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USAFA Harmon Memorial Lecture #26

"George Washington and George Marshall: Some Reflections on the American Military Tradition"  
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Though this is my second visit to the Air Force Academy, it is my first opportunity to present an address. I have had more exposure in this regard to one of your sister institutions: West Point. I must be careful not to speak of you as army men and women; but if I forget it will not be out of partiality. Gen. George Marshall at times was amused and at other times irritated by the partiality shown for the Navy by President Franklin Roosevelt, whom you may recall loved the sea and had been assistant secretary of the navy in the Wilson administration. On one occasion Marshall had had enough and pleaded good humoredly, "At least, Mr. President, stop speaking of the Army as 'they' and the Navy as 'us'!"

The title of this lecture suggests the obvious: that I consider it informative and instructive to look at certain similarities of experience and attitude shared by George Washington and George Marshall. In so doing, I want to speculate on their place in the American military tradition. These introductory remarks sound as though I am searching for relevance, and that is the case. No doubt at times historians, to say nothing of their readers, wish that the contemporary world would get lost so as to leave them unfettered to delve into the past for its own sake. Actually, for the first time in history there is the possibility that the contemporary world will go away but not in a manner that will be a boon to historical scholarship or anything else. That fear alone is enough to keep us searching-even desperately at times-for a relevant past, and in no area more so than military affairs broadly defined.

Some of the similarities between Washington and Marshall are more relevant than others, but it might be useful to enumerate a number of them now and still others later when we endeavor to link the two men in terms of the American military tradition. Both are commonly thought of as Virginians, and Marshall has been referred to as the last of the Virginians. If in truth, Marshall was a Pennsylvanian by birth-he admitted that his nasal twang gave him away- there was much of Virginia in his life. His home, Uniontown in western Pennsylvania, was once part of Virginia's vast claim to the Ohio Valley. Because of that claim Washington had fought in the immediate region of Marshall's youth. As a schoolboy Marshall had hunted and fished at locations where Washington had vanquished a small French party under Sieur Coulon de Jumonville, where Washington later built Fort Necessity and had then himself capitulated to the Gallic enemy, and where- following Braddock's defeat-Washington and others had buried the ill- fated general. A distant relative of Chief Justice John Marshall, George Marshall had family roots in Virginia; he graduated from Virginia Military Institute; and he retired in 1945 to a Virginia country seat-having expressed a desire, as did Washington, to enjoy a simple, bucolic life after a long career of public service. Dodona Manor at Leesburg-an imposing old dwelling that had once belonged to Washington's grandnephew- was to be his own Mount Vernon. There he would rest and reflect, to quote Washington metaphorically, under "my own vine and fig tree." (Or as Marshall would have expressed it, with his beloved roses and tomato plants). Both genuinely wished to escape the limelight; having no desire to profit further from their past accomplishments, they rejected appeals from publishers and well-wishers to pen their memoirs. In Marshall's case, the offer of a million dollars from the Saturday Evening Post came when he had \$1,300 in the bank.<sup>2</sup>

Neither general, however, was destined to see his dream of solitude and privacy gratified at war's end. Ever selfless and responsible, they could not decline when duty again beckoned but in a different form: Washington became the nation's first president, and Marshall headed a postwar mission to China before serving as secretary of state and secretary of defense in the Truman administration. Something about their personal character explained their willingness to come forth once more in behalf

of their country, and it is in the realm of character that the Virginia connection between Washington and Marshall rests most firmly in the public mind. For Marshall, like Washington and the other great Virginians of his generation and like Robert E. Lee, was thought to be a rock of stability, completely dedicated and committed to the cause he espoused.

The fact that neither the native Virginian nor the adopted Virginian was a backslapper or gregarious but just the opposite- remote and aloof- added to the aura that surrounded each man. Though both were named George, that in itself is hardly noteworthy, for neither as an adult encouraged first-name familiarity and could be downright chilling to those who tried to breach their inner walls. If, as the saying goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, perhaps the point about eschewing familiarity is best made with anecdotes.

While participating in the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia in 1787, several delegates were commenting on Washington's reserve and distant manner. The bold and witty Gouverneur Morris felt that his colleagues had exaggerated, saying that he was as intimate with Washington as he was with his closest friends. To which Alexander Hamilton responded by issuing Morris a challenge, offering to provide wine and supper at his own expense if Morris would approach Washington, slap him on the back, and say, "My dear General, how happy I am to see you look so well." On the designated occasion, Morris carried out his part of the bargain, although evidently with a degree of diffidence that had scarcely been expected in view of his earlier expression of confidence. Morris stepped up to Washington, bowed, shook hands, and gingerly placed his left hand on Washington's shoulder. "My dear General," said Morris, "I am very happy to see you look so well." Washington's reaction was instantly frigid. Removing the hand, he stepped back and glared silently at the abashed Morris, as the assemblage watched in embarrassment.<sup>3</sup>

The Washington anecdote, however revealing of the man's normal posture, may be apocryphal, but our Marshall story is authentic. At his initial official conference with President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938, Marshall, freshly minted deputy chief of staff, was asked a leading question about air power with which he did not agree. Roosevelt, thinking he had made an effective case for a priority in planes, said, "Don't you think so, George?" Marshall eyed the president icily and replied, "Mr. President, I am sorry, but I don't agree with that at all." Roosevelt, who first-named one and all, never after that addressed Marshall by anything but general. As Marshall himself recounted later, "I wasn't very enthusiastic over such a misrepresentation of our intimacy." <sup>4</sup>

Because Marshall is so close to us in time, and because of the splendid volumes of Forrest Pogue, we may have a more accurate appreciation of Marshall's contributions to our military heritage than we do Washington's. It may come as no surprise to say that, with few exceptions, serious civilian historians have not displayed a consuming interest in Washington as a military man. What may be harder to explain is the lack of critical attention devoted to him by professional soldiers, who until fairly recently dominated the writing of military history in America, and all the more unusual because military men have tended to be deeply conscious of history. They have believed it to be relevant. To study a famous battle is to simulate combat, to give officers a vivid sense of being present, of engaging vicariously in a meaningful tactical exercise. It surely sharpens one's wits to be mindful of the need to anticipate unforeseen events or fortuitous circumstances. There is also the more important sense of involvement on a higher level in the examination of strategy that shaped campaigns and led to the battles. On becoming assistant commandant of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, in 1927, Marshall made more rigorous an already existing requirement that every officer student prepare a short monograph on a military history subject. Marshall remembered that as a student himself at the Army Staff College he had devoted considerable attention to "past operations," particularly the Franco-Prussian War and the American Civil War; but he made no mention of assignments dealing with Washington's Revolutionary career.

