

Air and Space this Week

Item of the Week

THE MARSHALL PLAN AT 75

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Marshall Plan Secretary of State Secretary of Defense *USS Marshall (SSBN-654)*

The 75th anniversary of the lecture by George Marshall outlining his ideas for a post-WWII recovery program that bears his name was last week, on June 5.

The Marshall Plan was not strictly an aviation, astronomy, or Space exploration topic. However, the assistance the Plan gave to the post-War recovery in Europe had implications for the restoration of commercial aviation and other economic/industrial growth that affected the post-War infrastructure that made advances possible in all of the topics covered by A+StW.

I normally try to mix up the themes of the Items of the Week, but the calendar gave us a number of anniversaries of note these last few months or so (80th of Coral Sea and Midway, 78th of D-Day, so it's only appropriate that I close them out with an outline of the Plan and how it affected things after the War.

GEORGE C. MARSHALL

George Catlett Marshall was born on December 31, 1880, in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, where his father was in the coal business. He wanted a military career, but his grades were mediocre. He knew he would have no chance for an appointment to West Point, so he opted for the school his older brother had attended, Virginia Military Institute. His grades were still average at best, but he aced the bravery and military discipline requirements. He would attain the rank of first captain (highest available), but graduated 15th of 34 in the Class of 1901. He excelled at football, and was one of the few in his class to actually earn a Bachelor's degree.

The United States became embroiled in the Spanish-American War with the turn of the century. Marshall had become the Commandant of Students at Danville (Va.) Military Institute, but he took the competitive exam for officers as the Army expanded. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant in February, 1902, and soon after that got married and shipped out to the Philippines.

Marshall served in a series of increasingly-responsible posts after his combat in the Philippines, and received specialty schooling along the way, culminating by finishing first in the 1908 Army Staff War College class. His advancement continued during the years before WWI.

When war broke out in Europe, Marshall's CO, a former Army Chief of Staff, was made commander of the Department of the East. Marshall's first assignment was to help oversee the mobilization of the Army's 1st Division, troops earmarked for service in France. His career would get a boost in late 1917, when notoriously-cantankerous General Pershing came to inspect the 1st Division. Pershing was not impressed and began berating the Division officers. Marshall stood up for his boss, pointing out a number of factors of which Pershing was not aware. Rather than punish Marshall for his boldness, Pershing was impressed and began to go to Marshall for advice and counsel. He garnered further notice with his planning and performance at the Battle of Cantigny in late May, 1918. He was awarded the Citation Star (precursor to the Army's Silver Star) in recognition of his performance.

Within a few months, Pershing's respect for Marshall's planning skills caused him to ask Marshall to join his staff as G-3 (overseeing operations and training). Expanding responsibilities kept coming his way, and at the end of the War he became the Chief of Staff for the Eighth Corps. In 1919, he was named as Pershing's aide-de-camp, and he taught at the Army War College and was a key planner in the War Department. Promotions continued. But sadly, the high school sweetheart he married in 1902 passed away in 1927.

After his wife's death, Marshall became the Assistant Commandant of the Fort Benning Infantry School. Forward-lookers in the Army could tell that another war was likely coming, and they began to plan for it. Marshall was smack in the middle of that planning, he worked to transform Army infantry tactics from massed set-piece affairs to assault by small units, emphasizing firepower and maneuverability. He knew there'd not be static trench warfare the next time around. The Infantry School produced many of the leaders the Army would rely upon in World War II.

Marshall would meet and marry a widow with three children while he was stationed at Ft. Benning. One may take as an indication of Pershing's respect for Marshall the fact that Pershing served as Marshall's Best Man in that wedding.

The Depression years were a slow time for the U.S. military. Marshall served a two-year assignment with the CCC and after that served as a senior instructor with the Illinois National Guard. The advances he made in officer training and emphasis on excellence in command earned him a promotion to brigadier general in 1936. He took command of the 5th Brigade of the 3rd Infantry Division, stationed near Portland, Oregon, an ideal stepping stone to higher rank. At the same time, Marshall was also responsible for 35 CCC camps in Oregon and Washington. He was busy, but he liked the duty, and he and his new family loved living in the Pacific Northwest.

