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8 April 1966

MARSHALL'S STRATEGY AND THE COMMUNIST THREAT

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USAWC RESEARCH ELEMENT
(Research Paper)

Marshall's Strategy and the Communist Threat

by

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Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania
8 April 1966

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SUMMARY	iii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. WARTIME STRATEGIC THINKING	4
3. POST-WAR STRATEGIC THINKING	29
4. THE LESSONS OF MARSHALL'S STRATEGIC THINKING . .	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	44

SUMMARY

In the critical period between 1939 and 1949, General George Catlett Marshall served his country successively as Army Chief of Staff, Special Representative to the Republic of China, and Secretary of State. In this period and in these offices, he was one of the chief architects of the strategy adopted by the United States to counter the two aggressive "isms" which have threatened world order and security in the twentieth century: Naziism and Communism. The purpose of this research paper is to trace the development and content of General Marshall's strategic thinking in the decade from 1 September 1939, when he was appointed Chief of Staff, to January 1949, when he retired as Secretary of State.

Although the two threats existed concurrently, it was Nazi Germany under Hitler's leadership which first made its bid for power and precipitated World War II in September 1939. Therefore, as Chief of Staff from September 1939 to October 1945, General Marshall was primarily concerned with the gigantic tasks of building the military force and developing a global strategy to accomplish the defeat of Nazi Germany and her Axis allies. In the latter task, General Marshall's approach, in the early years of the war, was that of the classical military strategist: to wage war from a position of strength against a coalition of states to achieve traditional political goals, i.e., national security, restoration of the status quo, and a balance of power. Under the pressure of events and the charismatic leadership of President Roosevelt, however, there appeared to have occurred a dramatic change in General Marshall's thinking which manifested itself in the latter war years. After 1943 his actions indicate that he had abandoned the traditional military view of strategy, and had come to accept a new set of strategic values embodied in such concepts as victory for victory's sake, unconditional surrender, security through international cooperation, and faith in the honorable intentions of the Soviet Union.

It was only after the end of World War II and General Marshall's retirement as Chief of Staff in October 1945, that international communism openly appeared as a threat to world peace and security. In the face of this new threat General Marshall reluctantly returned to battle, but this time as a statesman rather than a soldier. In China, as Special Representative of the President from December 1945 to January 1947, and in Moscow as Secretary of State in the spring of 1947, he was brought face to face with the Communist bid for power and world domination. Although the ideological nature of communism seemed always to have baffled and eluded him, he was not thereby prevented from seeing the dangers inherent in the situation as it existed at that time at both ends of Eurasia. In China, his strategy of reconciliation failed, but in Europe, his strategy of eradicating the

root causes of communism, as expressed in the Marshall Plan, proved eminently successful in halting the spread of Communist power and influence on the Continent.

At the end of the war in Europe, Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson, called General Marshall to his office and said to him: "I have seen a great many soldiers in my lifetime and you, Sir, are the finest soldier I have ever known." It is unlikely that history will change that judgment.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Viewed in retrospect, 1 September 1939 was a fateful day in the history of the modern world. In Europe, on this date, Nazi Germany, bent on eliminating the last vestige of Versailles and the establishment of a new European order centered on the Third Reich, climaxed a long series of provocative actions by invading Poland. In a matter of days, Great Britain and France challenged the Nazi bid for power and World War II began on the Continent. In the Far East, Japan, also bent on the establishment of a new order and empire, was following an aggressive course of action in China and the Pacific which, perceptibly and rapidly, was leading to a collision with the vital interests of the United States in that area. At home, the American people were recovering from a long and disastrous economic depression. The Armed Forces were woefully unprepared for war, and isolationism was the prevailing political spirit and dominant element of American foreign policy, despite the ominous march of events in Europe and Asia.

Beneath the surface of these momentous events of September 1939, other forces, destined to have a profound influence on the international order, were stirring. Under the impulse of war, these latent forces were to assume a shape and substance which would bring the world in 1946 to a crisis even more dangerous than that which existed in 1939. In Moscow the ruling Communist Party, under Stalin's leadership, remained totally committed to world Communist revolution despite the threat to the USSR posed by Germany and Japan. In Shensi Province

of central China, a staunch Marx-Leninist and ideological brother of Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, was fighting both the Kuomintang armies and the Japanese invaders while plotting eventual Communist rule of all China. In the United States, a popular and dynamic President, long an internationalist, was thinking of world order and stability in terms of an international organization composed of the great "peace-loving" nations of the world and based on broad, liberal, democratic, principles. A third force in the international arena of 1939 was Great Britain with her traditional international policy of balance of power. With the war as a catalyst, these three forms of internationalism would meet and interact, and leave in their wake a residue of potentially explosive situations in every strategic area of the globe. "The roots of the Cold War thus reach far back in modern history."¹

In broad and general terms, this was the situation which prevailed when George Catlett Marshall became Chief of Staff of the United States Army on 1 September 1939. In the decade ahead, he would deal directly and intimately with both Nazi tyranny which was a clear and present danger, and Communist aggression which was inchoate and latent in 1939. As a soldier and as a statesman, he was destined to play a major role in the formation and execution of a strategy against both threats. His efforts would bring him acclaim as America's greatest soldier. They would also bring him criticism and condemnation. But on 1 September 1939 all these things were hidden in the future as he rejoiced in the attainment of the highest military office open to a soldier. It was an appropriate climax to a distinguished military

¹W. W. Rostow, The United States in the World Arena, p. 141.

career which had begun more than 37 years earlier when, as a graduate of Virginia Military Institute, he had accepted a commission as Second Lieutenant, Infantry, Regular United States Army.

CHAPTER 2

WARTIME STRATEGIC THINKING

When General Marshall became Chief of Staff in September 1939, his first and immediate concern was the military security of the United States against the rising tide of Nazi power.¹ There were several considerations which made this matter supremely important in his mind. In the first place, as Chief of Staff he had broad responsibilities for the security of the United States.² Secondly, the Nazi threat to the vital interests of the United States in the Western Hemisphere went from a possibility in 1939 to a distinct probability in 1940, and did not recede until June 1941 when the bulk of German offensive arms were turned eastward into Russia.³ General Marshall was keenly aware of this threat.⁴ Accordingly, his main energies from the fall of 1939 to the summer of 1941 were devoted to the difficult task of building, in peacetime, the Army from a force of approximately 174,000 enlisted men scattered over 130 posts, camps, and stations,⁵ into a modern army capable of defending the country. In his first Biennial Report to the Secretary of War on 1 July 1941, Marshall enumerates in detail the problems and difficulties which beset him in this task.⁶

¹Forrest C. Pogue, George C. Marshall: Education of a General, 1880 - 1939, p. 344.

²Mark Skinner Watson, United States Army in World War II, The War Department, Chief of Staff: Prewar Plans and Preparations, p. 75.

³Ibid., p. 95.

⁴George C. Marshall, Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1939 to June 30, 1941 in The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 20.

⁵Ibid., p. 16.

⁶George C. Marshall, op. cit., pp. 17-28.