Washington had become dated and irrelevant quite soon after the Revolution. Europeans, not Americans, continued to produce the influential military literature in the Western World, and there

seemed to be nothing new and original in Washington's battles and campaigns. This was so not only because, broken down into its components, much of what had appeared novel about American warfare had antecedents in European light infantry, thin skirmish lines, and so on, but also because no European monarchy thought it would have to engage in the type of struggle that confronted Britain in America in 1775. Moreover, the War of Independence took place before the study of strategy was a recognized area of investigation. But that quickly changed with Napoleon, who captured the imagination of scholar-soldiers everywhere—a practitioner of the offensive (the strategy of annihilation), not the defensive, as was usually the case with Washington. If Europeans ignored Washington the soldier, so did Americans, except for the popularizers and romantics. Serious military writers and thinkers on both sides of the Atlantic were under the hypnotic spell of a Swiss military intellectual, Baron Jomini, a founder of the strategic study of warfare who codified the lessons and principles of Napoleonic warfare. Even for Americans, writes Russell Weigley, "the object lessons were almost entirely Napoleonic and almost never Washingtonian. Early West Point strategists had their Napoleon Club, not their Washington Club. The first American books about strategy, Dennis Hart Mahan's and Henry W. Halleck's, contained much about Napoleon and little about Washington."<sup>5</sup>

Serious-minded career officers also found Washington's personal example in some respects damaging to their ambitions for the army since his own military experience suggested to civilians and militia advocates—oblivious to Napoleon and Jomini—that expertise in arms was unnecessary in a republic. After all, Washington prior to 1775 had only held commissions in the Virginia forces and his combat activity had been confined to the frontier. In wartime during the century after Washington's death, the government continued to give high rank to amateurs with militia backgrounds, men who in turn used their military records as stepping stones to the most elevated political offices. Six of these officers with predominantly domestic backgrounds attained the Presidency: Andrew Jackson, William Henry Harrison, Franklin Pierce, Rutherford B. Hayes, James A. Garfield, and Benjamin Harrison.

An officer corps that was not as professional as its most professionally oriented members wished it to be—that is, as professional as its French and German counterparts—was not about to embrace Washington warmly. They faced problems enough in an America that voiced the rhetoric of democracy and equality, that looked ambivalently at best at learned and specialized professions, be they law, medicine, or the military.

But if the American military in the nineteenth century could not admire Washington as a professional soldier, they nevertheless saw a kind of negative relevance in his inability to enlist in the Continental Army great numbers of men for the duration of the war and in his heavy reliance on poorly trained militia and short-term men. Here was a valuable lesson for their own day: even in time of tranquility, the nation should have a reasonably imposing military establishment so as to be better prepared in the event of conflict than Washington had been in the Revolution. Ironically, Washington, whose own military background and Revolutionary career seemed to offer little of a positive nature, was quoted in defense of a peacetime military structure that the American people refused to accept.

This is not to say that most Americans were pacifists or that many were ever really fearful of a military coup if the armed forces were substantially augmented. They were more preoccupied with keeping government small and taxes low and with the view—which was quite accurate—that after the War of 1812 America was secure from European embroilments. The danger of a formidable armed establishment was less from the military itself than from the politicians, who might be tempted to employ a beefed up army and navy in foreign adventures, including muscle-flexing in the Western Hemisphere. In retrospect, one may well conclude that peacetime defense spending, while never completely adequate, was fairly sensible—devoted to officer training at West Point, maintaining coastal fortifications and frontier posts, and exploring the West.

There was, of course, nothing wrong with military intellectuals such as Dennis Hart Mahan and Henry W. Halleck writing as advocates of exacting professional standards and claiming that European doctrine had much to offer. It was imperative that our officer corps possess the finest skills since it

would in national emergencies need to train and assimilate many thousands of young men from civilian life into the armed forces. But had American military men been as disposed to read the Prussian theorist, Karl von Clausewitz, as they were Jomini, they might have given further concern to the uniquely American problems of defense and warfare, for Clausewitz revealed a breadth lacking in Jomini and his followers, stressing throughout his magnum opus, *On War*, that armed conflict was merely an extension of politics. They ignored the experience of Washington, who during the Revolution had approached Congress on the subject of long-term recruits with the utmost tact and who in training his men was ever mindful of their civilian backgrounds.

Both civilian and military students of American wars have, to be sure, always praised Washington for his devotion to the concept of civil control of the military; and historical revisionism on that score is most unlikely. We can point out two most recent expressions, one by a civilian and one by a soldier. Above all else, writes Richard Kohn, formerly of Rutgers University and now Chief of the Office of Air Force History, "Washington should be remembered and appreciated for his absolute, unconditional, and steadfast refusal ever to seek or seize power outside legitimate political or constitutional channels." Indeed, "from the very beginning of his command, respect for civil authority was his first principle." Brig. Gen. James L. Collins, Jr., formerly Chief of Military History, Army Center of Military History, states, "the example, the image, and even the legend of Washington have had an immense influence in shaping the American officer corps and in providing ideals of responsible leadership. I would point to General George C. Marshall, the World War II Chief of Staff, as a faithful follower of the Washington tradition."<sup>6</sup>

