never have gotten out. But I could see why he had to have something.

Churchill, in talks on Rhodes, arranged to get to the conference ahead of time. He invited me to dinner and the two of us sat until two in the morning. Churchill was red hot. Then he had all the British in. Ike was there, but I didn't involve Eisenhower. I had handed him over when he became Allied commander. All the British were against me. It got hotter and hotter. Finally, Churchill grabbed his [WSC's] lapels and said His Majesty's Government can't have its troops staying idle. Muskets must flame and more fine English like that. I said, "God forbid, if I should try to dictate, but," I said, "not one American soldier is going to die on the goddamned beach." (He meant Rhodes here.) The others were horrified, but they didn't want the operation and were willing for me to say it.

Churchill never held this against me, but Ismay had to stay up with him all night. (I asked if Churchill spoke from brandy and he said no, that Churchill could hold it. Said King got too much once and president and Churchill never let on.)

Said in defense of Churchill that staffs were ultraconservative everywhere. Their business to show problems. Commander must know the dirt and all the problems; then he must decide if he wants to take the hazard. Marshall says he used to ask planners to work out something. Stimson wanted to get in on it and start revising. Marshall never believed in prejudging plan. I wanted to wait and see what they came up with.

I asked about Dill. In the first place, Dill won the antagonism of Churchill by being absolutely frank. He called him Winston. Early in Churchill's reign, he was trying desperately to find a way to discount the Germans. This would have led him into dispersive actions. Dill opposed.

Dill very frank with me. Probably his greatest value was when he heard from Churchill and the British chiefs. He would bring stuff to me and read it, but not say that Churchill had asked him for Marshall's reactions. I would react—I am ashamed to say, with curse words. Dill would write it down. Then he would say that Churchill had asked for Marshall's reactions.

He would show Marshall the notes and then they would strengthen the language and Dill would send it back. This was not an insult to the head of a friendly nation, but a comment on certain suggestions.

Dill helped by passing on to Marshall copies of Roosevelt's cables to the prime minister which were available to British chiefs but not the U.S. chiefs. Dill always afraid this fact would leak out that he was keeping Marshall informed.

Very difficult to deal with president under these conditions. Mr. Roosevelt didn't want things on the record. He didn't want a recorder. I brought in Deane once to keep some notes. He brought a big notebook and the president blew up. Next time Deane brought a book so little he couldn't use it. Our people had no idea of finesse. These things not needed for military, it is assumed, but needed in politics.

Stimson came back from one Friday Cabinet meeting with some notes. We worked until Sunday night on the idea. Navy worked on the notes Knox brought back. Found they had taken two different sets of ideas. Each one trying to keep notes while listening and presenting his own views. Stimson horrified at the loss of time.

I had Ismay draft the procedure the British used. Of course, it differed because of their parliamentary set-up. I wanted all sections in on it—send stuff to the people concerned. British met in a building which belonged to the control staff. We could have done it. [Concerning this, see Marshall's Memorandum for Mr. Hopkins, November 4, 1942, *Papers of George Catlett Marshall*, 3: 423–24.] I had picked Harriman to be secretary of the cabinet. Things were in a mess. We found that Donald Nelson's outfit was meeting with the British and deciding opposite to what we wanted. Harriman was made ambassador to Russia and that ended this.

Dill didn't sell out the British. He stood up for them when he thought they were right. He presented their views. Churchill did mistrust Dill. Didn't invite him to Tehran, so I took him. I also took him to China; impressed Chiang Kai-shek.

Dill as chief of staff would have been unfortunate with Churchill feeling as he did about Dill. I thought once Churchill would relieve Dill here as head of mission, so I arranged for five colleges to offer him degrees and sent Churchill stories about him, so he didn't dare recall him.

How did Admiral Leahy come in? I was senior staff officer and Arnold was under me. I was presiding officer in Joint Chiefs and had two votes. Source of difficulty with the navy. Had enough without that extra. King didn't want Leahy, but I went with Hopkins to president to try to get him to appoint a chief of staff for C-in-C. Roosevelt said I am my own chief of staff. I said you are not (who is that fellow who flies around?)—Superman. We must have a neutral man to preside. I think Leahy will do. Unfortunately, I was not here when Leahy was appointed and when the reporters asked

what he would do, Roosevelt said he was his legman. When I came back, Leahy asked me what he was to do. I said president doesn't know what a chief of staff is. Leahy was neutral enough for my purpose. He had no place to work, so I took him to an office in with the chiefs of staff and showed him his chair. I told him where to sit when we next met. King was furious when Leahy came in and sat down as presiding officer.