Despite the difficulties involved, General Marshall was eminently successful in his efforts to achieve military preparedness. In repeated appearances before Congressional committees, in the period 1939 to 1941, he succeeded, through his complete candor and obvious sincerity, in convincing Congress of the reality of the threat and the absolute necessity of rebuilding the armed forces of the United States.⁷ In some instances, as in the case of the extension of Selective Service on 18 August 1941, the necessary decisions were made at a critical point in time and by the narrowest of margins.⁸ So important was his work as a witness before Congress, that it has been compared to his military achievements.⁹ Winston Churchill singles him out as one of the few men to whom the American people need to be eternally grateful for the security of the United States and Western civilization in the dark days of 1940.¹⁰

General Marshall's concern for military preparedness went much deeper than the immediate threat of Nazi aggression in the early days of World War II. The depth of his concern and its abiding nature were reflected in the manner in which he approached Congress for men and materiel in the 1939-1941 period. He was aware of the traditional American distrust of the military, and the impact of rearming on the democratic process.¹¹ He was also aware that there never was enough money for the Army, and that he could not ask for too much too soon.¹²

⁷A. J. Liebling, "Profiles, Chief of Staff, General Marshall," New Yorker, 26 October 1940, p. 26.

⁸Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 8.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Winston S. Churchill, The Second World War, The Grand Alliance, p. 602.

¹¹George C. Marshall, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

¹²Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., pp. 37 and 181.

He, therefore, spoke of preparedness as something distinct and apart from the purposes for which an adequate military force would be used.¹³ He stated plainly that his only concern was the security of the American people.¹⁴ It was thus that he was able to win completely the confidence of Congress which was to be so important in the massive build-up after Pearl Harbor.¹⁵ Even after the war and the advent of the Nuclear Age, when hopes for the United Nations were high, he continued his efforts to keep the United States militarily strong by advocating an effective research and development program and universal military training.¹⁶ He did not believe that US security could be measured in terms of international organizations or exotic weapons alone. Neither could it any longer, in his opinion, be purely hemispheric. "It no longer appears practical to continue what we once conceived as hemispheric defense as a satisfactory basis for our security. We are now concerned with the peace of the entire world. And peace can only be maintained by the strong."¹⁷

It has been said that a strong defense was General Marshall's legacy to his country.¹⁸ Certainly, in the light of events which have occurred since 1945, there can be little doubt of the validity of his vision and foresight. In standing up almost alone in an

¹³George C. Marshall, op. cit., p. 30.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 33.

¹⁵Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 181.

¹⁶George C. Marshall, "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1945 to the Secretary of War," The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 152.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 291.

¹⁸Editorial, Army-Navy-Air Force Register, 24 Oct. 1959.

unpopular cause both in 1939 and in 1945, he enunciated a fundamental concept of United States strategic power, and made an enduring contribution to the American position of strength in the modern world.

Strategic planning in the fall of 1939 began almost from a standstill. The "color" plans of the 1920s, developed within the narrow limits of the existing national policy of arming for defense only,¹⁹ were little more than staff studies.²⁰ After the President, in his radio address of 26 April 1938, asserted that the situation in Europe had a bearing on the security of the United States, and that the United States would act to meet any threat in the Western Hemisphere,²¹ Army planners widened the scope of their plans to include, in the "Rainbow" series, an active defense of the Western Hemisphere and the vital interests of the democratic powers in the Pacific against possible German and Japanese actions.²² It was not, however, until after the re-election of President Roosevelt in the fall of 1940 that any real attempt was made to deal with military strategy as a whole on the assumption of concerted United States-British operations.²³

In the early war years, after Marshall became Chief of Staff, strategic planning moved uncertainly, and only in response to events in Europe and the Pacific, and Presidential direction. There were several reasons why General Marshall should be inclined to move cautiously and even warily. For one thing, he was deeply conscious

¹⁹Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 35.

²⁰Ibid., p. 87.

²¹Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, United States Army in World War II, The War Department, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, p. 5.

²²Ibid., pp. 7-8.

²³Ibid., p. 27.

of the Army's inability to project United States power beyond the Hemisphere, and saw no possibility of developing an adequate military force prior to the summer or fall of 1941.²⁴ It was this knowledge which led him to believe that the President was moving too far too fast in the summer of 1940, and to recommend less aggressive courses of action in the Pacific.²⁵ It was this same consciousness of military weakness which moved him to oppose vigorously aid to Britain in the summer of 1940.²⁶ A second reason for caution was the difficulty of knowing the mind of the President in the early days of the war. Franklin D. Roosevelt was a strong President who was fully prepared to be Commander-in-Chief in fact as well as in name.²⁷ Although the President had a high regard for Marshall's judgments,²⁸ and dealt directly with him,²⁹ he was inclined to be governed by expediency in day-to-day decisions, and to give overriding consideration to short-range military policy.²⁹ An added complication existed in the fact that the whole frame of reference within which the President thought differed radically from traditional military thinking.³⁰ A third reason why General Marshall was forced to proceed slowly can be found in the general absence of adequate policy direction. The isolation period had resulted in a vacuum of objectives,³¹ with the consequence

²⁴Ibid., pp. 12-13.

²⁵Ibid., p. 15.

²⁶Ibid., p. 19.

²⁷Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 5.

²⁸Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins, An Intimate History, p. 446.

²⁹W. W. Rostow, op. cit., pp. 89 and 45.

³⁰Samuel P. Huntington, The Soldier and The State, pp. 317-332.

³¹W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 46.

that in the early years of the war, "the military floundered about without any clear notion as to the policy of the government."³²

When General Marshall became Chief of Staff, work was in progress on "Rainbow" 2 which, at that time, seemed to cover the more likely prospects for the future.³³ In essence, this plan provided for the military defense of the Western Hemisphere and the vital interests of the Democratic Powers in the Pacific on the assumption that the United States would not be required to provide maximum participation in Europe.³⁴ Work on this plan was suspended in May 1940 after the "German avalanche completely upset the equilibrium of the European continent."³⁵ The whole basis of planning was thereby radically changed.³⁶ To Army planners, this new situation substantially increased the danger of Axis penetration in South America, and led to the conclusion that plans for entering the war in Europe (Rainbow 5) should be deferred and a plan for Hemispheric defense (Rainbow 4) developed.³⁷ On 22 May 1940 Marshall received the President's tacit approval for such a plan which was completed by the end of the month.³⁸

It was in this period, however, that the President became convinced that Great Britain would hold against the Nazi onslaught, and made one of the major strategic decisions of the war: "to back the

³²Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 323.

³³Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 8.

³⁴Ibid., p. 7.

³⁵George C. Marshall, Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1939 to June 30, 1941 in The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 20.

³⁶Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 11.

³⁷Ibid., p. 12.

³⁸Ibid., p. 13.

seemingly hopeless cause of Britain with everything he could possibly offer in the way of material and moral encouragement."³⁹ An immediate consequence of this decision was the submission to the Joint Chiefs by the President on 13 June of a hypothesis envisioning a world situation involving United States participation in the war by air and sea power, and the shipment of supplies to the Allies.⁴⁰ The impact of this proposition on national defense caused Marshall deep anxiety, and led, in the following weeks, to repeated requests to the President for policy direction on defense matters without notable results.⁴¹ Despite Marshall's fears and opposition, the firmness of this strategic decision became increasingly evident in the following months. On 29 December 1940, the President made his famous "arsenal of democracy" speech,⁴² and in March 1941 the Lend Lease Bill was passed.⁴³ By April the United States had acquired a base in Greenland, and in July assumed the defense of Iceland.⁴⁴ In an address in September 1941, the President announced the orders to the Navy to "shoot on sight"⁴⁵ thus signalling active United States participation in the war.