Obviously, I am not the only one to see a connection between Washington and Marshall, nor was General Collins. Douglas S. Freeman, the distinguished biographer of Robert E. Lee, hailed *Time* magazine's choice of Marshall as "Man of the Year" for 1943. Freeman, then at work on what would be his seven-volume life of Washington, declared that Marshall's "noblest qualities" were virtually identical to those found in Jefferson's "famous characterization" of Washington. "As far as he saw," said Jefferson, "no judgment was ever sounder. . . . His integrity was most pure, his justice the most inflexible I have ever known, not motives of interest or consanguinity, of friendship or hatred being able to bias his decisions." "That is George Marshall," added Freeman, "that and much more besides." Harvard University also found a tie between Washington and Marshall, who received an honorary doctorate of laws degree at the Cambridge, Massachusetts, university in 1947, the occasion of his so-called Marshall Plan commencement address, outlining an American proposal for the postwar economic recovery of Europe. The latter's degree citation stated that in terms of character, integrity and respect for American ideals and institutions Marshall brooked comparison with only one other American, and that was Washington.<sup>7</sup>

All the same, Washington-Marshall comparisons have not been numerous; and what is even more surprising, those scholars who have been conscious of defining an American military tradition have not paid particular heed to our two "Virginians." A former Harmon lecturer as well as a former colleague of mine, the late T. Harry Williams of Louisiana State University provides us with our point of departure for probing more deeply into comparative military analysis. In the aftermath of the Truman-MacArthur controversy of 1951, Williams produced an essay arguing that American military leaders have been either "Mac" or "Ike" types, and Williams' preference was clearly for the latter. The "Ikes" were open and easygoing, friendly and sometimes folksy, attuned to the democratic ideals of the republic, and consequently comfortable and understanding in their relations with civilian superiors. Williams believed that Zachary Taylor, U.S. Grant, and Dwight D. Eisenhower represented the "Ike" heritage at its best. In contrast, the "Macs"-exemplified by Winfield Scott, George B. McClellan, and Douglas MacArthur-were haughty and cold, dramatic and even theatrical on occasion, their values and conduct derived from an older, elitist past, all of which made it hard if not impossible for them to accept comfortably civilian control.<sup>8</sup>

Williams' essay provoked a critical response from Samuel P. Huntington in *The Soldier and the State*, an influential work on civil-military relations in America. Huntington considered Williams' thesis, while useful in some respects, "restricted in scope, failing to encompass important elements of the American military tradition which fall into neither the 'Ike' nor 'Mac' category." According to Huntington, the "Macs" and "Ikes" were actually two aspects of the tradition of political involvement on the part of the military. Declared Huntington, "the true opposition is not between the Taylor-Grant-Eisenhower line and the Scott-McClellan-MacArthur line, but rather between both of these, on the one hand, and the professional strand of American militarism (which might be described as the Sherman-Pershing-Ridgway line), on the other. Therefore, the real difference was between the 'Ike-Macs' and the 'Uncle Billies' or 'Black Jacks.' "

Perhaps we can unite the concepts of Williams and Huntington by saying that some generals fit into a political component of the American military tradition and that the "Ikes" have behaved admirably in that respect and that the "Macs" have, to say the least, been controversial. We can also maintain that other military leaders have made considerable efforts to eschew close ties to the civilian sector, feeling-according to Huntington, at any rate-that such involvement compromises the integrity of the armed services and detracts from their endeavors to achieve a full measure of professionalism.

However, have Williams and Huntington, surely stimulating and provocative, tended to oversimplify the elements of our military heritage? Is it, in fact, impossible for individual American generals to represent the best of both aspects of the American military tradition? While not necessarily easy, I think that it is possible and that the proof is in the careers of Washington and Marshall.

For purposes of analysis, there are advantages to reversing the above-mentioned categories and discussing Huntington's professionalism before turning to Williams' political component. Washington and Marshall benefited from extremely important military experiences of a professional nature before each became commander in chief at a most critical period in American history: Washington in June, 1775, soon after the beginning of the Revolutionary War, which pitted the thirteen colonies against Britain, then the most powerful nation in the world; Marshall in September, 1939, on the very day Hitler's juggernaut descended on Poland. Yet there were those who felt that they had been cast in command rolls beyond their training and competence. Charles Lee, a veteran British officer and a former general of Catherine the Great, seemed to some preferable to Washington. Marshall, still a colonel as late as 1936, had been elevated over the heads of senior brigadier and major generals in 1939. And if Washington had only commanded a regiment in the French and Indian War, Marshall had not led a division in World War I.

As for Washington, an effort to treat him as a professional may raise some eyebrows since he never held a regular commission prior to the Revolution and since military professionalism as we think of it today dates from the generation of Jomini and Clausewitz. Even so, in some ways he behaved as a professional and then some by the standards of his time.

As a colonial officer in the 1750s he had taken his military education seriously, availing himself of every opportunity to increase his "knowledge in the Military Art." Eighteenth-century soldiers were educated by the tutorial method, which, if followed to the fullest, meant discussions with battle-tested veterans, independent reading, observation, and firsthand practice. Washington had done all these by the time he received command of the so-called Virginia Regiment in 1755 and the task of defending the backcountry of the Old Dominion. Though he failed in his persistent efforts to obtain a regular commission for himself and to have his entire unit taken into the British service, he learned a great deal from participating with British regulars in the Braddock and Forbes campaigns. He especially profited from his association with Gen. James Forbes himself and Col. Henry Bouquet, both first-rate soldiers. And we know that Washington not only devoured all the military literature available-and he asked his officers to do the same-but that he also took notes on what he learned and observed. He was a stickler for neatness; proper drill and ceremonial procedures, and efficient organization and administration. With obvious pride, the officers of Washington's regiment announced

that they required only "Commissions from His Majesty to make us as regular a Corps as any upon the Continent. . . . We have been regularly Regimented and trained; and have done as regular Duty . . . as any regimented in His Majesty's Service."10

There was admittedly a gap of seventeen years between Washington's resignation from his Virginia post in 1758 and his selection to head the Continental Army in 1775. But he had not forgotten his appreciation for a military life—he who had unsuccessfully tried to procure for his home at Mount Vernon busts of six great captains, including Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and Frederick II of Prussia, and he who had chosen in 1772 to be attired in his old Virginia uniform for his first known portrait, doubtless the same uniform he wore at the opening sessions of the Second Continental Congress as an indication of his willingness to fight for American liberties.

