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"A SUPREME ACT OF FAITH"

GEORGE C. MARSHALL AND THE TRANSFER OF MUNITIONS TO GREAT  
BRITAIN, MAY-JUNE 1940

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B.S., United States Military Academy, 1980

A Thesis Presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

General George C. Marshall was sworn in as Chief of Staff of the United States Army on September 1, 1939, the same day that Nazi Germany invaded Poland. American military leaders are not traditionally noted for their influence in the decisions of civilian government. In Marshall's case, however, the timing of his arrival at the summit of the military hierarchy granted him unique opportunities during the two and one-half years before the U. S. entered the war. In the summer of 1940 he played a major role in the transfer of large quantities of munitions to Great Britain. This is a study of Marshall's participation in this overlooked but important decision.

As the new chief of staff, Marshall had two interrelated and immediately pressing concerns. The first was the security of the United States and its vital interests, a greatly increased problem once the conflict in Europe began. To accomplish this task, Marshall had all the forces of the United States Army at his disposal. The second concern was the Army itself. The United States Army in 1939 was small, poorly equipped, and unprepared for war. Marshall had to lead the revitalization of the military establishment.

Rebuilding the Army would appear to have been a logical way to improve national security, but Marshall was in a difficult position. He had to reconcile the best interests of the Army with existing constraints. One possibility was to expand the size of the Army as quickly as possible, equipping large numbers of new, untrained soldiers with whatever armaments were available. Another alternative was to support building up those military programs most likely to be needed first. The air forces and the navy seemed more likely to become involved in the European war before the land forces. Expansion of the Army could have been sacrificed for these needs. Alternatively, if the war could be ended satisfactorily by supplying the Allies, then their needs, not the Army's, were more important. However, if the Army rebuilding was not to be either rapid or sacrificed to other security needs, then a slower, controlled expansion could be pursued. Soldiers could be trained and equipped with modern weapons at the same time.

Marshall wanted to systematically acquire a balanced force. But this position cannot be understood without explaining why he decided in May 1940 that it was in the best interests of national security to give the British much of the Army's reserves of rifles, machine guns, mortars, field guns, and ammunition. Winston

Churchill noted the startling nature of this decision: "All this reads easily now, but at that time it was a supreme act of faith and leadership for the United States to deprive themselves of this very considerable mass of arms for the sake of a country which many deemed already beaten." <sup>1</sup> A closer study of the transfer reveals that the "act of faith" was really General Marshall's faith in his plan for rebuilding the United States Army. He wanted to build a balanced army equipped with modern weapons that would be capable of defending American interests. He accepted that this could only be done gradually.

While General Marshall was undoubtedly the "man of commanding vision" described by Churchill, his decision on this question did not reflect an ability to see further and take chances.<sup>2</sup> Rejecting a rapid buildup of manpower without weapons as impractical, Marshall sought to limit growth to the availability of new armaments. Refusing to concede to any need higher than that of the American military establishment's, he resisted transfers of modern weapons abroad.

But Marshall's actions in May 1940 were consistent with his earlier priorities. This was the first major transfer of arms to the Allies.<sup>3</sup> The decision was classified, and discussion was restricted to

President Roosevelt's immediate advisors. Marshall had a central role in the decision-making. His support of the transfer reveals his relatively narrow definition of national defense interests in mid-1940. Despite the desperate British situation, he still fought to preserve the best equipment for the United States Army.

## II. THE CONDITION OF THE ARMY, 1939-1940

The United States Army in 1939 was struggling to overcome the effects of two decades of neglect. The mobilization of large numbers of men and massive quantities of equipment for World War I had been short-lived. American military strength began to decline shortly after the end of the war. The majority of Americans felt that a powerful land army was superfluous or too expensive. These attitudes contributed to a continuous deterioration of the military capability of the land forces.

The American Army was small. The National Defense Act of 1920 established a ceiling of 280,000 men on active duty in the Army.<sup>4</sup> The Army of the interwar period never approached this maximum authorized size. In 1933, Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur reported that total Army strength was 141,000. MacArthur also rated the Army 17th in the world, a ranking that Marshall dropped to 19th in 1939.<sup>5</sup> During the period between MacArthur's report and 1939, the size of the Army climbed to a total of 170,000 men with 235,000 more in the National Guard.<sup>6</sup> In September 1939, the active duty component of the Army stood at 174,000 men. Marshall lacked the manpower authorized to accomplish initial American war plans.<sup>7</sup>

Not only was the American Army small, it was poorly equipped.



The contemporary image of the American soldier of World War II might have him carrying the semiautomatic Garand rifle, supported by Sherman medium tanks, antitank bazookas and a variety of medium and heavy artillery. This was true of soldiers by the war's end, but the Army in 1939 was equipped much as it had been in 1918. Marshall explained this situation to a congressional subcommittee in November 1939:

The trouble has been that from 1920 down to the present time we have, in a sense, gradually been accumulating a deficit. Immediately after the World War everything we had in the way of matériel was modern and we had a tremendous quantity. . . .

Unfortunately, the Army was still using the same equipment it had acquired in 1918.

The principal weapon of the American infantryman was the Model 1903 Springfield rifle. The modern, semi-automatic Garand rifle had been approved as a replacement for the slower, bolt action Springfield in 1936. But less than 40,000 of these were on hand in May 1940 and only another 169,000 were on order. While there were enough Springfields to arm the existing forces in 1939, a large expansion would have to rely on the even older Lee-Enfield rifles. These rifles had been purchased from the British in 1918 because the Americans lacked enough of the then-modern Springfields.

Never used, there were over two million of the Lee-Enfields packed in grease in Army depots.<sup>9</sup>

Machine guns had changed little between the wars. The Browning Automatic Rifle had been developed for use in World War I. A bipod and a modified magazine had been designed after the war to improve the weapon's performance, and it was the principal light automatic weapon. By 1939, only 65,000 of these weapons had been taken out of storage to be "modernized." None had been delivered to Army units by the start of 1940. Most soldiers were still using the World War I version of the weapon.<sup>10</sup>

The situation with antitank and antiaircraft weapons was similar. The Army was still relying on a heavy machine gun in both roles, just as it had in 1918. The .50 caliber machine gun in use had been recognized as inadequate for either job. A 37 mm antitank gun had been designed, but no units had the new weapon. A 3 inch gun was being produced for use against aircraft. Although some had been delivered, it was already considered obsolete in 1939. Even the .50 caliber machine gun was in short supply.<sup>11</sup>

The famous 75 mm cannon of the French Army was the field gun of the U. S. Army in 1939. Unfortunately, these had been in short supply in 1918, and the Army had acquired a number of British 75

mm field guns. Similar to the French gun, the British models were mounted on older box trails. This limited the cannon's ability to elevate and traverse, as well as precluding the towing of the piece behind a motor vehicle. These British guns were slowly being modified, but in 1939 over three-fourths of the artillery pieces still had to be drawn by horses.<sup>12</sup>

The American Expeditionary Force of 1918 would have recognized most of the equipment with the Army in 1939. Marshall realized what this meant to military preparedness. He told a National Guard Association in October 1939:

We have World War materiel for the troops, but you senior officers at least, undoubtedly, have the same thought that I have. You don't want your son and I don't want my son fighting somebody else's son who is equipped with the most modern thing produced in the world, while our boys have something which is to a certain degree archaic.<sup>13</sup>

Marshall understood that something needed to be done, but he also had to overcome some very large obstacles before he could correct the situation.

The military budget was an immediate problem that prevented Marshall from quickly acquiring modern equipment. . The Army had

been given only subsistence funds by the frugal administrations of the 1930s. What limited money had been available was largely consumed by fixed costs—wages, clothing allowances, food, and installation maintenance.<sup>14</sup> Each year the War Department submitted to the president a budget requesting sufficient funds to improve equipment, and each year a reduced amount was eventually approved by Congress. Marshall calculated that by 1939 the accumulated deficit from the previous decade's budgets was approximately one billion dollars.<sup>15</sup>

The Army had survived under these conditions by sacrificing equipment to retain personnel. The surplus equipment from the Great War was available for replacements, and the Army relied on it. Thrifty congressmen were reluctant to spend money on new equipment while this inexpensive source of material was available.<sup>16</sup> Research and development programs were limited. After new weapons were developed, adequate funds to produce the replacements were not provided. This had been the case with the Garand rifle, which some opposed as an undesirable technological innovation.<sup>17</sup> When a new 105 mm howitzer was designed to replace the 75 mm gun, the cost of replacing all the existing ammunition with the new size forced the Army to recommend retaining the older

weapon.<sup>18</sup> Marshall needed a lot of money to start replacing the older equipment.