By November 1940, the direction of things to come had apparently become sufficiently clear to General Marshall that, surprisingly, he concurred with a Navy plan (Plan "Dog") which provided for offensive action in the Atlantic in conjunction with the British while maintaining a defensive attitude in the Pacific.⁴⁶ It is also apparent that

³⁹Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 150.

⁴⁰Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., pp. 13-14.

⁴¹Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., pp. 110-113.

⁴²Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 226.

⁴³Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 321.

⁴⁴W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 53.

⁴⁵Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 370.

⁴⁶Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., pp. 25-28.

he had come to recognize that planning could go little further except on the basis of an Anglo-American coalition strategy.⁴⁷

The occasion for coalition planning came with the arrival in Washington of a delegation of British officers for a series of staff conversations on strategy in January 1941. The conversations were held between 29 January and 27 March 1941, and were known as the ABC talks.⁴⁸ These conversations were held against a background of increasing Anglo-American cooperation,⁴⁹ Presidential preoccupation with aid to Britain,⁵⁰ and fear on the part of the Joint Planning Committee that United States interests might be subordinated to British strategic aims.⁵¹ It was at these talks, which marked "an epochal change in the war policy of the United States,"⁵² that the grand strategy of the war was suggested, i.e., Germany first, and a secondary effort against Japan pending the defeat of Germany.⁵³ Although the ABC reports were never officially approved,⁵⁴ they served as a basis for a revised version of "Rainbow" 5 which was completed by the Army on 7 April 1941.⁵⁵ The ABC talks were also important in that, thereafter, coalition planning became the accepted pattern of life for Army planners.⁵⁶

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 30-31.

⁴⁸Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 125.

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 118-119.

⁵⁰Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵¹Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

⁵²Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 369.

⁵³Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 273.

⁵⁴Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 375.

⁵⁵Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 43.

⁵⁶Ibid.

The grand strategy suggested in ABC-1 was in line with Marshall's previous thinking.⁵⁷ In addition, the main task of the Army envisioned in ABC-1 and "Rainbow" 5, i.e., planning for sending Army forces to the United Kingdom, seems to have aroused no objection on Marshall's part.⁵⁸ In other respects, however, he found much in the British proposals with which he was prepared to take issue. One such proposal was a favorite plan of Churchill's for utilization of a substantial part of the United States fleet in defense of Singapore as a center of Commonwealth cohesion in the Far East.⁵⁹ This proposal was made at the ABC talks, and again at the American-British-Dutch talks at Singapore on 21-27 April 1941.⁶⁰ In both instances the proposal was rejected by Marshall as involving utilization of final reserves in a nondecisive area. His own view was that "Collapse in the Atlantic would be fatal; collapse in the Far East would be serious but not fatal."⁶¹ It is possible that he had another reason for his opposition: he was fearful that the President might, under British influence, make a decision beyond the Army's capability to implement at that particular time.⁶²

At the Atlantic Conference held off Argentia, Newfoundland in the early days of August 1941, General Marshall became acquainted

⁵⁷Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 273.

⁵⁸Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 47.

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 35-38.

⁶⁰Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 395.

⁶¹Memo, CofS (prepared in War Plans Division by Lt Col C. W. Bundy) for the Secy of War, 20 May 1941, quoted by Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 397.

⁶²Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 52.

with additional British views of strategy with which he had scant sympathy. It was at this conference that the British proposed utilization of American forces in Africa and the Near East, and advanced the theory that Germany could be defeated without the use of large land armies through a combination of blockade, bombing, armor probes, and propaganda.⁶³ Although Marshall remained noncommittal, a subsequent Joint Board report indicated his true feelings: the British view was "optimistic," and "would at best involve a piecemeal and indecisive commitment of forces against a superior enemy under unfavorable logistic conditions."⁶⁴ The Board also noted that "it should be recognized as an almost invariable rule that wars cannot be finally won without the use of land armies."⁶⁵ Aside from its content, this statement is significant in that it was made at a time when it was clear that "piecemeal commitment" was precisely what the President felt was necessary.⁶⁶

Before and during the Atlantic Conference, staff planners of WPD were hard at work on an estimate of production requirements which was later to develop into the Victory Program. The estimate had been directed by the President on 9 July 1941, after it had become apparent that previous estimates were beclouded by the Lend Lease program which had been enacted into law on 11 March 1941.⁶⁷ The President directed the Army and Navy to submit information on "overall production requirements required to defeat our potential enemies."⁶⁸ By 23 August,

⁶³Ibid., p. 55.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁶⁵Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., pp. 407-408.

⁶⁶Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 56.

⁶⁷Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 338.

⁶⁸Ltr, President to Secretaries of War and Navy, 9 July 1941, quoted in Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 338.

after Hopkins had returned from Moscow confident that Russia could withstand Hitler's attack, the President enlarged the previous requirement in scope on the basis of his announced intention of committing the United States to supply Russia with "all reasonable munitions help" for "as long as she continues to fight the Axis Powers effectively."⁶⁹ The report which finally went to the President on 25 September 1941 contained not only information on estimated production needs but a complete statement of the Army's view on strategy at that time.⁷⁰ There is little doubt but that it represented the Chief of Staff's considered view.⁷¹

The strategic concepts of this report were summarized in another document which went to the President on 11 September 1941, and which was signed by General Marshall and Admiral Stark. This was the "Joint Board Estimate of United States Over-all Production Requirements," which has been described by Robert E. Sherwood as "one of the most remarkable documents of American history" in that "it set down the basic strategy of a global war before this country was involved in it."⁷² Payne states that Marshall was responsible for two thirds of this report.⁷³ Written at a time when United States foreign policy was anything but clearly defined,⁷⁴ it allowed General Marshall maximum latitude in the expression of his personal convictions regarding

⁶⁹Memo, President to Secretary of War, 30 August 1941, quoted in Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 348.

⁷⁰Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 354.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 410.

⁷³Robert Payne, The Marshall Story, p. 140.

⁷⁴Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 352.

national objectives, policy, and strategy. It may, therefore, be considered as a broad and comprehensive expression of General Marshall's personal views on strategy after two years as Chief of Staff and on the eve of United States entry into World War II.

The national objectives of the United States, as seen by General Marshall in the fall of 1941, were as follows:

National objectives, as related to the military situation, called for (1) preservation of integrity of the whole Western Hemisphere; (2) prevention of disruption of the British Commonwealth; (3) prevention of further expansion of Japanese domination; (4) eventual re-establishment in Europe and Asia of a balance of power furthering political stability in those regions and future security of the United States; (5) establishment, as far as practicable, of regimes favorable to economic freedom and individual liberty.⁷⁵

Recognizing that these objectives could be obtained only through military victories outside this hemisphere, the Joint Board Estimate went on to state that "the first major objective of the United States and its Associates ought to be the complete military defeat of Germany," and that

the principal strategic method employed by the United States in the immediate future should be the material support of present military operations against Germany, and their reinforcement by active participation in the war by the United States while holding Japan in check pending future developments.⁷⁶

A study of the national objectives, policies, and strategy proposed in the Joint Board Estimate reveals not only General Marshall's

⁷⁵General Marshall and Admiral Stark, "Joint Board Report," summarized by Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 356.