Washington, who had considered himself a teacher as a colonial officer, continued to think of himself in that manner as commander in chief, and there assuredly was a good deal in his field grade experience that proved valuable to him in the Revolution. Washington in the 1750s had advised his provincial subordinates that "actions, and not the commission . . . make the Officer . . . there is more expected from him than the Title." In 1775 he elaborated on the same advice: "When Officers set good Examples, it may be expected that the Men will with zeal and alacrity follow them, but it would be a mere phenomenon in nature, to find a well disciplin'd Soldierly where Officers are relax'd and tardy in their duty; nor can they with any kind of propriety, or good Conscience, set in Judgment upon a Soldier for disobeying an order, which they themselves are everyday breaking."11

At the same time, Washington the teacher was not unwilling to learn from others, including the German drillmaster Friedrich Wilhelm von Steuben. It is hardly insignificant that the officers who respected Washington most were themselves the most soldierly in their orientation: bright junior officers such as John Laurens and Alexander Hamilton, militarily self-educated senior officers such as Nathanael Greene and Henry Knox, conscientious European volunteers such as the Marquis de Lafayette and Steuben, and the officers of the French expeditionary army at Yorktown, particularly Major General, the Marquis de Chastellux, who spoke of the efficiency and businesslike atmosphere of Washington's headquarters.

Less effort is required to demonstrate Marshall's professional credentials. His resume prior to World War II bulged with rich experiences, both at home and abroad—a tour in the Philippines, a student and teacher at the army schools at Fort Leavenworth, a second assignment in the Philippines, two years in Europe with the AEF during and after World War I, several years as special assistant to Chief of Staff John J. Pershing in the early twenties, a stint in China, an instructor and administrator at the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, head of the Army War Plans Division, and deputy chief of staff—a career spanning nearly forty years before succeeding Gen. Malin Craig as chief of staff in 1939.

In his service record and his attitude of mind Marshall was a professional soldier in the finest sense. He undoubtedly received his most valuable professional education—and here I use the word professional in Huntington's strictly military sense—during what was then known as the Great War. Though he had not emerged in 1918 with a star on his shoulder and a divisional command as had MacArthur, he had participated from high ground. From the post of chief of operations and training for the First Division, he moved on to become chief of the Operations Division of the First Army. In the latter capacity, writes Forrest Pogue, "he had a key role in planning and supervising the movement and commitment of more troops in battle than any American officer would again achieve until General Omar Bradley established his 12th Army Group in France in 1944."12

There are several noteworthy comparisons between Washington and Marshall in terms of professionalism. Strange as it may seem to us, Washington as a young Virginia officer really thought of himself as a professional soldier and said as much. He was terribly frustrated by not receiving regular status, and for that reason as well as because of other difficulties he seriously considered resigning from the Virginia service in the midst of the most arduous part of the French and Indian War

in his colony. Had he attained a royal commission, how would the course of history have changed? Not only would the Continental Army have had a different commander in chief, but Washington would likely have dropped out of posterity's sight had he made for himself a permanent career in the king's service. We can scarcely imagine that he would have gone all the way to the top, perhaps in the anomalous position of a former colonial as British supreme commander instead of Gen. William Howe, landing at New York in 1776 with an army of 34,000 men and the job of cracking the provincial uprising. Americans in the British regular service simply did not advance to rarified heights, lacking as they did the money to purchase expensive higher commissions and the close connections in London court circles that opened the doors to preferment.

Marshall obviously did get a regular commission after graduating from Virginia Military Institute in 1901, but it involved a good deal of energy on the part of people with the right political connections to accomplish it. He too had his share of disappointments in a small, peacetime army. Once at least he considered resignation in favor of the business world. Through no fault of his own it took him fifteen years to make captain and a total of thirty-four years to reach brigadier general. If Washington and Marshall were very ambitious men, they were also determined and persistent. If Washington was an ideal man to lead a revolution, Marshall had the stamina and tenacity to direct a worldwide military effort nearly two centuries later. Both of these hard-driving soldiers found diversion and relaxation in riding and hunting, an ancient Virginia pastime.

A second professional comparison concerns what World War I did for Marshall and what the French and Indian War meant for Washington. For Marshall, involved with planning for many thousands of men in a multiplicity of ways, the lessons that he tucked away for future use-to be acted on two decades later-seem obvious. What may be less clear is the relationship between Washington's experiences in the 1750s and his service on the larger stage that was the War of Independence. Not only did Washington command a regiment as a colonial, but during the Forbes campaign that saw the taking of Fort Duquesne he commanded a considerably larger body, an advance division, the only native American general in the Revolution to have had that type of opportunity in the previous Anglo-French conflict.

Out of the sum total of their background and training both Washington and Marshall had learned how to challenge men to give their best. They did so not by pompous rhetoric or theatrics but in part at least by the example of their own labor and dedication. It is common knowledge that Marshall always had to battle the tendency to be a workaholic; it is less well known that in eight and a half years as commander of the Continental forces Washington did not take a leave of absence, surely some sort of record in the annals of our military history. Both encouraged subordinates to be independent and creative, traits which are not invariably appreciated by those of the highest station, either civilian or military. Some authorities, feeling threatened by bright juniors, only give lip service to qualities of candor and openness. Washington and Marshall did not surround themselves with sycophants. They were intelligent, though not remarkably imaginative or flashy with their mental endowments; they wanted to be challenged-they asked questions and they were good listeners.