Marshall requested increased appropriations, but the president was not willing to ask Congress for everything that Marshall said was needed. Marshall and the secretary of war went to the president in September 1939 with a request for \$800,000,000. Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr. recalled that Roosevelt "brushed aside" this request. "You can't ever take the word of the Admirals of the Generals," Roosevelt later said to Morgenthau. "They will ring in money for a brass band or something else."<sup>19</sup> Roosevelt was more interested in naval programs and airplanes, and more money went into these weapons. "The beginning of a vast program of rearmament" that he announced in a speech on January 28, 1938, brought only \$17,000,000 for Army deficiencies.<sup>20</sup>

In April, 1940, Marshall informed the secretary of war:

Should the present Congress vote the \$37,000,000 for critical items of equipment set up in the President's budget for 1941, and also the additional amount of \$14,250,000 which was added for this purpose by the House of Representatives, there would still be a deficiency of \$25,000,000 for the modern equipment necessary to outfit the existing units. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Marshall kept seeking more funds for the Army. He had only limited

successes with Roosevelt, who was reluctant to endorse wholeheartedly a revitalization of the Army and the necessary budget requests. Each time that Marshall asked for more funds, Roosevelt trimmed the request. The president was sensitive to the controversy between advocates of isolationism and intervention. He was too wary of the resistance to rearmament to commit himself to large spending for the Army.

Consequently, Marshall had difficulty defending the president's budget before Congress. He had to remind congressmen who favored more spending that he could not ask for more appropriations than the president authorized. He told Senator Henry Cabot Lodge:

You have asked me, Mr. Chairman, to make a clear statement of our situation; I will try to do so, but I do feel embarrassed, because I do not wish to create the impression that I am recommending appropriations over and above the approved budget.<sup>22</sup>

He wrestled with this problem. He revealed his reservations when he testified, "I have no authority at the present time to ask for the increase which, in my opinion, is a present requirement."<sup>23</sup> The president's budget was inadequate to support Marshall's plans for rearming the military. Nonetheless, he did not openly criticize the president, and the shortages continued throughout 1939 and on into early 1940.

Marshall's persistence may have eventually swayed the president. On May 15, Roosevelt supported Marshall's request for \$657,00,000 for the Army.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, the string of German military successes in Europe that began in April was creating apprehension in the United States. There was increasing public and congressional support for defense spending.<sup>25</sup> Roosevelt was aware of this change. Perhaps he reacted to the new concern for American military preparedness by supporting more spending on the Army. Thereafter, President Roosevelt generally backed Marshall's requests for more funds, and Congress began approving the appropriations. Marshall overcame the financial restriction but remained unable to re-equip his forces. The modern weapons had never been built.

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Marshall was unable to regain the time lost from delaying rearmament. Without the money from Congress, the contracts for military equipment had not been signed. Manufacturers had been reluctant to develop the capacity to handle government military orders before the money was appropriated. Very limited production capacity existed in 1939. Before new equipment could be provided to the Army, most of the factories had to be built or converted from civilian use. This meant that there would be a further delay, even

after contracts were signed.

Marshall noted the similarities between the experiences of the American Army in 1917 and his situation. The Army had not been ready to fight a land war in Europe in 1917. The United States had not been ready to produce the needed equipment. Suddenly, enormous sums of money were available from a Congress that expected to see immediate results. Unfortunately, the money could not buy what did not exist. As Secretary of War Harry W. Woodring put it, "In the World War we went to school, so to speak, with borrowed books."<sup>26</sup> The Allies supplied the Americans with armaments. Marshall knew that he did not have that luxury in 1940.

Marshall bluntly told Congress not to expect rapid results. Despite his needs and the new willingness of Congress to provide funds, the chief of staff was conservative. On May 17, 1940, he told members of the Senate Appropriations Committee:

Frankly, I should be embarrassed at the moment by more money for matériel alone. A few months later you may see your way clear to make another and further step; but it is much wiser to advance step by step, provided those steps are balanced and are not influenced by enthusiasm rather than by reason.<sup>27</sup>

Marshall recalled how rapid expansion of the military for World War I created more demand than American industry could absorb. "We



believed it was a confusing thing to over-demand. We wanted to avoid the moves of 1917, made in a minute, to do vast things which industry could not absorb.”<sup>28</sup> He realized that the backlogs, confusion, and criticism directed at the War Department could be avoided by limiting the demands on productive capacity.

All armament production was limited. Gunpowder was being produced at 20-25 million pounds per year. The peak in World War I had been one billion pounds per year, and Marshall's staff anticipated two years before the United States could achieve that production.<sup>29</sup> Garand rifles were produced only at one government arsenal, and the backlog as of May 1940 was 60,000—about a year's production. Marshall told the Senate that at that rate of production, he did not expect to receive all the rifles already ordered until June 1942. Only half of the total requirement of new antitank guns (744 of 1,556) would be delivered by June 1941. The end of 1940 was the target for equipping the existing 30 antiaircraft regiments with 3 inch guns, height finders, directors, and (some) 37 mm guns. Only 24 of the preferred 90 mm antiaircraft cannons had even been ordered, and they would take about two years to produce. Forty-eight new 105 mm howitzers had been built, but they were still being tested against the 101 (of 600 total) 75 mm howitzers that had been

modernized. Marshall realized that new orders would not arrive before late 1941.<sup>30</sup>

Marshall proposed that work hours be lengthened at the existing facilities to accelerate deliveries. The president rejected this solution. Working a relatively few laborers longer hours, rather than hiring additional men, was too unpopular in a nation still feeling the effects of depression unemployment. Marshall explained that waiting for new contracts to generate additional jobs was a slow solution to the Army's immediate needs, but Roosevelt was uncompromising. The president's political considerations prevented Marshall from using accelerated work schedules to provide faster results. The Army would get modern equipment, but not quickly.

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Marshall wanted to avoid the mistakes that he had observed during mobilization in World War I. He frequently said, "We must never be caught in the same situation we found ourselves in 1917."<sup>31</sup> At the same time, he was aware that war had changed since then. He was learning from the fighting in Europe, and he understood "the comparative effectiveness of new and old weapons which have a great bearing on what the German Army has been able to do."<sup>32</sup> He was willing to complete the orders already made for older weapons,

like the 3 inch gun, but he plainly said that the Army would buy no more of them.<sup>33</sup> He wanted to modernize the Army's equipment, because he was not satisfied with the obsolete armaments that he had in quantity.

New equipment could not be delivered immediately, but more manpower was a possibility. Marshall, however, opposed either federalizing the National Guard or starting a draft. He had served with the National Guard several times during the 1920s and 1930s, and he realized that its condition was as bad as, if not worse than, the Regular Army's. He explained his position to the commander of the Illinois National Guard:

Of course, everybody is excited about the war and wants to kill Hitler, but in my opinion the situation will have to be more imminent to justify an immediate call of the Guard with their scant equipment, etc. Besides, many of them are just getting jobs.<sup>34</sup>

Forcing those men into the Army full-time would have been as disruptive and unpopular as a draft. Marshall never asked for a draft before August, 1940. Up to that time, he either believed that the Army could grow to a prewar interim size of 400,000 men without a draft, or he was too cautious to mention the idea. He said,

If the Regular Army is increased to 280,000, and beyond that up to around 400,000, by voluntary enlistments, we shall have available mobile troops in this country, with

equipment of one kind or another—but workable equipment—to utilize the instant the emergency arises for all the initial missions that will arise.<sup>35</sup>

Marshall's other consideration, besides the unpopularity of a draft and the expectation of obtaining enough men without one, was to preserve what little he had in the way of trained units. A sudden influx of draftees into the Army would have required Marshall to disperse the few experienced soldiers to serve in training units. Since the summer of 1939, when he was assigned as deputy chief of staff, Marshall had worked to reorganize, consolidate, and train the existing Army units.<sup>36</sup> By the spring of 1940, he had created effective organizations from the skeletons that had existed before. Dispersing these cadres to far-flung training installations would have wiped out this progress.

