

## Interview II

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Walter Reed Hospital Presidential Suite  
Washington, D.C.

The text is from GCM Library Xerox 2256; the original is in the NARA, Modern Military, Reference Collection #5035. The interviewers gave Marshall eight sheets of paper that outlined a "Situation" then asked one or more questions about it. The results of the interview were presented as a Memorandum for the Record that was declassified in August 1973.

1. This interview with General Marshall took place in the Presidential Suite at Walter Reed Hospital between about 1630 and 1830, 11 February 1949. No one else was present with General Marshall other than Colonel Guyer and Colonel Donnelly. No notes were taken either by Colonel Guyer or Colonel Donnelly during the course of the interview. General Marshall's views which are set forth below have been reconstructed from the memory of both officers, and the account which follows has been jointly agreed by them as reflecting as faithfully and fully as possible what General Marshall said. It is manifestly not feasible to impose further on General Marshall's time by submitting this record to him and requesting approval or correction.

2. General Marshall was asked if he considered that the President approved ABC-1 and Rainbow 5 even though he withheld any formal signature to this end. General Marshall replied that he did not consider that the President had approved these documents. He said it was a policy to keep matters of this kind away from the President in order to protect him from embarrassment, and in this connection General Marshall called attention that it was not at top military levels at which the ABC-1 staff talks had been held. General Marshall said that ABC-1 was a case of trying to get things started, to interchange views with the British, and to get ready for what might be coming.

3. General Marshall was reminded that in 1941 as well as at the Arcadia Conference after U.S. entry into the war British strategy did not envisage action by large land armies as in World War I. War Department planning, on the other hand, concurrently proceeded on the basis of raising as many as 215 divisions for the purpose of seeking a decisive land decision. In commenting on this difference of view, General Marshall said it had been apparent to the U.S. that the British did not themselves have sufficient manpower. Furthermore, he said, the British felt that the United States was

incapable of raising a large highly trained and effective ground force capably led and ably staffed. General Marshall said the British remembered the American armies they had seen in World War I. They also had in mind the untrained U.S. divisions (the 34th Division) which first arrived in North Ireland early during World War II. The British also remembered the instances of lack of training, errors and confusion which had occurred during TORCH. General Marshall said that four times, even as late as at Cairo, the Prime Minister had thrown up to him doubts as to U.S. forces and contentions that two and a half divisions would be required against each German division. On the last such occasion General Marshall said he had become so provoked that he told the Prime Minister he never wanted to hear this again, and incidentally he never did. General Marshall conceded, however, that especially after Mr. Churchill saw the magnificent forces arriving in western France direct from the United States and when he saw the performance of leadership and staff work by which the U.S. handled whole armies with greater facility than the British might handle a corps, Mr. Churchill became an enthusiast over United States forces. General Marshall said that one of his greatest problems was trying to convince the British that the United States could build up a force of this kind. General Marshall said he missed no opportunity when occasion presented itself to take Mr. Churchill, Mr. Anthony Eden, Lord Louis Mountbatten and other distinguished British visitors to training areas in the United States to convince them of the army that was being built. General Marshall explained, however, that it was not only the British who had doubts and that in the United States levels there were many vigorous opponents who did not believe in building a large United States force and did not believe either that it could be accomplished or that the equipment could be provided if it were. High level opposition precipitated one particular example the long hostility of the Washington Post toward him after he belabored them for an editorial which was hostile to building up U.S. forces and considered the absurdity, as General Marshall termed it, of using Chinese and other armies to fight the war.

4. General Marshall did not consider that any particular individual could be called the originator of the cross-Channel invasion concept. He said it had come to "many of us" at the same time. He considered that President Roosevelt initially and consistently supported the concept whole-heartedly. The President was, however, inclined to overlook at times the necessity of according the operation the priorities required. For example, General Marshall said that when steel allocations were an issue he had had to press the President vigorously for the necessary action to take steel from the Navy program for battleships, etc., in order to get materials necessary for ROUNDUP.