While Washington drew upon Greene, Knox, and Steuben-just as afterward as president upon Hamilton and Jefferson-Marshall had his Arnold, Bradley, Eisenhower, and Clark. Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold, Army Air Corps chief, remembered that at the outset Chief of Staff Marshall lacked a full appreciation of air power but that he learned quickly and was open-minded, part of "his ability to digest what he saw" and incorporate it into his "body of military genius."<sup>13</sup> Gen. Omar Bradley recalled a revealing occurrence that took place soon after he joined the secretariat of the new chief of staff in 1939: "At the end of the first week General Marshall called us into his office and said without ceremony, 'I am disappointed in all of you.' When we asked why, he replied, 'You haven't disagreed with a single thing I have done all week.'" Later, when Bradley and his colleagues questioned the contents of a staff study, Marshall said approvingly, "Now that is what I want. Unless I hear all the arguments against something I am not sure whether I've made the right decision or not." And to

Eisenhower, before the North African landings, Marshall declared, "When you disagree with my point of view, say so, without an apologetic approach."<sup>14</sup>

If it is not clear how Washington came by such qualities, it appears probable that Marshall was significantly influenced by his mentor, General Pershing, for on various occasions in after years Marshall mentioned approvingly Pershing's remarkable capacity to accept dissent. As Marshall informed Col. Edwin T. Cole in 1939, Pershing "could listen to more opposition to his apparent view than any man I have ever known, and show less personal feeling than anyone I have ever seen. He was the most outstanding example of a man with complete tolerance regardless of what his own personal opinions seemed to be. In that quality lay a great part of his strength."<sup>15</sup>

The quiet, low-key, reflective manner of instilling confidence and bestowing recognition of Washington and Marshall contrasted sharply with that of certain other military chieftains—Leonard Wood, for example, whose charm and way of inspiring subordinates is captured in a story by Frederick Palmer, a war correspondent in Cuba. Emerging from Wood's tent, a young officer exclaimed, "I have just met the greatest man in the world, and I'm the second greatest."<sup>16</sup> The illustration is not meant to imply that one method was right and another wrong, only to indicate that a general must resort to methods of leadership compatible with his own persona. Actually, Washington and Marshall were by natural disposition inclined to be fiery and temperamental, but they had by mastering self-control subdued these inherent tendencies. There were exceptions; neither suffered fools easily. There are tales of Washington swearing so mightily as to shake leaves from trees and of Marshall's blistering tongue peeling paint from walls.<sup>17</sup>

For the most part, however, Marshall, like Washington, had sufficient patience to be recognized as an excellent teacher, and it goes without saying that no military arm can be fully professional without superior teaching. While Washington was never an instructor in a formal sense, he urged the creation of a military academy, a step which was delayed until Jefferson's Presidency. Marshall, who taught and occasionally lectured at a number of military institutions, has been particularly praised for his positive impact on the officer students and junior instructors at the Infantry School, where during his five years as deputy commandant he dealt with two hundred future World War II generals, including Bradley, Collins, Ridgway, Stilwell, and Van Fleet. As early as 1937, before it was clear that Marshall would vault the seniority obstacle and make it to the top rung of the military ladder, there were officers—so Marshall learned from Lt. Col. John F. Landis—"who regard[ed] themselves as self-appointed 'Marshall men'."<sup>18</sup>

Both Washington and Marshall were attuned to the relationship between subject matter and pupil at all levels of instruction. American servicemen were not simply soldiers; they were American soldiers, products of a free and open society, where restraints upon individual action and expression were minimal compared to many other parts of the world. That fact could be frustrating, but it could also offer dividends. Speaking of militia during the French and Indian War, Washington complained that "every mean individual has his own crude notion of things, and must undertake to direct. If his advice is neglected, he thinks himself slighted, abased, and injured and, to redress his wrongs, will depart for his home." Years later, as Revolutionary commander in chief, Washington imparted his own reflections on leading Americans to Gen. von Steuben when the latter took over the training of the troops at Valley Forge. American soldiers, regardless of background, expected better treatment than they considered the lot of European rank and file. Steuben's *Regulations*, or "Blue Book," stipulated that a company commander's "first object should be to gain the love of his men, by treating them with every possible kindness and humanity, enquiring into their complaints, and when well founded, seeing them redressed. He should know every man of his company by name and character." <sup>19</sup>

With all this Marshall could surely have agreed, convinced as he was that Americans possessed the substance to be first-rate fighting men. That meant, however, they must know the issues involved, and they must recognize that their officers were sensitive to their well-being. "Soldiers will tolerate almost anything in an officer except unfairness and ignorance," stated Marshall, in words strikingly



similar to a previously quoted admonition from Washington. "They are quick to detect either." Marshall scholars have put such emphasis on this aspect of the General's military thought that it hardly requires further elaboration. 20

The teaching point enables us to form a transitional link between our two generals as professionals on the one hand and as military leaders mindful of domestic and political factors on the other. They deserve to be remembered as professionals, albeit not in a narrow Huntingtonian sense. They were not greatly troubled by the nation's alleged anti-militarism, by the fear that civilian attitudes and values made genuine professionalism all but impossible in America—that is to say, out of the question unless the army could remain distant from what some officers saw as corrupting and undermining civilian influences. Undeniably Washington fussed and fumed during the Revolution about certain civilian attitudes and practices. He also lamented the lack of long-term enlistments and the inadequacies of green militia; but these remarks, so often quoted by Emory Upton and other advocates of a modified Prussian military system for America, were uttered in the midst of a stressful war that he was in danger of losing.

It is most revealing to see what Commander in Chief Washington and Chief of Staff Marshall thought about the future peacetime military picture for the country. Washington in his "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" in 1783, preferred a small yet highly trained army with a federally organized state militia system as a reserve force, a system realistic as to American resources and values, a plan praised in 1930 by a career officer, John McAuley Palmer, as the best scheme of national defense ever proposed, one far superior to Upton's far-fetched pleas, and one—we should add—that Palmer's friend George C. Marshall also found in keeping with American realities. As early as the immediate post World War I years, and before Palmer had read Washington's "Sentiments," the two friends, veterans of years of service but still relative juniors because of the army's complex promotion mills, felt that a substantial army for the 1920s would be unhealthy for the country.<sup>21</sup> Nor did World War II really alter Marshall's thinking on what in Washington's day were called standing armies in time of peace. Interestingly, Marshall resorted to that pejorative expression himself in his final report as chief of staff in 1945. "There must not be," he warned, "a large standing army subject to the behest of a group of schemers. The citizen-soldier is the guarantee against such a misuse of power." According to Marshall, military needs should not be determined in a vacuum, should not be approached as military needs and nothing more. Rather, one must ask whether they would burden the country economically, as Washington himself in 1783 had said might happen were a sizable force retained, and whether they would be compatible with basic American principles.<sup>22</sup>

Today when we are in the midst of a debate over national priorities, a debate which includes among its components controversies over what constitutes an adequate nuclear shield, and more broadly the age-old economic question of guns vs. butter, Marshall has some timely words, possibly more meaningful for our generation than his own. "In the first place," he declared on the eve of World War II, "national defense under modern conditions has become a tremendously expensive business, so much so that I think it is the business of every mature citizen to acquaint himself with the principal facts, and form a general idea as to what he or she thinks is the wise course for this country to follow."<sup>23</sup> In short, defense spending is so expensive and freighted with so many far-reaching implications that we cannot leave the subject solely to the experts, who themselves often disagree.