Marshall was committed to creating a modern army, but he understood that "the whole thing is interwoven. . . the practicality of placing large orders at the moment [and] the necessity of having a trained, seasoned enlisted personnel." His approach was straightforward :

I should like to add that all of these matters have to be given proper weight in order to get a well integrated and balanced whole; and it is of great importance, when the matter is so vital to our defense and when it is so terribly expensive, that our action be on the most coldblooded,

businesslike basis we can figure out.<sup>37</sup>

Marshall guided his decision-making during this period by these standards. When he had to weigh the needs of the Allies or the needs of other countries in the Western Hemisphere against his own military requirements, his decisions were coldblooded and businesslike.

### III. AID TO THE ALLIES

Marshall's decision in May 1940 to release arms for sale to Great Britain has been interpreted by some writers as sympathy for the British, or an early acceptance of common cause against the Germans.<sup>38</sup> Other historical accounts have suggested that Marshall acquiesced to accommodate President Roosevelt's desire to help the Allies.<sup>39</sup> Forrest C. Pogue's excellent biography described Marshall as a leader "torn between sympathy for Great Britain and the necessity of meeting his own defense obligations."<sup>40</sup> According to Pogue, Marshall grappled with the alternatives before concluding that aid to Britain was necessary.<sup>41</sup> These descriptions assume that Marshall accepted the primary importance of British survival to American security.

Marshall frequently and unambiguously stated his priorities. He appeared frequently before Congress in late 1939 and early 1940 to explain his position on aid to the Allies. He felt that the Army's requirements were of a higher priority than British military needs. There were opportunities to back attempts to send armaments to Europe, but he was not willing to sacrifice his own plans for the good of the British or French. When the two interests could be reconciled, he supported aid to the Allies. In the area of industrial mobilization,

he openly admitted to being opportunistic enough to take advantage of British requirements to improve his own programs.

An Army program to improve industrial readiness had been designed in the 1920s. It called for "educational orders" — contracts for small quantities of military items — with civilian manufacturers. Firms were required to do the time-consuming set-up and retooling necessary to produce armaments. This program would have created reserve industrial capacity for emergencies. If implemented wisely, this plan could have greatly accelerated industrial mobilization. Unfortunately, the program had languished due to lack of funds. Fifty-five items were designated as "critical" in 1938, but only six were initially funded for 1939.<sup>42</sup> Few industries had any experience with American military orders in 1939.

The real stimulus for industrial mobilization in 1939 came from the British and French. The adoption of the "cash-and-carry" principle in the amended neutrality legislation of 1939 permitted Allied purchasing agents to enlarge their operations in the United States. With limited cash resources, they initially concentrated on obtaining industrial machinery and aircraft. As their sense of urgency increased, Allied purchasing activity expanded.<sup>43</sup> More munitions were supplied to the Allies in 1939 and 1940 than to the

U. S. military.<sup>44</sup>

This led to concern in Congress as it became apparent that most American military production was going overseas. In the first six months of 1939, Great Britain purchased American machine tools valued at £3,151,417, creating a serious shortage in an essential item of munitions production.<sup>45</sup> The Allies contracted for large numbers of airplanes, in excess of existing capacity, to enlarge the industry. American military orders were smaller, and there was concern that they were receiving a lower priority.

The Senate Committee on Military Affairs held hearings in March, 1940, to determine the "Effect of Arms Sales to Foreign Governments upon Price and Delivery to the United States Government." <sup>46</sup> The Army chief of staff was called to describe the situation to the senators. His position had not changed from one year earlier, when, as deputy chief of staff, he had told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that "the handling of such [foreign] orders would be to our advantage, as they would supplement in an important manner our projected educational orders in preparing industry to meet demands for war materiel." <sup>47</sup> Again in 1940, Marshall defended the practice of permitting the Allies to place large orders as in the best interests of the United States.



Marshall explained that when the Allies contracted for armaments, industry expanded, faster than it would have with only American orders. This created industrial capacity in excess of the limited U.S. needs generated by a gradual expansion. The reserve would be available to the United States in an emergency. One senator said: "In other words, as it looks to me, the Allies are paying for the development of our national defense. That is all there is to it." General Marshall replied, "That is what it amounts to."<sup>48</sup> Marshall was willing to let Allied money buy American arms as long as their purchases also helped his rearmament plans.

Whether or not Marshall was sympathetic to the Allied cause, he was unwilling to lobby for their interests. During the March 1940 hearings on foreign sales of munitions mentioned above, one senator used Marshall's remarks supporting such sales to declare his own support for the Allies. Marshall interrupted the senator to assert his own professional detachment: "I am not championing the Allies." As he put it, "I am interested in the Army, its interests, pure and simple."<sup>49</sup> He distanced himself from any interventionist interpretation of his support for Allied arms contracts.<sup>50</sup>

Marshall's objective of preserving the newest weapons for United States rearmament was also aided by neutrality legislation. Those

modern weapons that were most needed by the Army — rifles, machine guns, artillery, and military ammunition — were being produced almost exclusively in U.S. government arsenals.<sup>51</sup> Allied contracts for munitions had to be with civilian manufacturers.<sup>52</sup> Government-produced armaments could not be sold legally unless they had been declared surplus to national defense needs by the War Department.<sup>53</sup> Marshall found it difficult to declare new weapons built specifically for the Army to be surplus.

A student at Princeton University asked Marshall that spring about his feelings on supplying weapons to the Allies. Marshall told him:

What the Allies want from us is not men but material, planes, aircraft guns, and of course, flyers. These are just the things we cannot afford them yet. We must look out for our own people first.<sup>54</sup>

Marshall recognized that their concerns were parallel, but he stated his priorities clearly: U.S. first, Allies second. He did not intend to sacrifice those things he needed most to equip the Army.

Marshall's actions before the transfer at the end of May reflected this position. He refused to condone Allied purchases of artillery. The production was too limited and the delivery time too long.<sup>55</sup> The British and the French wanted American fighter planes, but he

opposed any transfers. On May 16, 1940, the French purchasing agent proposed a swap of existing U.S. P-36 warplanes for yet-to-be-produced Vanguard fighters that the French owned. Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau discussed at length with Marshall the possibility of releasing planes to either France or Britain. Marshall explained his priorities:

We have got to weigh the hazards in this hemisphere of one thing and another. I have taken the risk of not concentrating our talent in the immediately operating squadrons, except in the more desirable, the more symmetrical development of the whole program. . . .

No planes were released because, as Marshall wrote, "the damage to training would be too great."<sup>56</sup> When the president intervened a few weeks later to force the release of some fighter-bombers to the Allies, the Army was expected to supply bombs. Marshall said that he could not spare the bombs:

To furnish approximately one-fifteenth of the number of bombs desired by the Allied Purchasing Agent it will be necessary to release approximately one-seventh of our entire bomb stock in the two sizes required, 30 and 100 pound bombs. Additional bombs are under order, but the first deliveries will not be made for another six months.<sup>57</sup>

The secretary of war asked for written instructions from the president. The Navy supplied the bombs.<sup>58</sup>

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As late as May 18, 1940, Marshall opposed some transfers of munitions to Great Britain. He resisted pressure to alter his priorities. Significantly, he opposed the transfer of those items, like artillery, that he could ill-afford to sacrifice, if he were to continue building a balanced and modern army. Allied contracts for new planes were acceptable because the U.S. air forces could benefit both from plants built with Allied money and from their design improvements. He was not willing to surrender those few planes he had that were combat ready. No matter how badly the French or British situation was, he could not train pilots without planes. In each case he had to consider how much time he could gain or lose by aiding the Allies.

This distinction will be significant in later analysis of the transfer of arms that received Marshall's endorsement at the end of May. Otherwise, Marshall's behavior would seem inconsistent. But the chief of staff was not supporting unqualified cooperation with the British in May 1940. His concern with European events was professional and calculating. He defined American security interests at this time as follows:

We are supposed, under our present national defense policy, to guarantee the security of the continental United States, which includes the outposts in the Pacific and Alaska; to maintain the Panama Canal as a part of that

security in order that the fleet can operate on either coast, and also, under the policy of the President. . . to guarantee the Monroe Doctrine throughout the Western Hemisphere."<sup>9</sup>

This was a conservative, limited definition of American objectives. It is reasonable to assume that Marshall eventually concluded that meeting these basic security objectives required him to support the British. His statements and actions, however, do not indicate that he had reached such a conclusion by May 1940.