Leahy persisted in being an aide to the president. This was not what I wanted. He went to political meetings with the president—meetings which chiefs of staff didn't attend—and then didn't tell us what went on. He got too much on the political side of the conferences. He didn't tell us anything. We taxed him with it. It is interesting that I am blamed for political sessions at Yalta which Leahy attended and which King and I were not invited to.

## Chapter 6

Question 1: I had nothing to do with this (cable of Churchill).

Question 2: Says he guesses not to whether Sherwood exaggerated tension with Russia.

Question 3: Doesn't recall.

Question 4: Stimson correct as to Marshall's view on Naples attack. Marshall recalls that Churchill came leaping at his statement, assuming that he was approving the whole Italian thing.

Question 5: Staffs very cautious. Thinks Eisenhower largely influenced by his staff and particularly by Smith. Had a huge responsibility. With a mixed staff he was almost certain to have groups opposed to nearly any action. By time you watered down the plan it was a question whether you would have an operation or not. Proceeded on a very conservative basis in Italy in contrast to chance they had in TORCH. British were conservative with the exception of Churchill. Eisenhower said that when we are introducing logistics as a factor, you claim to know nothing about it (this to Churchill). If you have a proposition which you can delay by logistics, you count everything. You couldn't do dashing things with Allied command setup for national and international reasons. Very probably Eisenhower's procedure was a sound one.

Question 6: Most decidedly not. Only thing British hadn't put in was trying to get to the North Pole.

When trying to get rid of Nelson, president noted I was getting ready to send someone to China and said Nelson might have something he might help Chinese produce, like razor blades. Nelson went over and got into the Stilwell business. I called the president (something I seldom did) and asked if he had seen what Nelson was saying. I said he had gone a hell of a long way from razor blades.

Question 7: Don't remember anything about Spain. However, we

often talked of plans we did nothing about and did not intend to do anything about. One of my secretaries had worried about the fact that her notes and some of my memos are around. Sometime, when a point like this Spanish thing would come up, I would decide to dispose of it. So I would write my planners and ask how about it? They would slap it down and that was the end of it. But they said you will be attacked for suggesting cockeyed ideas. I would not put in the fact that I opposed an idea. I wanted planners to give me their views. We forgot that our operators were not writing history. However, many of them wrote for history. MacArthur was a specialist at that.

Question 8: Do not remember about General Hull on Mediterranean, but he was a very good man. Important man for you to talk to.

Question 9: Doubts if this exaggerates. If planners hadn't argued, I would have been worried.

Question 10: Doesn't recall any more. This expresses Marshall's views. Nothing to add. We felt very deeply that we would get in to political distress if war and casualties were prolonged. All our instincts pointed to necessity of ending war at earliest possible moment. During the Bulge that Texan (big old buster—Connally) went wild. Every time we had a victory, of course, people thought the war was over. Wanted to close down. Hadn't begun. Very bad in 1944 when we broke out. Almost disliked to hear of a victory. A very serious consideration in wanting to avoid sideshows. We wanted to end the war in a hurry. We were far away from home. Casualties heavy. We had the Rhine to cross. If we had had big losses at the Rhine, we might have had pressure for negotiations. We still had the Pacific where there seemed to be no surrender of any kind. Thousands of miles from home; not across the narrow Atlantic, but across the broad Pacific. Chandler wanted to go to the Pacific with me—"Happy" Chandler. MacArthur putting on pressure. Economy drives in Congress.

Question 11: Congress got in on the manpower thing. I always thought we had too many divisions. I didn't want so many divisions, but wanted good men and wanted a reserve pool. Didn't want depleted divisions. Hurts morale. Mustn't have empty seats. Congress passed bills on leave and farm exemption which cut strength.