War clouds continued to build in the late 1930s, and Marshall got a plum assignment, even though it meant giving up his command of troops and moving to the other Washington – DC. He was named Head of the War Plans Division at Army HQ in July, 1938, and would soon become an Army Deputy Chief of Staff.

Marshall's standing up to Pershing's unjust criticism was a major turning point in his career. Soon would come another.

Strong isolationist sentiment existed in the U.S., and even those leaders more attuned to the importance of an international perspective were thinking of ways to keep any future world-wide conflict away from U.S. shores. FDR called for a White House conference on how the U.S. should prepare for any coming future conflict. One of the ideas FDR floated was to supply European democracies with 10,000 aircraft for their defense. No mention was made of potential difficulties with that plan, in terms of pilot training, logistical obstacles, and how that many planes would compete with other essential wartime industries. FDR polled the attendees for their thoughts, and Marshall was shocked when nobody pointed out the obvious implementation problems the 10,000-plane plan would pose. When FDR got to him, Marshall let him have a terse, but respectful, disapproval. Like Pershing, FDR didn't seek revenge against Marshall, he sought Marshall's advice and counsel. FDR was deeply impressed with Marshall's knowledge and forthright honesty, and would make him the Army's Chief of Staff in April, 1939, jumping him over many more-senior officers. It would prove to be a truly inspired choice.

WORLD WAR II

Marshall would oversee the logistics of the largest military expansion in U.S. history. He was extremely organized, inspired his subordinates, had a great aptitude for recognizing talent. Among the generals whose career he advanced were Eisenhower, Patton, and Bradley. He faced many difficulties with the 40-fold expansion authorized, and strove to make the Army even larger than that, but that idea was negated due to the need for manpower in key defense industries. While most of his personnel recommendations he made were outstanding, there were a couple of clinkers that got through, including the commander that got his tanks beaten at Kasserine Pass.

FDR's admiration for Marshall was a double-edged sword. When time came to plan for Operation Overlord (the D-Day invasion of Normandy), Marshall did not get the job, Eisenhower did. FDR did not want Marshall to get away from the Pentagon. FDR cushioned any hurt feelings on Marshall's part by making Marshall a Five-star General, with the title "General of the Army."

Time Magazine made General Marshall its Man of the Year for 1943. He resigned as Army Chief of Staff (but did not retire, it was protocol for all who served as Chief of Staff that they would be on active duty for life). Eisenhower succeeded Marshall as Chief of Staff, on his way to the Presidency.

Immediately after V-J Day, the resumption of a civil war loomed in China, with communists under Mao fighting with nationalists led by Chian Kai-shek. Marshall had served a stint in China early in his career, so President Truman asked Marshall to go to China and try to broker a coalition government. Not surprisingly, both sides rejected any notion of "coalition," and Marshall returned home in January, 1947. FDR understood that failure in this case was unavoidable, and named Marshall **Secretary of State** upon his return. Always willing to call things as he saw them, Marshall's views on China were completely opposite of those of most

of the staff at State, and those of the Defense Department. Marshall saw the resolution of the China problem was not a priority, and Chiang's success was not a vital American interest.

THE POST-WAR ENVIRONMENT AND NEED FOR RECOVERY

Europe lay in ruins at the end of WWII. Victor and vanquished alike suffered severe economic dislocation, their cities were in chaos, and millions of survivors faced famine. Human suffering was everywhere. Adding to the general misery, the Soviet Union began exerting ever-tighter control over eastern Europe. The United States faced the twin crises of aiding Europe's economic recovery and blocking Soviet expansionism.

America was finished with isolationism; like it or not, America was now the leader of the Free World, and most realized that it was in America's best interest to help avoid punitive actions like those after WWI that led directly to the rise of Nazi Germany and WWII.