#### IV. DEFENSE OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE

Marshall did not have to contend only with the competing requirements of the Army and the Allies. There were other reasons that he might have resisted efforts to share scarce resources with the Allies in 1939 and 1940. When Nazi successes in the spring of 1940 forced him to contemplate defending the entire Western Hemisphere. Marshall could have changed his priorities and worked for other objectives beyond or in addition to rebuilding the Army. He could have tried to strengthen the military defenses of the more vulnerable Latin American countries. This alternative explanation for Marshall's behavior was suggested by David G. Haglund.<sup>60</sup>

Haglund recognized that there was opposition within the Roosevelt administration to sending arms to the Allies and that some of the opposition originated in the War Department. He claimed, "No top official in Washington was more convinced of the unwisdom of sending increased aid across the Atlantic than the Chief of Staff, George C. Marshall."<sup>61</sup> The reason for his reluctance, asserts Haglund, is that Marshall was more concerned with the German threat to Latin America. A transformation of American strategic thought was taking place, and defense of the entire Western Hemisphere appeared to be

more important to Marshall than aid to Britain.

Haglund's argument must be examined carefully. The general observations are accurate. Marshall did react to the perceived vulnerability of South America. At the same time, he was resisting the president's inclinations to sacrifice development of the Army to supply arms to the Allies. He did not, however, alter his commitment to building a balanced, modern army. His efforts to aid in defense of other countries in the hemisphere were consistent with his position on aid to the Allies. He exercised limits on aid to South America identical to those on aid to Britain.

General American attitudes changed quickly in April and May 1940. Sudden German victories made the security traditionally offered by the Atlantic Ocean and the British fleet seem doubtful. While fears of a subsequent German invasion of the continental United States were limited, Marshall and other, more informed planners worried more about the threat to the south. Latin America was vulnerable because it was "economically dependent upon a Europe that was rapidly turning into a Nazi fiefdom." Additionally, Latin American countries were vulnerable politically. The governments "were for the most part ruled by men who were not hostile to the basic tenets of the Nazi new order." Germany had tried

to penetrate South American markets, and there were "large and unassimilated populations of emigrants (and their descendants) from Axis nations" in some of the southern countries. The geographic fact that the shortest distance across the Atlantic was to the Brazilian port of N  tal was not lost on Army planners.<sup>62</sup> Haglund's argument focuses on concerns with the possibility of economic competition with a Europe closed to American trade. On such terms, the United States would be unable to compete with a German effort to draw South American countries into her sphere of influence.<sup>63</sup>

While this concern over economic threats in the Western Hemisphere existed, it did not alter Marshall's priorities on the transfer of munitions. Marshall had been involved in military relations with South America before he became chief of staff. He was reluctant "to part with precious supplies that might soon be needed to defend the Western Hemisphere."<sup>64</sup> But his earlier efforts contradict the conclusion that he blocked aid to Britain because of a transformed sense of strategic priorities that made Latin America more important.

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In 1939 Marshall was already aware of the poor state of military readiness in the South American nations. In the summer of 1939 he



had toured Brazil as the acting chief of staff, and he returned with an appreciation of the poor condition of the military there. This weakness aggravated the political instability of the government. When the Senate Foreign Relations Committee postponed changing neutrality legislation that would have facilitated the sale of surplus munitions to South American countries, Marshall wrote: "I hope that the failure of the passage of this legislation has not been a tragic disappointment in Brazil, and I feel reasonably certain that they can count on our getting matters straightened out at a fairly early date."<sup>65</sup> Marshall was sympathetic to South American needs, but , once again, he did not put their requirements ahead of the Army's.

He wrote the chief of staff of the Brazilian Army that:

Under existing law, we have the authority to sell to a friendly government any materiel which is surplus and no longer needed for military purposes. I am sorry that this surplus materiel is limited in quantity and quality because of our deficiencies in war materiel.<sup>66</sup>

Marshall was concerned, but he could offer the Brazilians very little. He specifically pointed out to his counterpart that he had no modern artillery pieces to share, until his procurement program had progressed further.

Marshall revealed what was surplus to his needs in December

1939. Chile contacted the U. S. State Department in an attempt to purchase American armaments. Marshall informed the State Department, following a survey by the Army chief of ordnance, that the Army had as surplus 100,000 Enfield rifles, one hundred 75 mm field guns, obsolete mortars, obsolete mountain guns, and ammunition (for the mortars and field guns only). This was old equipment from World War I, stored at government arsenals. Chile declined to buy the equipment because of its cost and obsolescence.<sup>67</sup>

The chief of ordnance, General Wesson, told Congress what armaments had been provided to our allies in the hemisphere as of March 12, 1940.

To date no actual sales of surplus ordnance items have been made. Negotiations have been under way pertaining to the offer of Brazil to purchase 90 guns, 6-inch (British), and of Haiti to purchase 2,500 Enfield rifles with parts and accessories.<sup>68</sup>

The 6-inch guns were obsolete coastal defense guns for which there was not even any ammunition available. This reflected the attitude towards supplying the other countries with arms. The need was recognized, but the only munitions offered were old, like the Enfields, or obsolete, like the coastal cannon.

Marshall was not interested in improving the military capabilities

of the other nations in the hemisphere. His plan was to rely on the revitalized American Army to accomplish any hemispheric defense missions. Haglund accurately identified this approach to hemispheric defense:

Of course, the White House never expected, nor even desired, that the defenseless Latin nations would actually try to fend off a foreign army by themselves; that was a job best left to the army and the navy of the United States, the only power in the entire hemisphere with the ability to turn back an invader.<sup>69</sup>

Marshall and his staff had been working with the State Department to develop a policy on greater military cooperation with Latin American countries since 1938. Between 1938 and June 1940, the number of military attachés in Latin America was doubled.<sup>70</sup> Marshall provided numerous suggestions to Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles for cooperation, collaboration, and joint use of facilities.<sup>71</sup> The president approved the liaison approach on May 23, 1940. The policy that evolved during this period was published by the War Department in July:

Objective — better mutual understanding; impressing Latin American officers with our military preparedness and our determination to uphold the Monroe Doctrine; affording selected officers of our Army opportunity of studying Latin America. In attaining our objective, we should concentrate on those countries of the most immediate military importance to us. Our objective does

not comprise expectations on our part of being able to use Latin American forces as effective allies in war.<sup>72</sup>

Marshall endorsed this statement because it echoed his priority: "our military preparedness."

Military plans drafted in May 1940 to defend Brazil reflected this approach. The "POT OF GOLD" operation was inspired by Roosevelt's fear of a rumored German infiltration aboard merchant vessels. Although skeptical of their ability to implement an effective defense, Marshall and Admiral Stark, the chief of naval operations, devised a plan intended to neutralize a small German force. The proposed solution involved fifteen thousand American soldiers and a large naval force. Brazil was to maintain civil order and grant the United States permission to enter Brazilian territory, nothing more.<sup>73</sup>

There is inherent appeal in the idea that General Marshall had a larger vision than most Americans in 1940. Marshall stands out as one of the important figures in the great cooperative effort that won the war. While less talented men hesitated to commit the United States to involvement in a global conflict, Marshall directed military operations from

Washington and overcame the obstacles on the path to victory. So it is implied and often asserted, such a gifted individual must have seen the need to aid Britain before others recognized it.

Haglund critiqued this tendency and called it the "White Legend" surrounding Marshall, the readiness of some historians to credit the chief of staff with an early understanding of the need for an Anglo-American alliance against Germany. Marshall did realize that the Western Hemisphere was vulnerable, so he was reluctant to send arms to Britain or any other nation. His rebuilding would be slowed if scarce modern weapons were sent abroad. Marshall wanted the Army to be the "covering force" behind which the United States could mobilize to defeat any threat, continental or hemispheric.<sup>74</sup> That covering force needed modern armaments, but time for preparations was running out.

## V. "A REASONABLE RISK"

Marshall had a sense of urgency apparent in his efforts to revitalize the Army. When he decided to support or oppose arms transfers, he had to consider how much time would be gained or lost. His guidance to the General Staff in May 1940 was to expand the active Army to 500,000 men by July 1, 1941. In the event of war, the Protective Mobilization Plan called for immediate increases to one million men "to be in a similar state of preparation by January 1942."<sup>75</sup> Marshall's own estimate was that he had approximately one year to get the Army up to strength and ready to fight.