Main pressure on manpower came from three things you mention. General Wood gave trouble. Said too many bombs. Wanted men for certain things. He never sat down with a casualty list. The first manpower requirement was usually drawn up by junior planners; was cut four or five times before I got it.

Question 12: I was against expansion. Wanted to perfect what we had and wanted replacement system. Couldn't keep up old regimental system; could no more do it than fly to the moon. British tried it and their people were shot to pieces.

## Chapter 4

Question 1: Embick one of our ablest officers. His board not in existence when we decided on policy. He carried out policy loyally. We turned over too many things of hack work type to the board so they didn't have time to put their feet on desk and think. We who were involved daily didn't have time to think and needed them. I don't know an officer more committed to duty than Embick.

Questions 2, 3, and 4: Hull and Handy were leading planners. Eisenhower also important. Doesn't know how he got Handy and Hull exactly. Thinks Eisenhower may have brought them up. Marshall said he brought Eisenhower from Texas. Had observed his work in the 1941 maneuvers. However, knew him when Eisenhower worked on battlefield monuments thing with Pershing. Wanted him at Benning. Said he did not think that Gerow was the important person in bringing Eisenhower in. Said he was intending to move Gerow out before Pearl Harbor; Pearl Harbor not responsible for the move. Had Bundy in mind for that place, but he was killed.

I asked if most of them did good work. He said, "Oh, my, yes."

Wedemeyer's reports always verbose and elaborate. Eisenhower usually gave oral statement. Handy much the same—very terse. Great deal of common sense, courage, loyalty. He was a VMI man, but I didn't know it. Didn't know that Brett was or that McCarthy was. At one time the SGS, the assistant SGS, another assistant SGS, deputy chief of staff, chief of air corps and chief of staff all from VMI. I sent for secretary of VMI alumni association and said don't brag about it. I had to bribe him by showing him our setup which impressed him.

Question 5: At first said no comment. Then said the reorganization, which was made apparently at the end of the war, he didn't approve of. Seemed to be to suppress anything which gave Somervell any power. He was efficient; shook the cobwebs out of their pants. Trouble was that almost none of the controlling individuals in making the reforms had served any length in this country. Didn't know the situation. General Hull said the arrangement of G-4 worked out in the reform was impracticable in time of war. Of course, I had to fight Somervell down or he would have taken the whole damn staff. I told him once not to insult the navy. I said, "By God, don't do it again." He and Handy had fought over controls. I agreed with him. Under the McNarney reorganization, Somervell once insulted the president over something. The president was angry. I told him that I was partial to anyone who tried to get anything done. I asked Hopkins to talk to him. Somervell did great things throughout the world. Only thing he failed to settle was when I sent him to Europe to handle Lee.



He didn't quite do it. Lee had been his roommate at college. Of course, Lee was under Eisenhower.

McNarney—a merciless man. A true hatchetman.

Smith—also hatchetman. Did the dirty work for Eisenhower. Amazing to me to see how he is acceptable to many people now.

Devers—pretty much embittered. Did good work in Europe at first. Got the personal ambition thing in too much. He was on a board which listed generals in order they should be promoted. Moved his own name up. Two members of the board wanted me to change it back. I didn't touch it, but it changed my view toward him. He got into the ambition class.

Question 6: No, president didn't tell us to stay out of political area. Only time he got us into it was when he put his hands up prayerfully and asked for invasion before election. He gave no political directions.

Question 7: I never told planners not to consider political questions.

Question 8: Doesn't recall what Vandenberg means.

Question 9: British had had experience. Thinks Matloff's statement is fair if they interpret it the way Marshall interprets it—that we were accepting views of people with experience.

He said we were trying to get stuff overseas. For a long time we had so little in practical being. Was very difficult to plan. I arranged with Churchill about Eisenhower's command. I got Churchill to accept Eisenhower as commander although he was a lieutenant general and lower in rank than British under him.

Questions 10 and 11: This manpower is hard to answer. I am trying to get a fair reaction (here he studied the matter two or three minutes). I was never for a large force. I wanted efficient divisions and manpower pools abroad. I was in favor of cuts and knew what I wanted was in the states. We had a tragic time in Africa trying to keep up regiments.

As secretary of defense, we got first appropriation in September; first trained men came in March. Congress keeps thinking that once they appropriate the money, there are the men.