5. General Marshall was asked to state his opinion as to why the British long and consistently opposed the cross-Channel invasion. His reply covered the British lack of manpower and British skepticism as to the fighting quality of U.S. forces and additionally the British recollection of terrible losses which had been previously suffered. General Marshall remarked that Mr. Churchill's personal physician had once confided in him that "You are fighting the battle of the Somme" when talking to Mr. Churchill about the cross-Channel invasion. General Marshall said the British never had forgotten the bloodshed of World War I and Ypers and Passchendaele, or in World War II the fresh

memory of Dunkirk. General Marshall said Sir Alan Brooke almost always alluded to these past occasions when the subject of the cross-Channel invasion came up.

6. General Marshall agreed it was substantially true that TORCH was undertaken primarily because the President insisted on action somewhere in 1942 and the British refused SLEDGEHAMMER. In this connection, General Marshall spoke of the early pressure of the British for GYMNAST, of the Prime Minister always pushing the subject of North Africa, and of the President's fascination for the Prime Minister's daring or unusual side issues. General Marshall said he did not consider that even TORCH could be called an example of the President overriding the strategic recommendations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He explained that prior to the TORCH decision President Roosevelt had strongly supported SLEDGEHAMMER and had sent General Marshall, Admiral King, and Mr. Hopkins to London to insist on Operation SLEDGEHAMMER, although if failing in this to find some other place for U.S. troops to fight in 1942. General Marshall said that TORCH was the only possible course. He said also that it was a political necessity to take some form of early offensive action in view of the succession of setbacks the United Nations had received such as at Singapore and Libya for the British and the Japanese advance in the Pacific.

7. General Marshall considered that the case of China might possibly present other instances in which the President might have overruled the JCS. He mentioned that the President supported Chennault over Stilwell. General Marshall himself wanted to recall Stilwell out of consideration of the embarrassingly difficult situation which had arisen. General Marshall said that Admiral King wanted, however, to have Stilwell where he was because there seemed to be no ready replacement for him. General Marshall commented that when General Stilwell returned to Washington he had given a "miserable" impression, far below the capabilities of so fine and able an officer.

8. General Marshall was asked if in agreeing to HUSKY the Joint Chiefs of Staff felt that this operation would be an end in itself and the British did not have in mind proposing subsequent major operations into Italy or the Balkans or elsewhere in the Mediterranean. General Marshall replied that the Joint Chiefs were ever apprehensive of further British proposals along such lines. He added that [apparently after the war and during General Marshall's tenure as Secretary of State] Mr. Bevin had said that the strategy of the war had been all well and good but that it was still a great mistake not having gone into the Balkans. General Marshall replied to Mr. Bevin that the United States wanted to fight the war and get it over with and that it could not have been countenanced that the United States spend another hundred billion dollars and suffer another half million casualties simply to further British political interests in the Balkan area.

9. General Marshall was asked if he could recall what degree of assurances might or might not have been given to Mr. Molotov in Washington in late May 1942 as to opening a second front in 1942. General Marshall replied that on the occasion this had come up the President has remained unusually silent in approval of the statements General Marshall made. Two interpreters were present, one of them was Mr. Molotov's

own Russian interpreter and the other a U.S. interpreter. General Marshall said bluntly to Molotov that the stringency of opening a second front was shipping and that to help the Soviets and provide them with the aid they wanted shipping was being consumed and lost on the route to Murmansk. General Marshall cited one convoy that had lost twenty-four out of twenty-six vessels [check should be made to verify these figures as well as to ascertain the date of this convoy]. He said he demanded to know of Mr. Molotov "What do you want, the second front or Murmansk? It isn't possible to provide both." General Marshall said he asked the U.S. interpreter if the Russian interpreter had repeated his words fully to Mr. Molotov. The U.S. interpreter replied negatively and was instructed by General Marshall to inform the Russian interpreter to tell Mr. Molotov again exactly what General Marshall had said. It was necessary for General Marshall to insist yet a third time that his words be translated and passed fully and exactly to Mr. Molotov. General Marshall commented that he had later found out that this episode had caused the Russians to trust him because they thought that General Marshall's blunt action had indicated that he was "honest."

10. General Marshall said he had once told General Alexander that U.S. troops might make every mistake in the book but unlike the British they didn't make the same mistake over and over.