President Truman codified our nation's approach on March 12, 1947, when he laid out his plans for the future before a joint session of Congress. His Truman Doctrine stated that the U.S. "would provide political, military, and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces." The immediate impetus for this policy came from the impending halt of British support to Greece to help them fight off the Greek Communist Party. Truman asked Congress for financial support for Greece, and Turkey, at the same time he moved against Russian plans.

Thus, the foundation was laid for the Cold War to come.

But stopping Soviet expansion didn't solve the economic and logistical problems faced by a recovering Europe.

Secretary of State Marshall's goal was to have the European nations come up with an economic recovery plan, and have the U.S. pay a big chunk of its cost.

Marshall laid out his ideas about the reconstruction and recovery of Europe in a speech he made at Harvard on June 5, 1947. President Truman sent Congress a message on December 19, 1947, urging them to pass the Economic Cooperation Act of 1948, which codified Marshall's thinking. Truman signed it into law on April 3, 1948. However, nobody called it by its legal name.

Instead, the Act became known as the "Marshall Plan." It made him *Time Magazine's* Man of the Year for 1948 (recall he had already been similarly honored for 1943, too!) and would win him the Nobel Peace Prize for 1953.

Marshall was now in his late 60s and was beginning to suffer ill health. He had been shouldering huge tasks and responsibilities for over a decade and was getting tired. He retired from the Army and was given the largely-honorary titles of being the head of the American Battle Monuments Commission and the U.S. Red Cross.

Then came the Korean Conflict. The U.S. military had demobilized quickly after V-J Day, and the Army and other services were woefully unprepared to fight. Heavy American losses early in the

fighting shocked Truman, and in response he fired the **Secretary of Defense**, Louis Johnson, and named Marshall his replacement. Since Marshall had been Army Chief of Staff, and was on Army active duty for life, that promotion required special dispensation from Congress, because the Secretary of Defense was supposed to be a civilian, not a military officer. Marshall was successful in infusing new leadership and rebuilding the relationships between Defense and State, and between SecDef and the Joint Chiefs.

THE GREATNESS OF A NATION IS TIED TO ITS GOODNESS

Marshall Plan

The United States did not have to help its former enemies recover, or its allies either, for that matter. But we did. It wasn't enough that the United States played a key role in victory, it also played a key role in the peace that followed, and the Plan was a big part of that.

George Marshall was a big believer in honor and integrity. His support for Chiang Kai-Shek is an example; he felt that the United States was honor-bound to the wartime commitments made to him (but he still didn't think that keeping Chiang in power was a "vital" U.S. interest).

Over the course of the Plan, over \$13 billion had been transferred to Europe and distributed to the 17 countries benefitting from it. As a direct consequence, Europe's GNP rose by a third, industrial production increased by 40%, and by 1953, trade between European countries increased almost 40%. No wonder they needed air travel!

Diplomatic Sensitivity

Marshall's skills as a diplomat were almost as stellar as his skills as a general officer, even though he was at times overruled. The Netherlands was set to invade Indonesia to restore its dominance lost in 1945 when Indonesia declared its independence. No positive action was taken until Truman, no doubt with Marshall's urging, used the cessation of Plan funding to the Netherlands to get their attention.

Marshall did oppose the creation of the nation of Israel in 1948, because he felt it would immediately lead to war, which it did.

Marshall brought the same level of sensitivity to his service as Secretary of Defense. One example of this was his adroit handling of the situation in Korea, where he upgraded all aspects of U.S. military operations there, without causing political problems. He authorized MacArthur to conduct operations above the 38th Parallel, but counseled against inflaming the situation to the point that would generate negative votes in the U.N. that would undermine the initial U.N. mandate to stop North Korean aggression. After Chinese troops entered combat in support of the North, Marshall held that the U.S. had a moral obligation to support the South, and opposed any concessions to the Chinese, because he knew that it would weaken the U.S. position. However, he also opposed a greater U.S. involvement in Korea, because he believed that containing the USSR was more important. Marshall was also instrumental in the removal of Douglas MacArthur from command in Korea, for making a series of inflammatory comments in direct opposition to Truman's statements about the Conflict. Truman had polled the Joint

Chiefs, Secretary of State Dean Acheson, and advisor Averell Harriman on their recommendation for MacArthur's future. Harriman wanted him out, Bradley wanted him to stay. The Joint Chiefs, and Marshall, agreed MacArthur must be relieved, because if he weren't, many Americans would conclude that civil authorities had lost control of the military.