⁷⁶General Marshall and Admiral Stark, "Joint Board Report," quoted by Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 415.

thoughts in the environment of late 1941, but much of his basic philosophy as well. In this latter respect, the Joint Board Estimate is probably a clearer expression of his personal outlook than his words and actions in the later war years after major decisions on matters of grand strategy had been irrevocably made by the President.

In 1941, General Marshall had spent 39 years of his adult life in a military atmosphere which dated back to the Civil War, and which has been aptly termed "military professionalism" by Samuel P. Huntington.⁷⁷ In essence, that philosophy saw the world in terms of competing nation-states among which rivalry, conflict, and even war was all but inevitable.⁷⁸ It was a philosophy which found little in common with the doctrines of optimism and progress.⁷⁹ It assumed that wars are fought to further national policy, that a determination of national goals necessarily precedes the determination of strategy, and that the purpose of strategy is security rather than victory.⁸⁰ It was a coldly realistic philosophy, free of illusion, which measured national policy in terms of the relative power of nations.⁸¹ As such, it differed radically from the spirit of liberal idealism which was eventually to guide the war policies of the United States.⁸²

There is much in the Joint Board Report which suggests that in the fall of 1941 General Marshall's strategic thinking substantially

⁷⁷Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 230.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 263-265.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 257.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 327.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 265.

⁸²Louis J. Halle, "Our War Aims Were Wrong," New York Times Magazine, 22 Aug. 1965, pp. 13-16.

embraced the essential concepts of the philosophy of "military professionalism."

Early in the Joint Board Report, the major nations of the world are enumerated and carefully classified as potential friends or enemies.⁸³ The assumed foreign policy objectives of Germany and Japan, as well as those of the United States, are clearly and precisely enumerated.⁸⁴ United States entry into the war to defeat Germany was predicated on the assumption that Germany would continue to threaten United States vital interests in the Western Hemisphere.⁸⁵ The strategic procedure to be followed by the United States was defined in terms of available power: the utilization of sea and air power initially pending the development of sufficient ground forces "to come to grips with the German armies on the continent of Europe."⁸⁶ Robert Payne has stated that, in the Joint Board Report, "The complexities of the situation are reduced to simple formulas. . . ."⁸⁷ Certainly, there is every indication that General Marshall saw the war as a conflict of nation states pursuing contradictory national policy objectives in the traditional manner, rather than as a conflict of ideologies or moral ideals on either side.

There is no indication in the Joint Board Report that General Marshall subscribed to the "new" theory of international relations then prevalent in Administration circles which assumed that nations

⁸³Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 410.

⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 412-414.

⁸⁵Ibid., p. 411.

⁸⁶General Marshall and Admiral Stark, "Joint Board Report," quoted in Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 418.

⁸⁷Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 140.

are, by nature, divisible into two species: "aggressor" and "peace-loving."⁸⁸ There is no mention of unconditional surrender, with its implications of the total destruction of nations, as a national policy.⁸⁹ The Report contained no implication that victory was the primary purpose of war or that political considerations could wait until after victory. It contained no suggestion that a durable peace could be established on the basis of an international organization or personal agreement among the leaders of the Three Great Powers.⁹⁰ There was no vision of building a new world order in the sense of a resumption of Woodrow Wilson's hopes.⁹¹ All of these concepts were totally foreign to the traditions in which Marshall had been reared. It is doubtful that they ever entered his mind until they were forced upon him at a later date.

The listing of a balance of power in Europe and Asia in the Joint Board Report as one of the five major United States policy objectives, was another indication that General Marshall was thinking along traditional lines in regard to international politics. This concept had long been the foundation of British foreign policy in Europe. As the war progressed, it became increasingly important in the British view of the post-war world. To Prime Minister Churchill, it encompassed the whole meaning of victory.⁹² In the United States, however, it enjoyed no such regard: the American view was that it was slightly

⁸⁸Louis J. Halle, op. cit., pp. 13-16.

⁸⁹Ibid. See also Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, On Active Service In Peace and War, pp. 565-566.

⁹⁰Louis J. Halle, op. cit., pp. 13-16.

⁹¹Edgar S. Furness, Jr. and Richard C. Snyder, An Introduction To American Foreign Policy, p. 114.

⁹²W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 116.

immoral, and inadequate as a basis for keeping the peace.⁹³ As previously noted, therefore, the United States rested its hopes for peace on unanimity among the Big Three and Russian goodwill. It was this division of view that lay at the base of the conflicts over strategy which divided the Anglo-Saxon Allies until late in the war.

If General Marshall continued to support the balance of power concept during the war, there is no evidence of it in the public records. Certainly, as will be indicated later, his strategy for prosecuting the war in Europe ran counter to that of Churchill. He may simply have changed his mind, or as General Bradley, he may have come to accept uncritically the Great Illusion.⁹⁴ More likely, however, he simply bowed, with as much grace as possible, to a Presidential decision, as he had done previously in the case of foreign aid.⁹⁵ The non-adoption of the balance of power concept by the United States in World War II, does not detract from the fact that a policy, which in 1965 appears to offer the only feasible basis for world peace, was proposed as a national policy objective by General Marshall in 1941. It is an indication of the soundness of his strategic vision, and as in the case of preparedness, it is part of his lasting strategic legacy to his country.

Perhaps the greatest single deficiency of General Marshall's strategic thinking as revealed in the Joint Board Report was its failure to take into account the dynamism of the political "isms" of Europe. In reference to the Joint Board Report, Robert Payne states

⁹³George C. Reinhardt, American Strategy In The Atomic Age, p. 101.

⁹⁴Omar N. Bradley, A Soldier's Story, pp. 533-534.

⁹⁵Mark Skinner Watson, op. cit., p. 306.

that "the dynamic of the fascist power was almost entirely overlooked."⁹⁶ This opinion would seem to be reinforced by the fact that in June 1940, at the time Germany was overrunning Europe, Army planners were of the opinion that United States participation in the war was unreasonable in the light of the "long-range national interests of the United States."⁹⁷ In the matter of communism, where the consequences were to prove much more serious, General Marshall's apparent failure to recognize the ideological threat was to bring down upon him, at a later date, the most serious accusations.⁹⁸

In developing a global strategy in the fall of 1941, General Marshall apparently regarded communism in Russia as a matter of domestic politics rather than as a wellspring of Soviet foreign policy. There are many reasons which might explain his failure at that time to recognize the implications of aggression inherent in Communist ideology. He was not a student of political ideologies, and as most Americans at that time, he was not disposed to take seriously any theoretical blueprint of conquest whether in the form of Mein Kampf or the Communist Manifesto.⁹⁹ There is also the consideration that in the fall of 1941 the Soviet Union did not figure very largely in international affairs except as a possible victim of Nazi aggression. The Joint Board Report listed Russia as a potentially friendly power¹⁰⁰ but saw her

⁹⁶Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 140.

⁹⁷Report, Sr A&N members JPC to CofS and CNO, 26 June 1940, quoted in Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 15.

⁹⁸Senator Joe McCarthy, The Story of General George Marshall, pp. 169-172.

⁹⁹Forrest C. Pogue, op. cit., p. 347.

¹⁰⁰Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 410.

continued participation in the war as desirable only from the viewpoint of facilitating future land operations against Germany in Europe.¹⁰¹ General Marshall may also have been influenced by President Roosevelt's conviction that, if the United States were forced into the war, "we should fight it as far from our own shores as possible and with the greatest number of allies, regardless of ideology."¹⁰² But whatever his reason may have been, in the light of the times, it was an understandable, if regrettable, omission.