11. General Marshall commented that General Eisenhower had appeared somewhat aghast when he had come to Cairo, considering the congenial and brotherly Allied staff which General Eisenhower had painstakingly formed. General Marshall smiled as he recalled that at Cairo General Eisenhower had walked in on CCS arguments so intense that General Marshall said it would have appeared on the surface they were about ready to break up at any moment.

12. General Marshall spoke of the sweep of the 85th and 88th Divisions in Italy in exploiting their breakout and going all the way to Rome. He said that the greatest significance of this event was that the Germans failed to evaluate what had happened and that if they had they would have foreseen and taken measures to prevent later such action in France after the invasion was on, especially by the forces of General Patton.

13. General Marshall stated his belief that had they been available in time one hundred LST's would have shortened the war by at least a year. General Marshall said that one of the most heated arguments at Cairo had been over just twenty-six of these vessels. He said that had we had LST's a long campaign in Italy would probably have never occurred as the assaulting forces would have gone in far to the north around Genoa even to begin with.

14. Operation ANVIL, General Marshall acknowledged, was a bitter and unremitting fight with the British right up to its launching.

15. As to the course of strategic discussions and decisions, General Marshall spoke also of the difficulty of refuting one of the strongest points always made by the British, namely, their contention that pressure on the enemy be kept up and troops not be

left idle. General Marshall said that he considered the period of idleness that would be necessary to build up forces for ROUNDUP and indicated his willingness to have accepted such a situation. He said, however, that the British insisted that the parliament would never have stood for a period of such idleness.

16. General Marshall plainly indicated that he thought an early SLEDGEHAMMER might have been successful. He conceded that it might possibly have been a sacrificial effort to save the Russians during the time when a crisis on the eastern front was expected by September 1942. General Marshall also conceded the small size of U.S. forces he was able to offer at that time and the fact that the bulk of the burden would have been on the British. Nevertheless he emphasized that the Germans had not yet heavily fortified the beaches and their positions in western Europe. General Marshall felt that there would have been at least a good chance of seizing and holding a beachhead which could have been exploited later even though he said such a beachhead would probably have suffered severe air attacks.

17. General Marshall referred to the July 1942 discussions in London when SLEDGEHAMMER was rejected and he had insisted on agreement to a written statement that if TORCH was undertaken BOLERO was out and ROUNDUP would not be possible in 1943. After long argument the British Chiefs of Staff finally agreed to accept this statement but not so Mr. Churchill or the War Cabinet, which had power to approve or disapprove the decisions of the British Chiefs of Staff. General Marshall said he did not give on this point and that the final CCS paper was an example of an agreement reached without approval by the War Cabinet although they knew of and opposed the action that had been taken.

18. In connection with the same document mentioned in the paragraph just above, there was also written in a stipulation that a number of U.S. air groups [fifteen] which had been previously committed to BOLERO could be diverted by the United States to the Pacific. General Marshall said that the words of this statement, however, were not what they appeared to be on their face. He said that he personally had written this stipulation not with the idea of necessarily sending the air groups in question to the Pacific but solely to deny the British a voice in the deployment of those air groups if TORCH were undertaken and BOLERO discontinued. General Marshall said, however, that this particular statement in the paper also caused a subsequent uncomfortable situation when Admiral King considered the wording at its face value as a positive agreement for the diversion of the air groups in question to the Pacific.

19. General Marshall volunteered considerable information on the difficulties that arose logistically due to the lack of warehousing facilities. In the United Kingdom these were so small and scattered that more than two or three times the normal number of Service of Supply troops were required. Even then it was frequent for items to become misplaced and something would be urgently required which had been shipped and received but could not be found. Consequently it was necessary in many instances to rush duplicate shipments. General Marshall also said that later on an attempt was made to eliminate warehousing and ship supplies direct to the decks as at Antwerp and thence

direct to the troops. He said, however, that this had caused a very serious situation during the Battle of the Bulge when great stores and stacks of urgently needed munitions were in the theater of operations but in such confusion that many needed items could not be found. This particular situation had been so serious that General Somervell had hastened over in person to correct it.

20. General Marshall said Mr. Stimson was such an ardent supporter of the cross-Channel invasion that he literally included it in his prayers every night.