The collapse of the Allied armies in France challenged Marshall's priorities. Winston Churchill described the difficult situation of the Allied forces on the European continent on May 15, 1940, in a personal letter to President Roosevelt. Pointing out that the Germans had broken through and were threatening to pin the British forces against the English Channel, the prime minister pleaded for American support. He requested, among other things, "antiaircraft weapons and ammunition."<sup>76</sup> In a reply the next day, Roosevelt assured Churchill that Arthur Purvis, the British purchasing agent in the United States, would be given whatever assistance was possible.<sup>77</sup>

Roosevelt and Purvis realized that there was very little the United

States could do to influence the immediate outcome of the battle for France. Purvis, who had been working in the United States for some time, had been rather selective in the contracts that he signed.

Limited to cash purchases by the neutrality act, he had concentrated expenditures of scarce U. S. dollars on industrial machinery to aid British armaments production and on aircraft orders to encourage American companies to expand their plant facilities.<sup>78</sup> There was little else available on the American market, and the Allied armies were already equipped with their basic equipment. As the military emergency developed in France, however, he sought to acquire all available armaments.

Marshall immediately became the central figure in the negotiations. The United States Army was the only source of immediately available arms and ammunition, and the chief of staff controlled the supply. Roosevelt expressed his desire to help Churchill to Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau, whom he relied on to negotiate all arms transfers to foreign countries. The secretary called General Marshall to his office on May 18. Marshall used the opportunity to inform Morgenthau that an earlier request that he release first-rate pursuit planes to Britain was impossible. "I regret to tell you that I do not think we can afford to submit ourselves to

the delay and consequences involved in accommodating the British Government in this particular manner.”<sup>79</sup>

Nonetheless, Marshall responded to the president's initiative. On May 22, he directed the chief of ordnance to review his inventories for the “Availability of Ordnance Materiel for Release without Adversely Affecting National Defense.”<sup>80</sup> Marshall received a list of munitions that same day. The president reviewed this list at the White House and indicated his approval by checking off all the items identified by Marshall.<sup>81</sup>

Marshall showed the president a list of sixteen items with “NO” written next to eight of them: 37 mm antiaircraft or antitank guns, 3 inch antiaircraft guns, short-range antiaircraft materiel larger than .303 caliber, Thompson submachine guns, automatic pistols, 75 mm artillery shells, powder-making machines or nitrocellulose [a gunpowder ingredient]. These items were being used to equip the revitalized U. S. Army. The munitions offered were all World War I surplus: 10,000 caliber .30 Browning machine guns (unmodified); 25,000 automatic rifles, M1918 (unmodified); 500,000 caliber .30, M1912 (Enfield) rifles; 500 75 mm field guns, M1917 (British design); 500 Stokes 3 inch mortars; 50,000 Stokes 3 inch mortar rounds; 100,000,000 rounds caliber .30 ball ammunition; and some



caliber .30 machine guns in various degrees of serviceability. The president approved sending every one of these items.<sup>82</sup>

While Marshall was willing to release these items "for the use of the Allies without jeopardizing the National Defense of the country," he could not transfer them directly to the British. As his memorandum prepared May 25 stated, "[This list] was prepared without regard to the legal or diplomatic questions, these being the subjects to be considered by the State Department and the President."<sup>83</sup> The problem was American neutrality. How could the United States government legally transfer arms to a belligerent like Great Britain? Marshall's staff advised him that such an act could be construed as "an overt act of war."<sup>84</sup>

After a week of searching for the president, the attorney general's staff found a loophole. Aging ammunition could legally be declared deteriorated by the War Department and sold to private American firms, who were then free to sell it to anyone, including foreign governments. Based on this precedent, weapons could be declared obsolete so long as replacements had been ordered and the old weapons were declared not essential to the national defense. Marshall and the secretary of war agreed on May 31 to insure that the materials on the list were not needed under the existing

Protective Mobilization Plan (PMP).<sup>85</sup>

This plan called for the eventual mobilization of 1.8 million men in the Army in the event of a national emergency or war. Marshall used this guidance to determine the quantity of .30 caliber ammunition available for release. His calculations were recorded on a note titled: "Status of Caliber .30 Ball Ammunition":

On Hand.....	580,000,000
Required for PMP.....	<u>450,000,000</u>
Excess, before commitments.....	130,000,000
Committed for <u>exchange</u> .....	<u>100,000,000</u>
Excess, <u>immediately</u> available for <u>exchange</u> .....	30,000,000 <sup>86</sup>

Marshall planned to send the additional 30 million rounds immediately and additional rounds once new rounds were produced to replace them. He wrote that he could release an additional 50 million rounds between June and December 1940. The obvious oversight in these simple calculations was the failure to provide ammunition for training. The consequences of this mistake will be discussed later. Nonetheless, the same logic was applied to the other weapons. Quantities on order or in excess or current needs determined how much could be released.

Marshall met with Morgenthau and the attorney general on June 3 to discuss how to negotiate the transfer with Purvis through a

private firm. The United States Steel Export Company agreed to act as the middleman. Movement of the munitions from government arsenals to the port of Raritan, New Jersey, began on June 4.

President Roosevelt signed the necessary documents on June 5.

Purvis agreed to pay approximately three million dollars for the items, and loading began on June 11.<sup>87</sup> The *Eastern Prince* sailed for England on June 13 with the first shipment: forty-eight 75 mm field guns, twenty-eight million rounds of .30 caliber ammunition, fifteen thousand machine guns and twelve thousand rifles.<sup>88</sup> In England, the quarter-million soldiers who survived the evacuation from Dunkirk waited with little more than rifles and bayonets.<sup>89</sup>

The shipments of munitions to England continued in secret during June and July. The list of items also grew. Marshall's subordinates worked diligently to find material that could be released to the British. While there are various listings of the munitions actually shipped to England, most are either incomplete or very general.

Nonetheless, at least the following items were transferred:

Lee-Enfield .30 caliber rifles.....	1,135,000
.30 caliber ammunition.....	188,000,000
	(rounds)
M1918 automatic rifles (unmodified).....	25,000
.30 caliber machine guns (various models).....	80,000
75 mm field pieces.....	895
75 mm ammunition.....	1,000,000

3 inch mortars.....	500
Mortar ammunition.....	50,000
Revolvers.....	20,000
TNT.....	17,716,000
	(tons) <sup>90</sup>

Edward R. Stepien, Jr., the U. S. Steel representative who facilitated the transfer, wrote in 1944: "It took less than 48 hours to decide what the Army could turn over as a reasonable risk in view of the vital importance to America's defense that Britain hold out."<sup>91</sup>

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For a number of reasons this "reasonable risk" did not mark a transformation of Marshall's priorities on arms transfers. First, he only offered those weapons that he considered obsolete. As a comparison to the list of arms offered to Chile suggests, the equipment represented the World War I stocks that he had been reluctant to rely on to equip his modern army. The same rifles, field guns, and mortars comprised the bulk of the transfer, only in greater quantities. The most obvious difference was the willingness to send Britain the ammunition not offered to Chile. While that may have been a compromise of his interests (the U.S. Army needed ammunition too), Marshall understood that it was senseless to send the British guns without bullets. As it was, the amount of .30 caliber ammunition sent provided only a bare minimum for each weapon.<sup>92</sup>

He also anticipated receiving newer, more reliable ammunition in the next six months to replace his losses.

The second indication that Marshall did not change his priorities to accommodate British needs was evident in the items deleted from the list. Antitank guns were not offered, even though the British had less than 500 tanks remaining and had lost most of their antitank weapons in France.<sup>93</sup> Churchill had specifically asked Roosevelt for antiaircraft weapons, but none of the American types—.50 caliber, 37 mm, or 3 inch—were shipped. No modern artillery was transferred, only the obsolete British-style 75 mm guns. Artillery took one to two years to replace, and Marshall did not believe he had that much time.

Third, airplanes were not on the list of items offered to the British because they were in too short supply. In this case, Marshall's problem was not the time needed to manufacture new planes. The transfer he blocked on May 18 would have provided him with better planes in six months. Training pilots was the bottleneck. There were so few modern combat aircraft in the air forces that the numbers of pilots waiting to be trained exceeded the number of available planes.