For the United States, the requirement for final decisions in the matter of grand strategy did not become urgent until approximately January 1943. From Pearl Harbor until that time, Allied operations were primarily defensive in nature, and as far as United States participation was concerned, were restricted to sea and air activities except for the North African campaign. General Marshall has summarized this period in the following terms:

During the fourth phase the United States and the United Nations were forced to assume a defensive role while mobilizing their strength for a global fight to the finish. Efforts during this period were devoted to the rapid deployment of men and resources to check the momentum of the Axis assaults, while establishing protected lines of communication around the world, and at the same time initiating a vast expansion of our military and naval establishments.¹⁰³

It was at some point in late 1942 or early 1943 that the tide definitely turned against the Axis Powers. By January 1943, it was

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 417.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁰³George C. Marshall, "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1941 to 30 June 1943," The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 63.

apparent that the German offensive in North Africa had been stopped permanently at El Alemain.¹⁰⁴ At this same time, Germany suffered a defeat at Stalingrad from which she would never recover. In the Pacific the tide had been turned with the Battle of the Coral Sea in June 1942.¹⁰⁵ From January 1943 onward, Allied victory was assured, and the strategic decisions made thereafter were to profoundly affect the subsequent peace as well as the course of the war.

The debate over the grand strategy to be employed in the conduct of the war was carried on from the ARCADIA conference of December 1941,¹⁰⁶ until the final decision was made at the Teheran conference in November 1943.¹⁰⁷ From the beginning, there was no question of General Marshall's position in this matter: "It was Marshall's fixed opinion that Hitler's Germany was the primary opponent to be disposed of, and that the best method was to make the main effort a cross-channel amphibious expedition into Hitler's heartland."¹⁰⁸ In the General's own words, "Victory in this global war depended on the successful execution of OVERLORD [i.e., cross-channel invasion]. That must not fail."¹⁰⁹ The alternate strategy, vigorously championed by Mister Churchill from ARCADIA to the Franco-American landings in southern France in August 1944, was the "soft underbelly" approach.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴"World War II," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 23, p. 791R.

¹⁰⁵George C. Marshall, "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1943," The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 80.

¹⁰⁶Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., pp. 99-102.

¹⁰⁷Omar N. Bradley, op. cit., p. 201.

¹⁰⁸R. Ernest Dupuy, ANAFR & Register and Defense Times, 31 Oct. 1959, Vol. 80, p. 25.

¹⁰⁹George C. Marshall, "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1945," in The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 178.

¹¹⁰Hanson W. Baldwin, Great Mistakes Of The War, p. 33.

In Churchill's rhetoric this strategy involved a "surge from the Mediterranean along the historic Belgrade-Warsaw axis"¹¹¹ into the heart of Europe. From May 1942, when President Roosevelt had assured Molotov that the United States hoped to open a second front in Western Europe,¹¹² the Russian position was one of uncompromising opposition to the Churchill view and firm adherence to Marshall's strategy.¹¹³ At Teheran, Stalin personally intervened in behalf of OVERLORD, and it was then that the cross-channel invasion, long advocated by Marshall, "became the irrevocable crux of Allied strategy in the European war."¹¹⁴

Prior to January 1943, General Marshall's opposition to Churchill's strategy is clearly understandable, at least from a military viewpoint. General Bradley states that General Marshall opposed it on the basis that it would "lure us into a day-to-day war without any long-range strategic plan. This wait-and-seeism, he argued, would not win the war."¹¹⁵ After January 1943, however, the debate was carried out against a political background which might have been expected to cause him to reexamine his position, particularly in view of the strategic concepts he had expressed a few months earlier in the Joint Board Report.

It has been said that the Cold War began in the early days of 1943 when the Soviet Union knew it could hold in the war against Germany, and saw the opportunity to expand its influence.¹¹⁶ Immediately following the German invasion of Russia in June 1941, the

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 32.

¹¹²Maurice Matloff and Edwin M. Snell, op. cit., p. 231.

¹¹³Hanson W. Baldwin, op. cit., pp. 32-35.

¹¹⁴Omar N. Bradley, op. cit., p. 201.

¹¹⁵Ibid., p. 191.

¹¹⁶W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 141.

great assumption in Great Britain and the United States was that the Soviet Union could not hold against the Germans for more than a few weeks or months. The United States War Department shared this view.¹¹⁷ At that time, it was General Marshall's view that "In spite of our situation, it was vital that we help both Russia and the United Kingdom for our own security."¹¹⁸ The British soon learned, however, that Stalin was far more interested in the political aspects of an alliance with the West than he was in military aid: "Even with its very life in peril the Soviet government appeared to be more anxious to discuss future frontiers and spheres of influence than to negotiate for military supplies."¹¹⁹ Certainly, after the victory of Stalingrad in January 1943, it was clear that the Soviet Union would share the Allied victory and would be a power to reckon with in post-war Europe.

It was in January 1943 too, that the first of a series of momentous "summit" conferences was held in which decisions vitally affecting the future political order of the world were made.¹²⁰ It was at the end of the Casablanca Conference, held in January 1943, that President Roosevelt dramatically announced unconditional surrender as the basis for ending the war in Europe.¹²¹ The European Advisory Committee, created at the Moscow Conference of October 1943, worked out the occupation zones of Germany, and the isolation of Berlin in the early

¹¹⁷Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., pp. 304-305.

¹¹⁸George C. Marshall, "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1943," in The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 71.

¹¹⁹Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., pp. 310-311.

¹²⁰Frederick L. Schuman, International Politics, p. 194.

¹²¹Hanson W. Baldwin, op. cit., p. 21.

months of 1944.¹²² The decisions to halt the United States armies along the Elbe, the Mulde, and the Enns in the last days of the war were made by General Eisenhower on the basis of political agreements already in existence.¹²³ The net result of these decisions was to lay the foundation for a power vacuum in the center of Europe into which the Soviet Union was certain to move if the Anglo-Saxon Allies did not. Although the Chief of Staff played a very minor role in the discussion of these matters,¹²⁴ there seems little doubt but that the War Department must share the responsibilities for these decisions.¹²⁵

Despite these political realities, General Marshall continued after January 1943, as previously noted, to give unqualified support to the cross-channel strategy. The result was that "the war was so fought as to give Moscow the possibility of dominating the whole region from the Soviet border to the Elbe."¹²⁶ Winston Churchill attributes this to blindness to political realities on the part of both the War and the State Departments;¹²⁷ however, there are strong indications that General Marshall himself was aware of the political consequences of the situation and the strategy he espoused. At the Quebec Conference of August 1943, Harry Hopkins had a document entitled, "Russia's Position" identified only as quoted from "a very high level United

¹²²W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 98.

¹²³Dwight D. Eisenhower, Crusade In Europe, pp. 399-411.

¹²⁴Ray S. Cline, United States Army in World War II, The War Department, Washington Command Post: The Operations Division, pp. 217, 231-233.

¹²⁵Hanson W. Baldwin, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

¹²⁶W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 145.

¹²⁷Winston S. Churchill, Memoirs of the Second World War, pp. 936-938.