21. General Marshall said that he himself had given to Mr. Churchill the news as to the fall of Tobruk. This news arrived during a meeting at the White House at a time when the British had come over to oppose SLEDGEHAMMER and seek agreement that some alternative, preferably GYMNAST, be planned. General Marshall commented on how terribly shaken Mr. Churchill had been at the word regarding Tobruk. From this point on, General Marshall said, all other business stopped and only one consideration was in all minds—what to do to help the British in the disaster that had befallen them in Libya.

22. General Marshall spoke of the early situation in the Pacific in regard to the assortment of Dutch, Australians, Canadians, etc., and the problems of the ABDA Command. General Marshall said he felt it was better to have a unified command under the British than nothing. He had suggested Wavell mainly because although Wavell was a thousand miles or more away he was still closer to the scene than anybody else. General Marshall spoke of the great care in forming ABDA to protect General MacArthur's position and one point in this connection was a stipulation that Wavell was an over-all commander and could not at the same time directly command the forces of his own nation. General Marshall said that this caused considerable embarrassment later on when General MacArthur insisted on acting not only as over-all commander but also as commander of all the forces under him.

23. General Marshall then said he was often as in the dark about what the Navy was doing or planned to do with resources in the Pacific as all the Joint Chiefs of Staff were almost continuously in the dark as to what the British were doing or planned to do with resources virtually anywhere. He cited as one example discovery of the fact that the British were suing landing craft in some sort of patrol duty in U.K. waters. General Marshall observed that this was "convenient" but not what landing craft were intended for.

24. General Marshall said he had long offered unity of command to the Navy in Alaska but that they did not want it. He said that when the proposition came up for the Army to exercise unity of command in Panama the Navy had prepared a long list of conditions to be met. These, however, the Navy withdrew when they saw that the Army had stated no objections to a similar proposition of unity of command by the Navy in Hawaii.

25. General Marshall spoke of the long ingrained traditional skill of the British in the committee system and readily cited the early weaknesses of the United States in

operating under this procedure. He mentioned especially the occasion of the Casablanca Conference and the freshman innocence of United States participators.

26. General Marshall emphasized that it was Sir John Dill who made the CCS a success which it could never have been without him. So closely did Dill see and share the American view that he became increasingly in bad grace at home with the British. General Marshall said that at Casablanca, for example, Dill was muzzled and was not allowed to talk. General Marshall further spoke of how he and Dill often sat together drafting cables which Dill would send to London and would present American views that General Marshall would otherwise have had difficulty in making known. General Marshall said that Sir John's affinities for the Americans had become so recognized that he was about to be recalled at the time he died. General Marshall said that at this same time he had already been successful in having American honorary degrees bestowed upon Dill and that a great many more were already in the offing at the time of his death. General Marshall spoke of Sir John Dill with the utmost admiration and personal affection.

27. General Marshall said that much differences between the Army and Navy arose over intelligence. On one occasion a high ranking naval officer (not Admiral King, General Marshall specified) had said that a Joint Intelligence Committee would be set up "only over my dead body." General Marshall said he had replied that he was sorry to see so young a man must die but that there would be a Joint Intelligence Committee. General Marshall said, however, that he and Admiral King constantly tried but never got the "peculiar" intelligence people to function peaceably and properly.

28. General Marshall felt that Mr. Sherwood's recent book on Hopkins-Roosevelt should never have appeared in the form and content in which it was published. He said it seemed apparent that Mr. Hopkins had kept copies and had had copies made of documents which he should never have retained and which should not have been used.

29. General Marshall highly complimented Mr. Hopkins, however, on the great support he had given on one particular occasion when the question of munitions assignments was under consideration. General Marshall had learned to his horror that the President had agreed with the Prime Minister to set up Mr. Hopkins and Lord Beaverbrook in control over munitions assignments on a co-equal level to the Combined Chiefs of Staff. General Marshall told the President he would not be responsible for the outcome if such an agreement were consummated and told the President it would be an unacceptable situation for the CCS to have to go to Beaverbrook and Hopkins and ask for the munitions they needed while at the same time a large degree of control over American munitions would be in the hands of the British in London. General Marshall said that although Mr. Hopkins might have satisfied great personal ambitions by supporting the agreement as it had been prepared he quickly saw General Marshall's point, agreed with General Marshall, and took General Marshall's side in opposing the matter before the President. At the time this conversation was taking place the Prime Minister, Lord Beaverbrook, and the British Chiefs of Staff happened to file into the room. The Prime Minister was much upset when the President told him that this particular point of the