Neither Washington nor Marshall was enamored of war. If conflict had possessed a glamorous appeal in previous ages, asserted Marshall, it was no longer so in the twentieth century. Washington as president was accused of cowardly behavior in his determination to avoid hostilities in the face of British aggressions on the high seas and in the Northwest. Marshall, speaking before the American Historical Association, charged his scholarly audience with the task of investigating seriously the "deadly disease" of war, of which "a complete knowledge" was "essential before we can hope to find a cure." In a modest way, the army itself might make a contribution to the study of war through the Historical Section of the War College, but Marshall did not share the view of General Pershing in the

1920s that the Historical Section should assume as a primary task issuing critical replies to historians who found fault with various aspects of the American military performance during World War I. Col. Oliver L. Spaulding, chief of the Historical Section, proposed that the adjutant general extend by letter to every state superintendent of public instruction an offer to have military men review American history textbooks "as to the accuracy of their presentation of facts." Marshall accurately advised Pershing that many educational leaders would interpret such a campaign as an attempt "to mould public opinion along militaristic lines." Furthermore, "once a book has been printed, its author and publisher would undoubtedly actively resent unfavorable reviews by the War Department." Fortunately, Marshall's wise counsel prevailed <sup>24</sup>

Given their deep understanding of American history and culture, Washington and Marshall seem obvious choices for T. Harry Williams' category of "Ike" type military leaders. Why then did Williams leave them out? Here we can only speculate; perhaps he omitted them because they were not the affable, easygoing sort that Williams associated with his definition of the "Ikes." But does one have to be friendly and folksy to recognize that officers would lead wartime armies composed of citizen-soldiers, to appreciate the problems of civilian leadership, and to work harmoniously with that leadership? The careers of Washington and Marshall show that we can answer that question with a decided "no." Indeed, the man who holds himself back a bit may, if blessed with wisdom and integrity, command even more respect; and it is quite plausible to maintain that both men used their natural reserve to good effect. "Familiarity breeds contempt," is the saying, not that reserve elicits disrespect.

It is not enough for us to say that the "Ikes," along with Washington and Marshall, believed in civil supremacy, for it is doubtful if the "Mac" generals themselves were anything but dedicated to American constitutional government. Even so, Williams rightly informs us that the story of the "Macs" should make us mindful that civil-military relations have not always been as tranquil as we might like to think. McClellan grew up on Jomini, who said that after wars commenced the civilian authorities should retire and let the soldiers manage the fighting without interference, a view rejected by President Lincoln. Nor, of course, did Truman accept the interpretation of civil-military relations in wartime expressed by MacArthur after the president removed him from his Far Eastern post in 1951. "A theatre commander," MacArthur stated, "is not merely limited to the handling of his troops; he commands the whole area, politically, economically and militarily. At that stage of the game when politics fails and the military takes over, you must trust the military. . . . When men become locked in battle there should be no artifice under the name of politics which should handicap your own men."<sup>25</sup>

Where, then, is the difference between the "Macs" on the one hand and the "Ikes" and Washington and Marshall on the other so far as civil control is concerned? The latter not only believed in it, as did the "Macs," but they understood it as well, in all its dimensions. It meant, among other things, that the central government could not always give first priority to the military's total needs as defined by the military—could not because of homefront requirements, or political considerations, or international factors. Time and again Washington endeavored to explain this truth to his discontented officers and men during the War of Independence. Furthermore, as Marshall said during World War II, democracies inevitably go to war ill prepared and they do not conduct their conflicts efficiently. He later added that "tolerance and understanding of our democratic procedures and reactions are very necessary" for military men. If Washington felt political pressures in the Revolution to hold New York City and to defend Philadelphia, the patriots' capital, Marshall made a point of telling various classes at military schools that for reasons of homefront morale the politicians insisted on some major offensive thrust each year, beginning in 1942.<sup>26</sup>

Washington and Marshall not only adjusted to the realities of war in a free society, but they were praised for doing so. Both were extolled to a degree that seems almost unhealthy in a nation that has always been somewhat uncertain in its thinking about soldiers and military institutions. It troubled John Adams and his cousin Samuel that Washington was deified by his admirers. It did not disturb Presidents Roosevelt and Truman to speak of Marshall as the indispensable man. Yet our two army

commanders never succumbed to a Narcissus complex, nor were they hesitant to speak out against actions and policies they considered ill-advised; and Marshall went so far as to warn Roosevelt that he would do so on his assuming the top army post in 1939.

Here in the nature of their occasional dissent from governmental decisions was a part of the American military tradition that is worth preserving. To be loyal is not always to be a yes man. It should be permissible, even desirable, for the military man to speak up if he feels that policies are absolutely wrong or in need of revision, provided he does so without endeavoring to create executive-legislative friction or without undermining the political and constitutional system. One wonders to what extent the Truman-MacArthur controversy subsequently inhibited military men from speaking their minds-not only at times in favor of greater military expenditures and involvements around the world but also in terms of doing less. Historically, military men in America have been quite sensitive to criticism, and Washington and Marshall were not exceptions; but at least they understood it as the inevitable result of our personal freedoms, and they were even somewhat philosophical about it.