States military strategic estimate." In substance, this paper stated that after the war Russia would hold a position of dominance in Europe, that this fact made it absolutely essential that the United States develop and maintain the friendliest possible relations with Russia, and that a major concern of United States efforts in this regard was the prosecution of the war in the Pacific.¹²⁸ Although the authorship of this document cannot be firmly established, Robert Payne attributes it to Marshall.¹²⁹ In any case, it would seem impossible that a document, so identified, could be unknown to the Chief of Staff. In testimony before Congress in the summer of 1943, Marshall said that, while the Chiefs of Staff had not discussed political matters at Casablanca, these considerations were uppermost in his mind at that time.¹³⁰ Thereafter, he tried to get more military planners into the national policy field, and to establish an agency of government to serve as a liaison and coordinator of the various departments of government concerned with policy and strategy.¹³¹ Finally, it has been noted that he came away from the Yalta Conference grim and silent, in striking contrast to the jubilation of President Roosevelt.¹³²

In holding to the cross-channel strategy in the latter war years, therefore, General Marshall seems to have departed knowingly from the strategic concepts of "military professionalism" which figured so

¹²⁸Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., pp. 748-749.

¹²⁹Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 205.

¹³⁰Ray S. Cline, op. cit., p. 313.

¹³¹Ibid., pp. 313-317.

¹³²Robert Payne, pp. 236-237.

prominently in his thinking at the time the Joint Board Report was prepared in September 1942. Victory seems to have supplanted security as his main concern; writing in the summer of 1943, he stated: ". . . every resource we possess is being employed to hasten the hour of victory without undue sacrifice of the lives of our men."¹³³ Payne describes it as "The Rage for Victory."¹³⁴ The rejection of Churchill's strategy, the conclusions of the document, "Russia's Position," and his later determination to come to terms with communism,¹³⁵ would seem to indicate that his old concept of a power balance among nations as the basis of stability had given way to a "faith" in the good intentions of Russia, as a basis of peace. In all of this there appears to be an abandonment of the idea that realistic policy objectives can be the only true basis of strategy.

To understand such a profound change in General Marshall's strategic thinking, it is necessary to recall the circumstances within which he lived and worked. Early in the war, President Roosevelt had made it abundantly clear to the Joint Chiefs that the administration's aim was to win the war in the most efficient manner possible from the strictly military point of view.¹³⁶ Thus, United States wartime policy was dominated by the military requirement of defeating Germany.¹³⁷ There is also the fact that the President exercised a strong influence on his subordinates. Marshall was usually advised in advance of the

¹³³George C. Marshall, "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1941 to June 30, 1943," in The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, p. 104.

¹³⁴Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 191.

¹³⁵Frederick L. Schuman, op. cit., p. 292.

¹³⁶Ray S. Cline, op. cit., p. 313.

¹³⁷W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 145.

President's views on matters being considered, and "Through this subtle process the values and assumptions of the President were gradually written into the thinking of the military Chiefs."¹³⁸ It should also be recalled that, throughout the war, the Kremlin leaders maintained the pretense of collaboration with their Western allies, and it was not until after the war that their aggressive intent became apparent.¹³⁹ In Secretary Stimson's view, for twenty years prior to the war there had been no clash between Soviet and American vital interests, and there was no evident reason why the two nations could not continue their respective policies without clashing.¹⁴⁰ Finally, it should be recalled that a failure to appreciate the nature of Communist ideology as a source of Soviet foreign policy continued to be the most obvious blank area in Marshall's thinking.

¹³⁸Samuel P. Huntington, op. cit., p. 333.

¹³⁹Edgar S. Furness, Jr. and Richard C. Snyder, op. cit., p. 513.

¹⁴⁰Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, op. cit., p. 606.

CHAPTER 3

POST-WAR STRATEGIC THINKING

Much as he may have desired it, the end of the war brought General Marshall no relief from public service. He had scarcely returned to private life after his retirement as Chief of Staff when President Truman found a new and urgent requirement for his talents. So it was that when he flew to China on 19 December 1945¹ as President Truman's Special Representative to that country, he began a new career as a diplomat and statesman which was to last until his final retirement on 12 September 1951.² It was a career that was to bring him face to face with the second great ideological threat to United States security and vital interests in the twentieth century, i.e., communism. It was also, initially, to take him back to a country where he had served a quarter of a century before as an infantry officer.³

In the eighteen years from the time General Marshall left Tientsin in 1927 as an Army officer until his return as Ambassador in 1945, momentous events had occurred in China. Two major threats to China's peace and integrity had arisen, one an external threat in the form of Japanese aggression, the other internal in the form of the rise of Communist power and influence. In her own interests, the United States was to react to both these threats, and General Marshall was to play a vital role in determining the nature and form of that reaction.

¹Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 254.

²"Marshall, George Catlett," Encyclopedia Britannica, Vol. 14, p. 968.

³Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 100.

Japanese aggression against China included the Twenty-One Demands of 1915,⁴ the conquest of Manchuria beginning in 1931,⁵ and the start of undeclared war on China in 1937.⁶ By the summer of 1942, Japanese ambitions, in General Marshall's estimate, had been extended beyond China to include domination of virtually the entire Far East.⁷ The attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941 was an attempt to translate these ambitions into realities through war on the United States.

From the beginning, United States reaction to the Japanese aggression was prompt and effective. The United States protested Japan's Twenty-One Demands as a violation of the traditional American policy of respecting the territorial integrity of China.⁸ In support of the same policy, the United States adopted an attitude of nonrecognition of territorial changes brought about by force in the wake of the Manchurian conquest.⁹ After the undeclared war of 1937, the President made his "quarantine" speech, and in 1939 the United States announced the termination of the Japan-United States Commercial Treaty of 1911.¹⁰ From Pearl Harbor to the end of the war, the complete military defeat of Japan became the principal American objective in the Far East.¹¹

The strategy employed to accomplish the defeat of Japan was that advocated by General Marshall. It was he who was instrumental in

⁴"Chronology of Principle Events," United States Relations With China, based on files of the Dept. of State, p. xxxvii.

⁵Ibid., p. xxxviii.

⁶Ibid.

⁷General Marshall and Admiral Stark, "Joint Board Report," quoted in Robert E. Sherwood, op. cit., p. 414.

⁸Sec. Bryan to Japanese Ambassador, 13 Mar. 1915, Annex 12, United States Relations With China, pp. 430-436.

⁹"Chronology of Principle Events," United States Relations With China, based on files of the Dept of State, p. xxxviii.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, op. cit., p. 617.

making the cardinal decision that the war against Japan should be secondary to the war on Germany.¹² He visualized the quickest way to the defeat of Japan as a series of amphibious assaults across the Pacific spearheaded by the Navy, leading, if necessary, to a final assault on the Japanese home islands. As part of this strategy, he believed that China should be given sufficient support to keep her in the war against Japan.¹³ It was this strategy which led to the total defeat and surrender of Japan on 10 August 1945.¹⁴

The internal threat of communism in China began in May 1921 with the founding at Shanghai of the Communist Party "under the ideological impetus of the Russian revolution."¹⁵ By 1927 the Communists were strong enough to precipitate an open break with the Kuomintang government,¹⁶ and thereafter, even during the period of the popular front of 1936,¹⁷ the Communist leaders pursued a policy and course of action designed to achieve total power in China. As was to become known later, they were acting, not as loyal Chinese, but as agents of Moscow, which for fifty years had worked to extend its influence in the Far East.¹⁸ At the time of the Marshall Mission, the Communists were in a position of ascendancy, while the Nationalist government was declining in strength and influence.¹⁹

¹²Winston S. Churchill, The Grand Alliance, p. 705.