Fourth, Marshall had the opportunity to expand or delete from this list. He could count on Roosevelt supporting any

recommendations to send more arms. In fact, his staff continued to add to the list of available items after the president formally approved the deal on June 5. The added items were anticipated surplus, that is, weapons that had designated replacements on order. Marshall agreed to additions that were more of the same—World War I surplus that would be replaced in the next year or sooner. Had Marshall been opposed to the transfer, he could have easily blocked these late additions. Instead, Marshall encouraged transferring those armaments that he anticipated replacing.

Was there any risk associated with this decision? Marshall gave away so much that it becomes important to consider if he was accepting a serious vulnerability to aid the British. The transfer took away 30 percent of the available automatic rifles, and replacements were six months away.<sup>94</sup> Over eight thousand of the ten thousand older machine guns sent to England were required weapons that could not be replaced for at least nine months.<sup>95</sup> Although the 75 mm field guns were obsolete, they still represented over 21 percent of all the field guns in the entire Army.<sup>96</sup> Their replacements were one to two years away. The 75 mm shells were 29 percent of the total Army inventory, and the TNT was four-fifths of the available manufacturing surplus.<sup>97</sup> Much of what he gave away was gone for

at least the short-term.

But he did retain enough rifles, machine guns, and ammunition for a 1.8 million man army, a much larger force than he had in June 1940, and he was getting modern equipment as fast as it could be produced. Marshall continued to ask the president to increase the rate of production, and additional Allied orders stimulated further expansion of the American munitions industry. Marshall's confidence in his program was further encouraged by the improved performance of the Army during spring maneuvers. While he worried about risks in the overseas departments (Panama Canal, Hawaii, and the Philippines), he did not fear an invasion of the continental United States.<sup>98</sup> The risk and delays associated with sending the obsolete and surplus munitions to Britain were acceptable.

Marshall was a broad-minded military thinker, so he certainly considered the advantages of aiding Britain. He would have recognized, as many interventionists argued at the time, that continued British resistance was less costly to the United States than British defeat and eventual war with Germany. He also recognized his superiors' support for aid to Britain, particularly Morgenthau and Roosevelt. Sending arms to Britain could buy him time to prepare

the Army more thoroughly.

Despite these arguments, however, Marshall did not act like an early advocate of unqualified American support. Continuity characterizes his decisions, not transformation. Marshall's decision to release the World War I munitions to the British involved a much greater quantity than ever before, but the same priorities applied. He accepted the "reasonable risk" because the threat to his timetable was minimal. He realized that modern arms would be delivered in six months to two years. Transferring the surplus did not change this schedule. By retaining an essential number of rifles and ammunition for the interim, Marshall accepted a minimum risk.



## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The decision to aid Britain had significant short and long-term consequences. Although Marshall had hoped to minimize the impact of the arms transfer on his mobilization plans, he was not able to avoid all problems. And while the transfer was conducted covertly, debate over the issue of aid to Britain continued and the legal situation promptly changed. The rapid collapse of French resistance and fear that Britain would suffer a similar fate called into question the wisdom of the decision. Almost immediately, Marshall's estimate of a year to prepare the Army proved unduly optimistic.

Anticipating that Germany or Japan might try to capitalize on British weakness, Marshall took steps to improve readiness in the overseas departments of the Army. Fearing a "transpacific" raid if the fleet left Hawaii, Marshall, on June 17, placed Hawaii and Panama on 24-hour alert status. Live ammunition was issued and observation posts manned for the first time. The Army commanders informed Marshall that they were handicapped by the shortages of ammunition and antiaircraft weapons.<sup>99</sup> The alert ended in July as fears subsided, but the problem with ammunition shortages continued.

During July, Marshall began to realize that his calculations for the

availability of small arms ammunition had been flawed. Calculating that the Army needed 450 million rounds of .30 caliber ammunition if mobilized to defend the country, Marshall withheld this amount from the British. But as the Army expanded and trained more vigorously, more ammunition was needed. Contracts for three new plants were finalized in July, 1940, but actual construction did not begin until the fall. There was no increase in production until the first quarter of 1941.<sup>100</sup> The vulnerability of his position was highlighted in September, when one fire at an ammunition plant in New Jersey destroyed half of the smokeless gunpowder capacity.<sup>101</sup>

Even before the fire, Marshall was struggling to resolve the problem. On August 7, 1940, he sent a memorandum to the secretary of war requesting permission to divert .30 caliber ammunition from the British shipments to alleviate shortages in the Philippines.<sup>102</sup> He noted on August 16: "Our present actual shortage is 1,077,000,000 rounds. We require 1,600,000,000 rounds of caliber .30 ammunition to provide an adequate reserve for an Army of 1,200,000 men."<sup>103</sup> Marshall met with the new secretary of war, Henry Stimson, on August 20 to argue that he could only send the British 5 million rounds, not the 50 million promised in June.<sup>104</sup>

The British continued to receive ammunition shipments because

they had no facilities for manufacturing .30 caliber ammunition. Army training programs suffered instead. Marshall ordered a reduction of ammunition available for training. This move saved 250 million rounds, but cut back live fire training by thirty percent.<sup>105</sup> The consequences of this action are impossible to quantify, but they were undoubtedly negative. At a time when American soldiers should have been training more with their weapons, they had to train less. Marshall and his staff had overlooked a basic requirement for training ammunition.

While the Congress had not been involved in this transfer, Marshall soon had to deal with new limitations on the future transfer of "surplus" munitions overseas. The details of the transfer were secret, but the attorney general's favorable ruling on the legality of such transfers was announced on June 8. Congress debated this opinion on June 11 and attached an amendment to the pending naval appropriations bill. Intended to limit President Roosevelt's freedom of action, the new law placed more responsibility on Marshall. Subsequent arms transfers had to be validated within 24 hours by a certificate testifying that the arms were surplus to national defense needs. Either the chief of staff of the Army or the chief of naval operations had to sign the certificate, which was then provided to the

heads of the Armed Services Committees of both the House and the Senate.<sup>106</sup>

Marshall later admitted that he personally considered the requirement unconstitutional, because it technically provided him with the authority to bypass the president. He continued to authorize transfers of material by this method until the passage of the Lend-Lease Act, but the freedom of action Marshall had exercised in the first decision was gone. Subsequent transfers came under immediate congressional scrutiny. Marshall later explained how he dealt with this situation:

I tried not to crowd the issue at all, and I thought that it was imperative that Congress feel that they could trust me, and then I could get them to do things that otherwise they would oppose. . . . It was the only time I recall that I did something that there was a certain amount of duplicity in it.<sup>107</sup>

The solution he had chosen in May increasingly characterized his reaction to subsequent pressure to release Army munitions. In order to achieve his own goal of rebuilding the Army, he accepted the necessity for limited compromise. He realized that he could afford to release these munitions without sacrificing his plans. He acknowledged other interests, and he sent the British equipment he could have used for training. Marshall was developing a broader

view of the Army's needs.

Some benefits were associated with the transfer. The ammunition that was sent abroad was twenty years old and deteriorating. While it was valuable to the British Home Guard, the transfer meant that American soldiers went into combat with newer, more reliable ammunition. The resulting shortage of small arms ammunition was revealed before the United States entered the war. There was time to plan for increasing production. This was done so vigorously that by November 1943, the Ordnance Department *closed* two new ammunition plants whose production was surplus to Allied needs.<sup>108</sup>

Additionally, the official Army history of the Ordnance Department in World War II notes that this transfer was an important dress rehearsal for later Lend-Lease shipments. Lacking any plans or prior experience with large arms shipments overseas to other nations, the Army encountered a variety of problems with this transfer. The General Staff realized that the depot system of positioning material for continental defense was inappropriate. The problems first encountered when the transfer began in June 1940 took months to resolve, but they were overcome sooner because of the experience gained.<sup>109</sup>

The material sent to Britain also proved to be valuable, despite its

obsolescence. Winston Churchill explained that for every old American rifle shipped to England, a newer British rifle was released for transfer to the expanding Regular Army. "When you are fighting for existence, any cannon is better than no cannon at all," and Britain was defended by only about five hundred field artillery pieces after Dunkirk.<sup>110</sup> The additional 895 field pieces received during June and July were important material and moral factors in any calculations of British ability to resist an invasion.