RESTORATION OF COMMERCIAL AVIATION

This blog is about topics in aviation, astronomy, and Space exploration; so what is the link between those and General Marshall and his Plan? Remember, Europe was in shambles after the War. Famine and poverty were rampant, even among the victors. Some may debate the fullness of the impact of the Marshall Plan, but there is no doubt that the funding released under it saved many lives in Europe, helped them restore their economies sooner than would have happened without the Plan, created a great amount of goodwill for the United States, and cemented the United States' position as the "leader of the Free World."

A good example of how the various countries got a good start on their recovery of the War is found in the restoration of civil national airlines at the same time the Plan went into effect. The region's economic recovery and these new companies went hand-in-hand.

In the UK in the 1930s, there were a number of small air transport companies. They were nationalized and merged to form the British Overseas Airways Company (BOAC) on April 1, 1940. Almost all civil air transport was suspended for the duration, with BOAC personnel and equipment put to War use. After the War, BOAC was reactivated as a government-run civil airline, with a small fleet of War-worn planes. After the Plan was implemented, BOAC was able to get more appropriate aircraft and their business did well.

Italy's story was similar. The Plan helped stabilize the Italian economy, and Alitalia was created in May, 1947, and began domestic flight operations soon thereafter. By July, it was making a foray into international flights.

Even Germany's air transport capability was able to grow under the Plan. Lufthansa had been established in 1926, and continued in one form or another until it was shut down at the end of WWII. With their economy coming back, the Germans started a commercial airline in January, 1953. At that time, West Germany did not control its airspace, and the new company, Luftag, could not operate. That didn't stop them from hiring staff (many were former pre-War Lufthansa personnel), ordering some new planes, and setting up a logistical support system that could serve a domestic airline. Luftag bought the rights to the "Lufthansa" name in August, 1954, and got clearance to start operations in April, 1955. International flights started a month later.

In all three cases, a national airline service would have been created after the War, Plan or no Plan. However, these companies were able to start operations as their nation's economy started recovering, and that recovery generated business. Their subsequent growth help illustrate the Plan's value.

NO GREATER MEMORIAL

There has always been a (usually) good-natured rivalry between the Army and the Navy, and not just on the football field. A little such is a good thing, when it gets to the point that inter-Service cooperation is impeded, as it was in Wartime Japan, it can be fatal.

Perhaps the greatest recognition of General Marshall's military reputation was the fact that the Navy named one of their ballistic missile submarines after him, a Benjamin Franklin class (SSBN-654) sub commissioned on April 29, 1966, with his wife as sponsor. There was a change in submarines caused by the loss of the *USS Thresher*, and the *USS Marshall* was the first "boomer" to be built from scratch using the SUBSAFE program.

BTW, NASA went through a similar process after the *Challenger* disaster that the Navy went through with SUBSAFE, and the two organizations worked together to create a NASA-specific SUBSAFE-type program.

George Marshall retired after 49 years of service to America, in September, 1951. He tended to his garden and his only reappearance in public life came in June, 1953, when now-President Eisenhower appointed him to lead the U.S. delegation to the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. He was so appreciated by the British that he was invited to the post-coronation banquet at Buckingham Palace, where he was the only non-royal seated at the new Queen's table.

George Marshall died at Walter Reed Hospital on October 16, 1959. He was, of course, buried at Arlington National Cemetery. In addition to his place in history, the George C. Marshall Foundation and the George C. Marshall International Center preserve his legacy.

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