¹³George C. Marshall, "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army, July 1, 1943 to June 30, 1945," in The War Reports, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, pp. 210, 219.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 246.

¹⁵Dean Acheson, Ltr of Transmittal, 30 July 1949, United States Relations with China, based on the files of the Dept. of State, p. v.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 168.

¹⁸Dean Acheson, op. cit., p. xvi.

¹⁹Ibid., p. x.

In the post-war years, the United States was slow in recognizing and reacting to Communist aggression. At the time of the Marshall Mission, there was a strong and prevailing hope in the United States that the wartime alliance with Russia could be continued for the purposes of peace in the post-war period.²⁰ As late as 1945, official reports from certain foreign service officers continued to describe the Chinese Communists as democratic reformers.²¹ At Teheran, Yalta, and Potsdam, Moscow had agreed to "democracy" in the liberated areas of the world.²² Repeatedly, in the latter war years, Patrick J. Hurley, US Ambassador to China, was informed by Stalin and Molotov that the Chinese Communists were not real Communists and that the Soviet Union fully supported the American aim of a unified China under Chiang Kai-shek.²³ These concepts were formally incorporated in the Sino-Soviet Treaty of 14 August 1945.²⁴ All of these considerations lent credence to the basic assumptions of the Marshall Mission: that the civil war in China was an internal matter unrelated to the Soviet policy of expansion, and that cooperation between the Kuomintang and the Chinese Reds could produce a unified, stable government in China.²⁵

General Marshall went to China in December 1945, therefore, for a single objective to be obtained in a specific manner. The objective and the means of obtaining it were clearly enunciated in President

²⁰Ibid., p. viii.

²¹Anthony Kubec, How The Far East Was Lost, p. 323.

²²Frederick L. Schuman, op. cit., p. 514.

²³Edgar S. Furness and Richard C. Snyder, op. cit., p. 533.

²⁴Dean Acheson, op. cit., p. viii.

²⁵Anthony Kubec, op. cit., pp. 325 and 342.

Truman's statement of 15 December 1945: "It is the firm belief of this Government that a strong, united and democratic China is of the utmost importance to the success of this United Nations organization and for world peace."²⁶ The statement also indicated how this objective was to be obtained: through a cessation of hostilities between the conflicting armies, and arrangements for a national conference of all political elements to achieve a unification of the country.²⁷

Although General Marshall later denied writing the President's statement, or establishing the policy, there seems little doubt but that the statement faithfully reflected his personal views.²⁸

General Marshall worked diligently in China for more than a year to accomplish his mission. At times, he seemed close to success, but in the end he recognized there was no hope, and he returned to the United States in January 1947.²⁹ In his concluding statement, he blamed both sides for the failure. He spoke of the "overwhelming suspicion" with which the two parties regarded each other. He criticized both the "reactionaries" who dominated the Kuomintang, and the "dyed-in-the-wool Communists." He expressed the belief that there were liberal elements in both parties, and that "The salvation of the situation . . . would be the assumption of leadership by the liberals in the Government and in the minority parties. . . ."³⁰ Thereafter matters drifted. Having failed in his mission, General Marshall

²⁶Annex 62, United States Relations With China, based on files of the Dept. of State, p. 607.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 607-608.

²⁸Anthony Kubec, op. cit., p. 326.

²⁹Dean Acheson, op. cit., p. xii.

³⁰George C. Marshall, "Text of Marshall's Statement on Situation in China," New York Times, 8 Jan. 1947, p. 3.

seemed to have no other solution.³¹ In 1947 he overruled Wedemeyer's recommendation that the United States give all-out support to Chiang Kai-shek.³² He had apparently long since ruled out a military solution to the China problem. He was certainly aware that public opinion would not tolerate massive military intervention.³³ More basically, he appears to have realized that an ideological conflict does not lend itself to a military solution: repeatedly in 1946 he warned Chiang Kai-shek of the impossibility of solving the Communist problem by force.³⁴ Yet, strangely, the conspiratorial and aggressive nature of communism seemed still to have eluded him.³⁵

General Marshall's second direct encounter with international communism came after his appointment as Secretary of State in early 1947. This time Europe itself was at stake.

Sometime in early 1946, "Stalin must have concluded that the United States regarded the area east of the Elbe (as well as China) as regions of secondary concern, worth the expenditure of diplomacy and even money but not military strength."³⁶ It was at this time that he decided to seize total control of eastern Europe at the expense of Big Three unity,³⁷ and embarked upon an intensified campaign of aggression that was to end with the failure of the Berlin Blockade in April of 1949. In this period, Turkey, Greece, Czechoslovakia,

³¹United States Relations With China, based on files of Dept. of State, p. 280.

³²Sumner Welles, Seven Decisions That Shaped History, p. 170.

³³Dean Acheson, op. cit., p. x.

³⁴Ibid., p. xv.

³⁵Senator Joe McCarthy, op. cit., p. 130.

³⁶W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 167.

³⁷Ibid.

France, and Italy would be subject to pressure, guerrilla warfare, outright conquest, and political machinations by Communists under the guidance and control of Moscow.³⁸ In the beginning of 1947, therefore, the awareness was growing that a dangerous Soviet program of expansion was under way.³⁹ When General Wedemeyer returned from his fact-finding mission to China in July, and identified the Chinese Communists as "tools of Soviet policy,"⁴⁰ the signs were clear and unmistakable that a gigantic program of ideological expansion was beginning,⁴¹ at both ends of Eurasia.

When the British announced their inability to continue to aid Greece and Turkey on 21 February 1947, the United States could wait no longer. On 12 March 1947, President Truman addressed a joint session of Congress, and enunciated what has come to be known as the Truman Doctrine: the United States would not stand by and permit free people to be subjugated by armed minorities or by outside pressure, but would aid these people as necessary to insure that they could work out their own destiny in freedom.⁴² The Great Illusion was over,⁴³ and a policy of containment had its beginning.⁴⁴ Marshall's "long test" of Soviet intentions would continue,⁴⁵ but no longer on the basis of unilateral weakness and trust.

³⁸Ibid., p. 168.

³⁹Ibid., p. 207.

⁴⁰Frederick L. Schuman, op. cit., p. 536.

⁴¹W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 170.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 207-208.

⁴³Ruhl J. Bartlett, The Record of American Diplomacy, p. 721.

⁴⁴Robert Endicott Osgood, Limited War, p. 146.

⁴⁵W. W. Rostow, op. cit., p. 116.

General Marshall was appointed Secretary of State on 21 February 1947,⁴⁶ the same date that the British announcement regarding Greece and Turkey set the United States upon a new course in its relationships with the Communist world. One of his first duties in this new position was to attend the Moscow Conference of the Council of Foreign Minister of 10 March - 24 April 1947 for the purpose of considering peace treaties for Germany and Austria.⁴⁷ At Moscow, Marshall came face to face with Soviet intransigence, obstructionism, and hypocrisy: they proposed a discussion of China, they accused the West of laxness in the demilitarization of Germany, they protested the unification of the American and British zones, and they demanded ten billion dollars in German reparations.⁴⁸ At a particularly stormy session with Stalin on 15 April, Marshall rejected the Russian proposals "categorically."⁴⁹ He left Moscow

convinced that the Soviet government was stalling for time, that it was far from being ready to cooperate in any reasonable scheme for lessening distress and tensions in Europe, and that it was in fact doing all it could to make the existing situation worse.⁵⁰

If the Russians had regarded Marshall as their friend previously, they would have no reason to do so henceforth.