General Marshall realized advantages and disadvantages associated with releasing munitions to the British in May 1940, but he had new factors to consider right away. In addition to the changes mentioned above, there was the growing recognition of the need for a draft to continue to meet manpower goals. Britain's fate was uncertain during the Battle of Britain. Despite widespread pessimism, President Roosevelt continued to insist that more aid be sent. Shortly after the destroyer-for-bases exchange in September, the debate over the Lend-Lease Act began. All these factors influenced Marshall's subsequent view on the priorities of national defense.

He eventually modified his emphasis on the primacy of the Army's needs. Legally committed to aiding Great Britain first, and

later the Soviet Union, Marshall had to adopt a larger vision on the subject of arms transfers than he had in May 1940. A change in his priorities, however, did not come suddenly with the fall of France. He continued to defend his rather narrow definition of national security objectives. His views changed gradually rather than in a burst of prophetic vision. Marshall balanced very contradictory requirements in this case, as he did throughout the war.

## VII. NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Their Finest Hour* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1949), 142-43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>3</sup> The exchange of 50 WWI vintage U.S. destroyers for rights to bases on British territories in the Western Hemisphere was announced on September 30, 1940. The Lend-Lease Act was signed by President Roosevelt on March 11, 1941. Both involved arming the British, but occurred months later and were publicly debated. The possibility of an immediate German victory was not as imminent as in May 1940. For a detailed account of each event, see Warren F. Kimball, *The Most Unsordid Act : Lend-Lease, 1939 - 1941* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1969) and Philip Goodhart, *Fifty Ships That Saved the World : The Foundations of the Anglo-American Alliance* (New York: Doubleday, 1965).

<sup>4</sup> Mark A. Stoler, *George C. Marshall: Soldier -Statesman of the American Century* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1989), 46.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 65; and Mark Skinner Watson, *Chief of Staff : Prewar Plans and Preparations* (Washington, D. C. : Department of the Army, 1950), 24.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-29. The plan adopted in 1937 called for 280,000 men on active duty as the minimum size for an effective force capable of meeting security needs during mobilization to an army of 1,000,000 men. This was the "Protective Mobilization Plan" force (PMP).

<sup>8</sup> Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, *Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill for 1940, H.R. 7805*, United States House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 27 November 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Constance McLaughlin Green, Harry C. Thomson, and Peter C. Roots, *The Ordnance Department : Planning Munitions for War* (Washington, D. C. : Department of the Army, 1955), 177; Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941, H.R. 9209*, United States Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 17 May 1940.

<sup>10</sup> "Availability of Ordnance Materiel for Release without Adversely Affecting National Defense," 22 May 1940, Office of the Chief of Staff Emergency File, Record Group 165, National Archives (photocopy, George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*



<sup>12</sup> Green, *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*, 74; and Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, *Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941, H.R. 9209*, United States House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 12 March 1940.

<sup>13</sup> Larry I. Bland, ed., *"We Cannot Delay", July 1, 1939 - December 6, 1941*, vol. 2 of *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1986), 91.

<sup>14</sup> Harry C. Thomson and Lida Mayo, *The Ordnance Department: Procurement and Supply* (Washington, D. C.: Department of the Army, 1960), 2-3.

<sup>15</sup> Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941 H.R. 9209*, United States Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 17 May 1940.

<sup>16</sup> Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations, *Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941, H.R. 9209*, United States House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 23 February, 1940. Marshall testified, "From a financial standpoint alone the virtual junking of the 75-mm gun and ammunition and the expenditure of vast sums to equip the Army with 105-mm howitzers, and with the necessary reserves of ammunition, would be difficult to justify." See also Watson, *Chief of Staff*, 33.

<sup>17</sup> The Senate debated the merits of the older bolt-action rifle versus the newer semi-automatic Garand. Accuracy, reliability and relative ammunition expenditures were concerns on April 30 and May 1, 1940.

<sup>18</sup> Watson, *Chief of Staff*, 39-40.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Morgenthau, Jr., *The Presidential Diaries of Henry Morgenthau, Jr., 1938-1953* (New York: Clearwater Publishing, 1984), May 13, 1940. Microfiche.

<sup>20</sup> Mark S. Watson, "First Vigorous Steps in Re-arming, 1938-39," *Military Affairs* XII (Summer 1948): 65.

<sup>21</sup> Bland, *"We Cannot Delay"*, 2:198.

<sup>22</sup> Senate Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941 H.R. 9209*, United States Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 1 May 1940.

<sup>23</sup> "House Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on Senate Amendment to the Military Establishment Appropriation Bill for 1941*, United States House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 29 May 1940.

<sup>24</sup> Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall: Ordeal and Hope* (New York: Viking Press, 1966), 31.

<sup>25</sup> Thomas N. Guinsburg, *The Pursuit of Isolationism in the United States Senate: From Versailles to Pearl Harbor* (New York: Garland, 1982), 242; George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (New York: Random House, 1972), volume 1, 1935-1948.

<sup>26</sup> House Committee on Military Affairs, *An Adequate National Defense as Outlined by the Message of the President...*, United States House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 17 January 1939.

<sup>27</sup> "Hearings on H.R. 9209, Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941," 17 May 1940, Senate Subcommittee Hearings, 76th Congress, 3d Session, Microfiche Volume S623-3.

<sup>28</sup> "House Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on Supplemental National Defense Appropriation Bill for 1941, H.R. 10055*, United States House of Representatives, 76th Congress, 3d Session, 4 June 1940.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on H.R. 9209, Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941*, Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 30 April 1940.

<sup>31</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay", 2:86.

<sup>32</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on H.R. 9209, Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941*, Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 29 May 1940.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay," 2:266.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Bill for 1940, H.R. 7805*, Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 27 November 1939.

<sup>37</sup> Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on H.R. 9209, Military Establishment Appropriations Bill for 1941*, Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 17 May 1940.

<sup>38</sup> William Frye, *Marshall: Citizen Soldier* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1947), 277, and Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., *Lend - Lease: Weapon for Victory* (New York: MacMillan, 1944), 24-25.

<sup>39</sup> Watson, *Chief of Staff*, 309-10; Stoler, *Marshall: Soldier -Statesman*, 75; Richard M. Leighton and Robert W. Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy, 1940-1943* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1955), 33.

<sup>40</sup> Pogue, *Marshall: Ordeal and Hope*, 49.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, 79.

<sup>42</sup> Green, *et. al.*, *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*, 57-59. The items selected were: semi-automatic rifles, 3-inch antiaircraft gun recoil mechanisms, forging for 75 mm shells, machining for 75 mm shells, searchlights, and gas masks. Subsequent emergency appropriation measures did provide for more educational orders, but this was too late to do more than pave the way for the full-scale production contracts that came in 1940-41.

<sup>43</sup> Thomson and Mayo, *The Ordnance Department: Procurement and Supply*, 10.

<sup>44</sup> Green, *et. al.*, *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*, 66.

<sup>45</sup> "Confidential Report on Britain's Industrial and Financial Mobilization Plan," October 13, 1939, Brookings Institute for the War Resources Board, The Papers of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., Box 76-2, Alderman Library, University of Virginia, Charlottesville.

<sup>46</sup> Senate Committee on Military Affairs, *Effect of Arms Sales to Foreign Governments upon Price and Delivery to the United States Government*, Senate, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 28 March 1939.

<sup>47</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearings on Senate Joint Resolution 89*, Senate, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 22 March 1939.

<sup>48</sup> Senate Committee on Military Affairs, *Effect of Arms Sales to Foreign Governments upon Price and Delivery to the United States Government*, Senate, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 28 March 1939.

<sup>49</sup> Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *Hearings on Senate Joint Resolution 89*, Senate, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 22 March 1939.

<sup>50</sup> Marshall's support for Allied contracts did not contradict the valid concern that British machine tool purchases hurt American industrial mobilization. Machine tools sold to Britain handicapped American buildup by moving a scarce, vital commodity to England. Contracts with U.S. firms, on the other hand, added to U.S. capacity by financing the construction of plants in the U.S. In an emergency, the U.S. government could (and later did) seize control of such resources.

<sup>51</sup> Thomson and Mayo, *The Ordnance Department: Procurement and Supply*, 10; *In Abundance and On Time, 1939-1943* (Bridgeport, Connecticut: Remington Arms Company, 1944), 12-15.

<sup>52</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay", 2:237-38.

<sup>33</sup> There were, of course, ways around this obstacle. In October, 1940, the U.S. government leased the British a complete set of equipment from the Rock Island Arsenal to permit them to contract for Remington Arms to build a factory to produce British .303 caliber rifles. Bland, *"We Cannot Delay"*, 2:334-35; Remington Arms, *In Abundance and On Time*, 16-17.