proposed agreement needed further discussion, and the President now supported the objections General Marshall had raised. General Marshall said he felt that the President would not have accepted his opposition to the point had it not been for Hopkins' intercession since the British were about to return to London, the point had to be settled then and there and Churchill gave in reluctantly. The General stated that he also felt it was this episode which may have later caused Lord Beaverbrook's resignation from the Cabinet.

30. General Marshall spoke of Mr. Churchill's custom of having him completely alone at dinner on the first night of arrival at the big plenary meetings. The Prime Minister's purpose, of course, was to feel out General Marshall and try to sell him Mr. Churchill's own point of view before the meetings commenced. General Marshall said that on one occasion he had been reading Macaulay while enroute to the conference and at the usual twosome dinner he had mentioned this fact and it had turned out that Macaulay was a great favorite of the Prime Minister. So enthusiastic in fact had Mr. Churchill become that he had risen from the table and while striding the floor had orated, verbatim, passage after passage from Macaulay. General Marshall reminisced with much amusement how the Prime Minister's enthusiasm had kept him occupied in this manner until suddenly it was past midnight and he had still not settled down to business. The lateness of the hour resulted in General Marshall respectfully saying good night and departing, with the Prime Minister well satisfied about Macaulay but entirely frustrated about working on General Marshall.

31. General Marshall spoke of the manner in which General Arnold became established by him as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. General Marshall said one of his own problems was to avoid getting into discussions as to the possible co-equality of the Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics in the Navy Department and the question as to whether this individual should also sit with the Chiefs of Staff. General Marshall said he simply brought General Arnold's real in as Sir Charles Portal's opposite number. He said that General Arnold's real status as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff did not actually date until later when General Marshall himself was able to write into a Presidential Message to Congress a phrase which stated that the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff consisted of General Marshall, Admiral King, and General Arnold. General Marshall said that although General Arnold sat as a member of the JCS it should be recognized that throughout the war he was a subordinate to General Marshall in the War Department. General Marshall said his policy, however, was to give General Arnold as much latitude as possible as a co-equal and not to exercise control over him or intervene unless it was absolutely necessary to do so. General Marshall said that in the early days such occasions had not infrequently arisen due to the early inexperience and lack of quality of the young Air Staff which would put General Arnold up to some "half-baked" propositions. General Marshall said he realized that in the early days most air officers were naturally primarily interested in flying and not in staff duties. He commented upon the later high excellence of the Air Staff when it was composed of young officers with plenty of combat experience.

32. General Marshall discussed the manner in which Admiral Leahy became added as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He said that when meetings originally began he found himself in the embarrassing position of having to act as chairman at meetings at which there would arise controversial questions that had already concerned him in his capacity as Chief of Staff in interdepartmental business with the Navy. General Marshall said he began about in February trying to correct this situation by adding an additional and relatively disinterested member. He had thought of Admiral Leahy because there was no Army officer whom General Marshall thought would be suitable and furthermore he did not believe that President Roosevelt would have accepted an Army officer. Furthermore General Marshall said he had had the highest regard and confidence in Admiral Leahy's wisdom, experience, and integrity as an unbiased individual. General Marshall said that when he began proposing to the President that he have a Chief of Staff, Mr. Roosevelt would answer by saying "Why? You are my Chief of Staff." General Marshall said he replied to the President that he was only the Chief of Staff of the Army and that there was a Navy also to consider. General Marshall said it took him nearly six months to sell the President on this idea. General Marshall said that understandably there was Navy opposition to Admiral Leahy's appointment as Chief of Staff to the President because of fears that such action would preempt the position of Chief of Naval Operations and Commander in Chief of the U.S. Fleet as principal adviser to the President on naval matters. General Marshall pointed out, however, that such fears proved groundless. General Marshall said he was abroad when the President released a press announcement of Admiral Leahy's appointment and referred to the new Chief of Staff as being his "leg man." This horrified General Marshall, who, of course, had no such position in mind for Admiral Leahy. General Marshall said he cabled back immediately to have an office fixed up for Admiral Leahy. Upon his return he saw to it that a place was prepared for Admiral Leahy at the head of the table as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and he was there seated by General Marshall much to Admiral King's displeasure although the situation worked out as one of harmony.