In a long and guarded radio report to the nation made on 28 April 1947, General Marshall carefully analyzed the developing crisis in Europe. The basic problem, in his view, was economic deterioration. In his own words, "The patient is sinking while the

⁴⁶Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 189.

⁴⁷Frederick L. Schuman, op. cit., p. 198.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Harry Bayard Price, The Marshall Plan and Its Meaning, p. 4.

⁵⁰Ibid.

doctors deliberate."⁵¹ He left no doubt but that the Soviet Union fully intended to capitalize on the resulting distress and chaos. He described the Soviet proposals made at Moscow as designed to promote in Germany and in Europe, "a deteriorating economic life," "indefinite American subsidy," and "the inevitable emergence of dictatorship."⁵² Finally, he appealed for American unity and action to meet the crisis.⁵³

General Marshall gave the task of finding a solution to the newly established Policy Planning Staff headed by George F. Kennan on 29 April 1947.⁵⁴ On 23 May, the concept of the European Recovery Program was presented to Marshall in the form of a memorandum. The root of the European difficulty was defined as resulting "in a large part from the disruptive effect of the war on the economic, political, and social structure of Europe and from a profound exhaustion of physical plant and of spiritual vigor. . . ."⁵⁵ Communism was seen as attempting to exploit the situation, but not as a cause of the problem. It made a clear distinction between a plan for the revitalization of Europe, and American support of such a program. The initiative would have to come from the Europeans themselves, and they would have to bear the responsibility for its implementation. It would have to be a joint venture of the participating nations as a group rather than as individuals, and it would have to be sufficient to do the

⁵¹George C. Marshall, "Radio Address," 28 Apr. 1947, text printed in The New York Times, 29 Apr. 1947, p. 4.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Harry Bayard Price, op. cit., p. 21.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 22.

whole job. The part of the United States would be to give friendly help initially, and later support the program. The plan would not be simply a reaction to Communist pressure but a positive and dynamic plan to create a free and stable Europe. The Communist states could join if they chose to do so, but, with or without them, a new Europe based on free institution would be the goal.⁵⁶

In his Harvard Speech of 5 June 1947, General Marshall announced his plan to the world. "Our policy," he said, "is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos."⁵⁷ Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist. He stated that "It would be neither fitting or efficacious for this Government to undertake to draw up unilaterally a program designed to place Europe on its feet economically. This is the business of Europeans."⁵⁸ He promised that "Any government that is willing to assist in the task of recovery will find full cooperation . . . on the part of the United States Government."⁵⁹ He warned that

Any government which maneuvers to block the recovery of other countries cannot expect help from us. Furthermore, governments, political parties, or groups which seek to perpetuate human misery in order to profit therefrom politically or otherwise will encounter the opposition of the United States.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 22-24.

⁵⁷George C. Marshall, "Text of Harvard Speech," The New York Times, 6 June 1947, p. 2.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid.

The results of the Harvard speech were electrifying. Before the Marshall Plan became law on 3 April 1948,⁶¹ sixteen Europeans had met in Paris in July 1947, and by September had drawn up the outline of a four-year program for economic recovery.⁶² In contrast to the enthusiasm of the Western Europeans, the Soviet Union reacted with characteristic violence. At the initial Foreign Ministers conference held in Paris in June, Molotov had attempted to sabotage the basic concept of the plan, and having failed, departed the conference denouncing American "imperialism."⁶³ During the Congressional debate, the Soviets sponsored strikes and riots in France and Italy in protest against American "capitalism." They "had quickly recognized the Marshall Plan as a potential obstacle to the realization of their objectives in Europe."⁶⁴ They could hardly have been unaware that Marshall was the chief architect of that obstacle.

When General Marshall, worn by illness and the burdens of public office, retired as Secretary of State in January 1949,⁶⁵ the full measure of the success of the Marshall Plan was not yet apparent. In years to come it would come to be regarded as, perhaps, his greatest achievement. Time would prove that he had accurately analyzed the problem in Europe and had devised a most effective strategy to meet the threat. It is noteworthy that there is no indication that he ever considered a military solution. He returned to

⁶¹Harry Bayard Price, op. cit., p. 70.

⁶²Ibid., pp. 26-37.

⁶³Ibid., pp. 27-28.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 60.

⁶⁵Robert Payne, op. cit., pp. 311-312.

public life again as Secretary of Defense from September 1950 to September 1951,⁶⁶ but in 1949 his great work had been done. As he left the State Department, he had faced the two great threats to the peace and security of the United States in the twentieth century, Naziism and Communism, and he had played a vital role in developing and implementing the strategy which destroyed the one and contained the other in a vital area of the world. It was an enduring achievement for one man in one lifetime.

⁶⁶Robert Payne, op. cit., p. 312 and p. 323.

CHAPTER 4

THE LESSONS OF MARSHALL'S STRATEGIC THINKING

In the foregoing chapters, an effort has been made to trace the highlights and essential elements of the strategic thinking of General George C. Marshall in the critical period between 1939 and 1949. It is obvious that General Marshall lived and thought in an environment of time and circumstances which is now long past, and which will not prevail again in the future. Nevertheless, in the opinion of the writer, there are lessons of enduring value which can be derived from the strategic thinking of this great soldier in a critical period of history. In this final chapter, these lessons are listed and summarized for the convenience of the reader.

As discussed in previous chapters, General Marshall's strategic thinking during the war and the post-war period contained basic elements which appear to be fundamental to his whole thinking process. Stated in the form of propositions, these elements of strategy can be listed as follows:

1. Military preparedness, in the form of a balanced military force, is essential to United States security in the modern world.
2. In a world of conflicting nation-states, a balance of power continues to be the only time-tested method of achieving international stability.
3. A clear statement of national policy and national objectives is an essential prerequisite to sound strategic planning.

4. An effective global strategy requires the existence at the seat of government of the machinery necessary to measure and correlate all elements of national power: political, economic, psychological, and military.

5. Ideological conflicts conducted on the political, economic, and social order do not lend themselves to a military solution. If all of these propositions are accepted as axiomatic by present-day strategic planners, it should be remembered that they were not so accepted in the period from 1939 to 1949, when General Marshall proposed them.

With specific reference to the present state of the Cold War, there can be seen in General Marshall's strategic thinking, as previously discussed, certain basic assumptions which merit the special consideration of those responsible for United States strategic planning at the present time. Again, by way of summary, they can be stated as follows:

1. The United States cannot fight everywhere at once with equal force.

2. The impetus and the plan for defending freedom must come from the nations under attack, not from the United States.

3. Flourishing free institutions are the stumbling blocks of communism.

A final lesson, which is evident from the discussion of General Marshall's strategic thinking in previous chapters, is the necessity for the military officer concerned with strategic planning to be

knowledgeable in the fields of history and political science. As suggested previously, a lack of understanding of the ideological "isms" of his time appears to be the one "blind spot" in General Marshall's strategic thinking throughout the period discussed. In his case, the occasion and the opportunity for such knowledge was never provided. It need not happen, however, to those who follow him.

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