I once suggested at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth that it might help civil-military relations if we could require every general to serve a term in Congress or on the White House staff and to insist that the most influential national political figures on Capitol Hill and in the executive branch direct a field army. But since the ideal is never the reality and since the military will continue to receive its lumps from the politicians and other civilians from time to time, where are we left? For one thing, we must not forget that the military probably suffers no more abuse than other sectors of government-and since Vietnam, if not during the war itself, even less, less than the president, the Congress, and the Supreme Court. Washington, for example, received far more slings and arrows as president than he did as general, and so did Taylor, Grant, and Eisenhower. And as for Marshall, his performance as a civilian in several high level posts in the Truman administration brought him the most vicious kind of abuse from the far right in this country. 27

Whatever ills the American military feel are inflicted upon them from time to time, these can be better understood and countered if officers have had a healthy diversity of experiences with the civilian sector of American life. Washington as a young officer on the frontier had to deal with townspeople and farmers, with militiamen and volunteers, and with Virginia's executive and legislative leaders. Subsequently he himself sat for over a decade and a half in the House of Burgesses, and in 1774-1775 he represented his province in the Continental Congress at Philadelphia. He learned how political bodies behaved, how the legislative mind perceived things. He became more appreciative of the nature and complexities of the English heritage of civil control of the military, a heritage which Britain herself seemed to threaten after 1763 when a numerous peacetime military force for the first time was stationed permanently in North America. He did so in the context of outpourings of sentiment on such subjects as the evils of maintaining standing armies, the virtues of militias composed of upstanding citizens, and specific instances of civil-military friction.

As for Marshall, his remarkable insights into civilian attitudes and values owed much to his frequent teaching assignments with the National Guard over a period of thirty years. From an early stage in his career, he was acknowledged by professionals and amateurs alike as singularly proficient in dealing with guardsmen, whom he said (as Washington had written of militia earlier) must be accorded more than customary courtesy. When in 1908 the War Department established a Division of Militia Affairs to provide greater control over the National Guard, Gen. Franklin Bell tried and failed to get Marshall appointed assistant to the division head, a compliment nonetheless to the then twenty-eight-year-old lieutenant.

It is without doubt that some officers have had ample exposure to the civilian community and still fallen short in the area of civil-military relations. Probably a partial explanation for those failures lies in the fundamental character of the officers concerned. Experience alone does not guarantee future achievement, but it assuredly helps, particularly if it comes at a formative stage in an officer's career, and if he has the opportunity to build on that experience as did Marshall. He gained further insight into

the civilian realm when he accompanied Chief of Staff Pershing to Congressional hearings, when he interacted with the academic world through participating at R.O.T.C. conferences, when he sought opportunities to speak to civic and business clubs and organizations, and when he worked with the New Deal's Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in the 1930s—all of which narrowminded officers would have scorned as digressions from military professionalism.

Marshall, in fact, realized at the time that they were invaluable. In 1938, he declared that his recent three-year assignment "with the Illinois National Guard [w]as one of the most instructive and valuable military experiences I have had." Judging from Marshall's own assessments, his several assignments that involved the establishment and administration of CCC programs were equally beneficial. They constituted "the most interesting problem of my Army career," he told Pershing in 1933. Five years later his opinion had not changed. "I found the CCC the most instructive service I have ever had, and the most interesting," he observed to Gen. George Grunert 28

What had he learned? From his years with the National Guard and the CCC Marshall gained know-how in the mobilization, organization, and administration of large bodies of civilians. It proved to be crucial training for the man who as chief of staff would have the responsibility of preparing millions of draftees for duty in World War II. And for the time being, until they were ready for action, the military force that would separate America from disaster would be the National Guard. Unlike World War I, Marshall believed that subsequently America would not have the luxury of waiting months before making a heavy human commitment. "We must be prepared the next time we are involved in war, to fight immediately, that is within a few weeks, somewhere and somehow," he advised in March 1939. "Now that means we will have to employ the National Guard for that purpose, because it will constitute the large majority of the war army of the first six months." Yet, complained Marshall, too much of current American military training implied that the nation would begin to fight with combat-ready professionals—at Fort Leavenworth, for instance, he stated that the faculty could not see the forest for the trees.<sup>29</sup>

Consequently, Marshall believed it vital to upgrade the guard. Its training would afford the miniscule peacetime army practical awareness of the art they must have when conflict erupted, to say nothing of bolstering America's defenses and providing the nucleus of the citizen army that would ultimately fight a future war (which Marshall foresaw as coming), just as citizen forces had been the military backbone of the country in all its previous armed struggles.

No officers have ever equaled Washington and Marshall in effectively bridging the gap between the civilian and the military. Or to state the matter differently, which brings us back to the theories of Williams and Huntington, Washington and Marshall united the best of both the professional and political (or "Ike") characteristics of the American military tradition. Time magazine said of Marshall: "In a general's uniform, he stood for the civilian substance of this democratic society." Pogue tells us that Marshall "became familiar with the civilian point of view in a way rare among professional military men." A staff member stated the matter thusly: "Marshall had a feeling for civilians that few Army officers . . . have had. . . . He didn't have to adjust to civilians—they were a natural part of his environment. . . . I think he regarded civilians and military as part of a whole." Washington said it even better: "We should all be considered, Congress, Army, &c. as one people, embarked in one Cause, in one interest; acting in one interest: acting on the same principle and to the same End."<sup>30</sup>

## Notes

1. Forrest C. Pogue, *George C. Marshall* (New York, 1963-), II, 22. Thus far Pogue has published three volumes of his magisterial biography: *The Education of a General, 1880-1939* (1963); *Ordeal and Hope, 1939-1942* (1966); and *Organizer of Victory, 1943-1945* (1973). For Pogue's brief preliminary assessment of Marshall, see *George C. Marshall: Global Commander* (Harmon Memorial Lecture X: United States Air Force Academy, Colorado, 1968). I would also like to acknowledge my

debt to Morris Janowitz. His *The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait* (New York, 1960) has substantially broadened my perspective on the military in America.

2. Marshall penned an account of his service in World War I, but it was not published until long after his death. George C. Marshall, *Memoirs of My Services in the World War, 1917-1918*, with notes and foreword by James L. Collins, Jr. (Boston, 1976). It should also be noted that Marshall's second wife, Katherine Tupper Marshall, wrote a highly useful reminiscence: *Together: Annals of an Army Wife* (Atlanta, 1946).