<sup>34</sup> Edward Brooke Lee, Jr., "Politics of Our Military National Defense," Senate Document 274, 76th Congress, 3d Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), 122-24.

<sup>35</sup> Memorandum for Chief of Staff, "Foreign Purchase of 75 mm guns," 21 May 1940, Reel 20, Item 761, George C. Marshall Research Library, Lexington, Virginia. "No 75 mm guns have been declared surplus. They could not be sold without such a declaration which would be difficult to justify."

<sup>36</sup> John Morton Blum, *Roosevelt and Morgenthau: A Revision and Condensation of From the Morgenthau Diaries* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1970), 318-19.

<sup>37</sup> Morgenthau, *The Presidential Diaries*, May 13, 1940. In August 1940, the Air Force reported that bombs on hand were only sufficient for one month of maximum operation. See Memorandum, 16 August 1940, "Status of demolition bombs in Continental U. S.," National Archives Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff, Emergency File.

<sup>38</sup> Bland, *"We Cannot Delay"*, 2:238-39. Marshall's memorandum for the President dated June 8, 1940, read: "To furnish approximately one-fifteenth of the number of bombs desired by the Allied Purchasing Agent it will be necessary to release approximately one-seventh of our entire bomb stock in the two sizes required, 30 and 100 pound bombs. Additional bombs are under order, but the first deliveries will not be made for another six months."

<sup>39</sup> "House Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on Senate Amendment to the Military Establishment Appropriation Bill for 1941*, House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 29 May 1940.

<sup>40</sup> David G. Haglund, "George C. Marshall and the Question of Military Aid to England, May - June 1940," *The Journal of Contemporary History* 15 (1980): 745-60. Haglund repeated this argument in his book, *Latin America and the Transformation of U.S. Strategic Thought* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1984).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 745.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 747.

<sup>66</sup> Adolph A. Berle, *Navigating the Rapids, 1918-1971: From the Papers of Adolph A. Berle*, Beatrice Bishop Berle and Travis Beal Jacobs, editors (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), 293. See also Patrick J. Hearden, *Roosevelt Confronts Hitler: America's Entry into World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1987), 159-60.

<sup>67</sup> Haglund, "Military Aid to England," 747.

<sup>68</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay", 2:33.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 2:72-75.

<sup>70</sup> Stetson Conn and Byron Fairchild, *The Western Hemisphere: The Framework of Hemisphere Defense* (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Army, 1960), 211.

<sup>71</sup> House Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Military Establishment Bill for 1941, H.R. 9209*, House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 12 March 1940.

<sup>72</sup> Haglund, *Latin America and the Transformation of U.S. Strategic Thought*, 181.

<sup>73</sup> Conn and Fairchild, *The Western Hemisphere*, 173-76.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>76</sup> Watson, *Chief of Staff*, 106.

<sup>77</sup> Marshall used the term "covering force" in testimony before the Senate in August 1940 to describe the 1.2 million man initial increment of the expanded protective mobilization plan force. Senate Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on the 2d Supplemental National Defense Appropriations Bill, 1941*, Senate, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 15 August 1940. "It [the Army] would furnish the covering force, behind which we would have to prepare additional forces for a larger effort to maintain the integrity of the Western Hemisphere."

<sup>78</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay", 2:221.

<sup>79</sup> Franklin D. Roosevelt, *Roosevelt and Churchill: Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, Francis L. Lowenheim, Harold D. Langley, and Manfred Jonas, editors (New York: Saturday Review Press, 1975), 95-96.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

<sup>81</sup> Thomson and Mayo, *The Ordnance Department: Procurement and Supply*, 10.

<sup>82</sup> Blum, *Roosevelt and Morgenthau*, 311, 318-319.

\* Memorandum for Chief of Staff from C. M. Wesson, May 22, 1940, Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Conference File, Marshall Library, Reel 270, Item 4125.

\* "Release of Ordnance Materiel to the Allied Purchasing Agent," Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Emergency File, Secret Memorandum, May 25, 1940, photocopy, Marshall Library.

\* *Ibid.*

\* *Ibid.*

\* "Negotiations for transfer of certain munitions to French-British," Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Emergency File, June 3, 1940, photocopy, Marshall Library.

\* Memorandum for the President, May 31, 1940, Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Emergency File, photocopy, Marshall Library.

\* "Status of Caliber .30 Ball Ammunition," Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Emergency File, marked "Used by C of S 6/6/40, photocopy, Marshall Library. This note also states: "In addition we can make available 4,000,000 rounds per month until August 1st, thereafter 10,000,000 rounds per month until December, 1940, in exchange against 50,000,000 rounds now on order."

\* Bland, " *We Cannot Delay*," 2:238; William L. Langer and S. Evertt Gleason, *The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940* (New York: Harper, 1952), 512. The role of U.S. Steel Export Co. is discussed in Stettinius, *Lend - Lease*, 11, 26; and in Green, *et. al.*, *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*, 73.

\* Stettinius, *Lend - Lease*, 28.

\* Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 138-9.

\* The evolutionary nature of the shipment has made numbers confusing. For instance, the original list of surplus prepared May 22 listed five hundred 75 mm field guns. Nine hundred were scheduled for delivery by the contracts signed on June 11. Only 895 were finally shipped. According to a Chief of Staff Memorandum dated April 16, 1941, "variations in stock records" and a more complete inventory made on July 11, 1940, revealed discrepancies in the earlier lists. Five fewer field guns, but approximately 1,000 more machine guns were shipped. The original estimates only considered unmodified Model 1917 Browning machine guns. Other models in the arsenals—Lewis, Vickers, and Marlin—were included. See Leighton and Coakley, *Global Logistics and Strategy*; Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Miscellaneous Correspondence File, Marshall Library, Reel 289, Item 4332.

\* Stettinius, *Lend - Lease*, 25.

<sup>92</sup> The quantity of ammunition supplied would have allocated approximately 30 rounds per rifle and 1400 rounds per machine gun—a bare minimum with no reserve.

<sup>93</sup> Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 144-5.

<sup>94</sup> Memorandum for the Chief of Staff, June 5, 1940, "Surplus Ordnance Materiel Available for Sale to Foreign Governments," Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff, Foreign Sale or Exchange of Munitions, Marshall Library, Reel 289, Item 4332.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>96</sup> Thomson and Mayo, *The Ordnance Department: Procurement and Supply*, 70, Table 8.

<sup>97</sup> Green, *et. al.*, *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*, 75.

<sup>98</sup> "House Committee on Appropriations, *Hearings on Senate Amendment to the Military Establishment Appropriation Bill for 1941*, House of Representatives, 76th Cong., 3d sess., 29 May 1940.

<sup>99</sup> Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engelman, and Byron Fairchild, *Guarding the United States and Its Outposts* (Washington, D. C.: Department of the Army, 1964), 158-59.

<sup>100</sup> Remington Arms, *In Abundance and On Time*, 14.

<sup>101</sup> "Weekly Progress Report of the Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense," 332, September 18, 1940, Stettinius Papers, Box 78-7.

<sup>102</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay", 2:292.

<sup>103</sup> "British Arms and Ammunition," Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Emergency File, August 16, 1940, photocopy, Marshall Library.

<sup>104</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay", 2:292.

<sup>105</sup> "Memorandum from the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, subject: Shortage Small Arms Ammunition," September 21, 1940, Record Group 165, Office of the Chief of Staff Miscellaneous Correspondence File, Reel 20, Marshall Library. The General Staff advised Marshall of the consequences of the earlier order to cut training use of ammunition. The G-3 noted the training cost, while the War Plans Division felt that the reduction was too small to save sufficient ammunition. There was still significant reservation to overseas arms shipments in the General Staff, particularly in light of the destruction of the Kelvin powder plant.

<sup>106</sup> Bland, "We Cannot Delay", 2:262.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>108</sup> Letter from Major General L. H. Campbell, Jr., Chief of Ordnance, to Mr. C. K. Davis, President, Remington Arms, November 11, 1943, Remington Arms, *In Abundance and On Time*, 64.

<sup>108</sup> Green, *et. al.*, *The Ordnance Department: Planning Munitions for War*, 79-82.

<sup>110</sup> Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, 145, 272.



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