33. General Marshall said that Admiral Leahy in his relations with the President was able to keep himself considerably well informed on political matters. These, however, he usually retained to himself except for informing the Joint Chiefs of Staff from time to time upon particular matters of which he felt they should be aware.

34. General Marshall said it was the Planners who raised the issue that the Joint Chiefs of Staff should have a charter. General Marshall said he objected on the grounds that the Joint Chiefs of Staff were getting along all right as things were and that if their functions were put down in writing in the form of a charter there would arise in all certainty questions as to what the Joint Chiefs could or could not do. In this further connection, General Marshall said the status of the joint Board was simply forgotten about. General Marshall said a workable system had been established in the JCS and that he himself got thoroughly tired of hearing about the Joint Board when questions were brought up as to what should be done about it.

35. General Marshall spoke of the invaluable services rendered by Lt Colonel Florence Newsome in his office. When Colonel Newsome assumed the task of briefing General

Marshall on various matters, he would inquire of her, he said, as to what General Arnold or General Somervell or someone else thought of the particular matter at hand. This led to Colonel Newsome's going to see General Arnold or General Somervell and briefing them as to General Marshall's views in addition to obtaining their own views. Praising the ableness and tact of this WAC officer, General Marshall said she was of invaluable service in this regard and it was not long until General Arnold and General Somervell would literally cancel all other appointments in order to receive her.

36. General Marshall dwelled on his insistence and his own absolute confidence that troops could be so superbly trained that in their first battle engagement they could cope with, and succeed against, any enemy. He spoke of his categorical directives to commanders that this was what was to be accomplished and that it could and must be done. He spoke of the great training areas made possible by the vast expanse of the United States and the great value of the maneuver areas such as Louisiana. He spoke also of Mr. Churchill's astonishment at first seeing United States paratroops in particular. He remarked that when General Clark was made American commander in Italy he was emphatically told by General Marshall that his problem would be to obtain an initial victory with new troops and that no excuse on the grounds that the troops were new or untrained would be acceptable. The resulting success of the 85th and 88th Divisions was a fact of historical significance. The General also mentioned the comparative difficulties of training infantry versus seamen. The latter are aboard a ship, and each man, without possibility of retreat, has a battle station, but infantry, in combat, are hard to control. General Marshall averred that an infantry regiment is the hardest unit to train properly and there probably has never been a perfectly trained infantry regiment.

37. General Marshall said he had offered the 10th Mountain Division to General Eisenhower for OVERLORD but it had been declined on the grounds that, having an irregular or non-standard T/O and E, it could not be transported efficiently by the Navy. The division went to General Clark and made a fine record. Later General Eisenhower asked General Marshall orally for the 10th Division. General Marshall said it would be unfair to General Clark and besides General Eisenhower was inconsistent; he had already declined the division. General Eisenhower looked astonished; he always prided himself on, at least, being consistent. He said it was the first he had heard of it. Turning to General Bull, his G-3, he said, "How about it, Bull?" General Bull flushed to the crown of his head. He had taken action on his own responsibility. The 10th Division was not taken away from General Clark.

38. General Marshall spoke of his close and pleasant relationship with Admiral Stark and of their deep and lasting friendship.

39. General Marshall said that he is not going to write any memoirs. He said that without facts such a work is not history and that the facts cannot be included without opening old wounds or causing hurts or misunderstandings or resulting in grievances and troubles. General Marshall remarked that he has had enough troubles already.

40. For the same reason that General Marshall does not intend to prepare any memoirs he emphasized that he does not wish to be quoted on information he had given the interviewers on these questions or might give on subsequent occasions. He said he realized that it was the task of the JCS historians to get behind the real events and opinions which lay behind the documents and beneath the apparent surface. He indicated that he would be glad to help to this end but that at the same time he does not wish to be directly quoted such that the result might have the same consequences which he himself intended to avoid by not writing any memoirs of his own.