3. Max Farrand, ed., *Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* (New Haven, 1911-1937), III, 85, 86n.

4. Pogue, Marshall, I, 323; Larry I. Bland and Sharon R. Ritenour, eds., *The Papers of George Catlett Marshall* (Baltimore and London, 1981-), I, 651.

5. Russell F. Weigley, "American Strategy: A Call for a Critical Strategic History," in Don Higginbotham, ed., *Reconsiderations on the Revolutionary War: Selected Essays* (Westport, Conn., 1978), 33.

6. Richard H. Kohn, "The Greatness of George Washington: Lessons for Today," *Assembly*, XXXVI (1978), 6, 28; James L. Collins, Jr., "George Washington: Statesman and Strategist," 6. General Collins graciously gave me a copy of his essay, which he read at the Organization of American Historians meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, April 7, 1983.

7. *Time*, January 3, 1944. Freeman's remarks appeared in editorial form in the *Richmond News Leader* December 30, 1943, and were enclosed in Freeman to Marshall, December 30, 1943, Marshall Research Foundation Library, Lexington, Va.

8. T. Harry Williams, "The Macs and the Ikes: America's Two Military Traditions," *American Mercury*, LXXV (1952), 32-39.

9. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1957), 367-368.

10. John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington* (Washington, D.C., 1931-1944), II, 26.

11. W.W. Abbot, et al., eds., *Papers of George Washington: Colonial Series* (Charlottesville, 1983-), II, 257; Fitzpatrick, ed., *Writings of Washington*, III, 441.

12. Pogue, Marshall I, 189. Marshall himself stated: "It fell to me in the World War to actually write more detailed orders, and to actually prepare orders for large forces, than I believe any officer in the Army." Bland and Ritenour, eds., *Marshall Papers*, I, 438.

13. Henry H. Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York, 1949), 163-164, 172, 180, 187, 195. For Marshall's growing awareness of the importance of air power, see Bland and Ritenour, eds., *Marshall Papers*, I, 676-679, 698-699, 707.

14. Omar N. Bradley and Clay Blair, *A General's Life: An Autobiography* (New York, 1983), 83-84; Pogue, Marshall II, ix, 411. Eisenhower took Marshall at his word. See Joseph P. Hobbs, ed., *Dear General: Eisenhower's Wartime Letters to Marshall* (Baltimore, 1970), especially Hobbs' discussion of this point (pp.83, 231). Eisenhower subsequently wrote that Marshall "insisted that his principal assistants should think and act on their own conclusions in their own spheres of responsibility, a doctrine emphasized in our Army schools but too little practiced in peacetime." *Crusade in Europe* (New York, 1948), 35.

15. Bland and Ritenour, eds., *Marshall Papers*, I, 705. Marshall repeated such comments about Pershing in interviews with Forrest Pogue *Ibid.*, 189, 194, 200-201. The Marshall-Pershing relationship calls for further study, although it receives some attention in Pogue's work and also in Frank E. Vandiver's *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J Pershing* (College Station, Texas, 1977).

16. Frederick Palmer, *Newton D. Baker: America at War* (New York, 1931), I, 162.

17. For Marshall's temperament, see index references in Pogue, Marshall, I, 417, II, 488, III, 676; for Washington's temperament, see index references in Douglas S. Freeman, *George Washington:*

A Biography (New York, 1948-1957), IV, 727, V, 568. Katherine Marshall admitted that her husband's anger could be "like a bolt of lightning out of the blue. His withering vocabulary and the cold steel of his eyes would sear the soul of any man whose failure deserved censure." Together; 109.

18. Bland and Ritenour, eds., Marshall Papers, I, 537.

19. Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, 1,493; Regulations for the Order and Discipline of the Troops of the United States (Philadelphia, 1779), 138, reprinted in Joseph R. Riling, Baron von Steuben and His Regulations Including a Facsimile of the Original (Philadelphia, 1966).

20. Pogue, Marshall, II, 111.

21. Washington's "Sentiments on a Peace Establishment" are in Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, XXVI, 374-398; John McAuley Palmer, Washington, Lincoln, Wilson: Three War Statesmen (New York, 1930). Marshall strongly encouraged Palmer to publicize Washington's views, and he read critically the author's study before it was published. Bland and Ritenour, eds., Marshall Papers, I, 328-329, 333-334, 338-340, 344-345, 347-348, 351.

22. This section of Marshall's report, entitled "For the Common Defense," is from "Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff, July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945," in The War Reports (Philadelphia, 1947), 289-296. I have used a reprinted text in Walter Millis, ed., American Military Thought (Indianapolis, 1966), 436-445. Marshall's points about standing armies and expenditures are found on 437, 439-440. Marshall, who stressed his intellectual indebtedness to Washington in calling for universal military training (not service), received high praise from Palmer. He declared that Marshall had "translated Washington's philosophy into the language and thought of the atomic age." Quoted in I.B. Holley, Jr., General John M. Palmer: Citizen Soldiers and the Army of a Democracy (Westport, Connecticut, 1982), 688, a splendid volume which contains a wealth of information on the Marshall-Palmer relationship.

23. Bland and Ritenour, eds., Marshall Papers, I, 644.

24. Harvey A. DeWeerd, ed., Selected Speeches and Statements of General of the Army George C. Marshall (Washington, D.C., 1945), 36-39; Bland and Ritenour, eds., Marshall Papers, I, 218, 222.

25. Quoted in Michael Howard, "The Influence of Clausewitz," in Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans., Carl von Clausewitz, On War (Princeton, 1976), 42-43.

26. Speech to National Institute of Social Sciences, May 18, 1949, Pentagon Office, Speeches, Marshall Research Foundation Library.

27. See, for example, Senator Joseph R. McCarthy, America's Retreat from Victory: The Story of George Catlett Marshall (New York, 1951).

28. Bland and Ritenour, eds., Marshall Papers, I, 613, 423, 659.

29. Ibid., 707.

30. Pogue, Marshall, I, 307-308; Fitzpatrick, ed., Writings of Washington, XI, 291.

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