

Wash Star
14 Sept 50

Gen. Marshall Called The Right Man for The Wrong Job

Should Be Named Head
Of Joint Staff Chiefs,
Columnist Contends

By David Lawrence

President Truman has called back to service the right man—but for the wrong job.

Gen. Marshall should have been appointed chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff rather than Secretary of Defense. For the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff are primarily responsible for the debacle in Korea.

To put Mr. Marshall, a former commander of our armed services, in a civilian job to receive advice from a Joint Chiefs of Staff whose military knowledge and experience in global operations are no less than his own is to throw confusion into the whole defense establishment.

Just where does the civilian judgment and military influence of Mr. Marshall begin and end? Where does the military judgment of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff begin and end? What is the line of demarcation? How can Gens. Collins, Vandenberg and Bradley, who served as subordinates under Gen. Marshall, tell their former superior what they would tell him if he were a civilian official of the Government, as Congress intended the Secretary of Defense to be?

Prowess Is Military.

General Marshall is a military leader with an estimable personality. No one in public life in recent years has earned as much respect or won the affection of so many people inside and outside of official life in Washington as has George Marshall. But his prowess is military, and it was never intended by Congress—nor is it in keeping with American tradition—that civilian control over the military establishment should be surrendered even in time of crisis.

The Constitution designates a civilian and not a military man to be the Commander-in-Chief of our Army and Navy. What is happening today is that President Truman, sensitive to criticism because he has fallen down on his own job, is trying to overcome that criticism by selecting a man to whom he now will virtually delegate his post as Commander-in-Chief.

This Changing World

Dangerous Precedent Seen in Revision
Of Security Act to Give Marshall Post

By Constantine Brown

The majority of Congress, like the rest of the country, indorses heartily President Truman's selection of Gen. Marshall as Secretary of Defense.

The wave of criticism of Louis Johnson's administration of that department in recent months has infiltrated even the ranks of the armed forces, which Mr. Johnson frequently handled with a heavy hand.

While the passage of an amendment to the National Security Act to permit a member of the armed forces to head the Defense Department is taken for granted, because of Gen. Marshall's prestige, many Congressmen wonder whether it is wise, particularly in these troubled times, to change one of the fundamental principles of the law.

"Man on Horseback" Feared.

The National Security Act was one of the most hotly debated pieces of legislation when it was presented to Congress by the administration. There were long and well-thought out discussions, both in committee and on the floors of both houses.

The provision that no officer could be appointed Secretary of Defense unless he had been retired from the armed forces for at least 10 years, was put into the law with the specific objective of preventing a "man on horseback" from threatening the democratic institutions of this country.

It was an important safeguard inserted into a law which Congress had reason to believe would remain on the United States statute books for a long time. It was the intention of both the legislative and the executive branches of the government to avoid the possibility, however remote, that a high-ranking officer, who could command the obedience of the armed forces, some day would become the foremost power in this country.

This thought does not apply to Gen. Marshall, of course. The wartime Army Chief of Staff had hoped to stay out of the limelight

after he finished his job in World War II. It was his sense of duty to his commander in chief which prompted him to accept the thankless task of special ambassador to China. The same sense of duty induced him to become Secretary of State for a short time.

When Gen. Marshall left the State Department he had every reason to expect that he could spend the rest of his days quietly and away from new and heavy responsibilities. Again it was President Truman's pressing request which persuaded him to abandon his rest and accept the burdensome job as Secretary of Defense.

Gen. Marshall did not seek his new job, any more than he sought the position as special ambassador to China or as Secretary of State. But while all this is true, amendment of the National Security Act, to permit members of the armed forces to head the Defense Department, is fraught with danger, unless Congress changes the law everytime a new secretary is appointed.

"Urges" In Time of Stress.

Insofar as is known there are no generals or admirals in the United States who have tendencies toward political dictatorship. But such "urges" appear generally in times of great national stress, when things are going very badly for the country.

History in other parts of the world shows that some dictators have been the best-intentioned and most patriotic of men. They sincerely believed they were acting unselfishly and for the good of their country. While a civilian would have difficulty lining up the armed forces behind him, the spirit of discipline in all branches of the military service would compel them—in the hypothetical event of a coup d'etat—to follow one of their own commanders.

It was this very remote possibility which decided our lawmakers to put into the law the very definite and formal prohibition that no military man could head the armed services unless he had been separated from the service for 10 years.

It will thus be necessary for Congress to revise radically the National Security Act of 1947 to enable President Truman to appoint Gen. Marshall as Defense Secretary. This may establish a dangerous precedent.



Constantine Brown

This may satisfy political requirements for a few weeks before the Congressional elections, but it will not last long as a solution. The new set-up will demoralize the Army, Navy and Air Force on the civilian side. For how can the Secretary of the Navy, the Secretary of the Army and the Secretary of the Air Force match their judgment of what ought to be done in civilian matters related to defense if the boss is a military man who tells them what to do?

President Truman could have appointed Gordon Gray, former Secretary of the Army, to be Secretary of Defense and Gen. Marshall to be chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. That would have been an ideal set-up. Few civilians who have served at the Pentagon have the practical knowledge and breadth of vision possessed by Mr. Gray. The President, on the other hand, might have selected for the defense post Representative Carl Vinson of Georgia, Democrat, who is chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and who knows more details of the defense problem than any other man in Washington. So it wasn't for lack of material that Mr. Truman turned to Gen. Marshall.

Likes to Delegate Power.

The President likes to delegate to cabinet officers complete power and divert attention from his own shortcomings. Then, when they make mistakes, as did Louis Johnson, he lets them take all the blame for decisions which, in the final analysis, he should have made himself.

Secretary Johnson did make serious mistakes. This correspondent in the past has pointed them out. But, so far as Korea is concerned, Mr. Johnson is the scapegoat for the mistakes made by the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff who by their votes scuttled the Marine Corps, scuttled the overseas bases needed for Far Eastern operations and spent 50 billions in the last four years on a narrow theory—a risk that the only way wars would be fought in the future would be from the air.

The error in concept which has upset America's defense program, demonstrated in Korea, was not that of Louis Johnson. It was the strategic concept of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff, dominated by Gens. Bradley and Vandenberg, which has been found wanting.

To put Gen. Marshall in as Secretary of Defense is perhaps to solve some delicate problems in the relations between the Defense Department and the State Department and to make easier the proposed abandonment of China to the Communists. But it will not bolster the morale of the three civilian secretaries who are now made subordinates of a military man. Nor will it aid the broad cause of unification under civilian control. It is a mistake that can be rectified only by making Gen. Marshall the military head of our armed services, where he can serve best.

If Congress amends the law permitting a military man to control our whole defense set-up, it will be setting a precedent that will plague America for generations.