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
given operations are no less
than his own is to throw confusion
into the whole defense establish-
ment.

Just where does the civilian
judgment and military influence
of Mr. Marshall begin and end?

Where does the military judg-
ment of the United States Joint
Chiefs of Staff begin and end?
What is the line of demarcation?

How can Gen. 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 per-
sonality. 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 position is military, and
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
times 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 dele-
gate 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 selec-
tion of Gen. Marshall as Secre-
tary of De-

fense.

The wave of criti-
cism of Louis Johnson's
administration
of that depart-
ment in recent
months has es-
sitized even
the ranks of the
armed forces,
which Mr.
Johnson fre-
quently handled
with a heavy
hand.

While the passage of an am-
endment to the National Security
Act to permit a member of the armed
forces to head the Defense De-
partment is taken for granted,
because of Gen. Marshall's pre-
tige, many Congressmen wonder
whether it is wise, particularly in
these troubled times, to change
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 ad-
ministration. 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 re-
tired 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 Con-
gress had reason to believe
would remain on the United States
statute books for a long time. It
was the intention of both the legis-

dative 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 be-
come 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 thank-
less 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 re-

sponsibilities. Again it was Presi-
dent Truman's pressing request
which persuaded him to abandon
his rest and accept the burdens-
some 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, amend-
ment of the National Security
Act, to permit members of the
armed forces to head the Defense
Department, is fraught with dan-
ger, 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 tenden-
cies 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 com-

pel them—in the hypothetical
event of a coup d'état—to follow
one of their own commanders.

It was this very remote pos-
sibility which made our law-
makers put into the law the

very definite and formal prohibi-
tion that no military man could
head the armed services unless he
did not receive 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 ap-
point Gen. Marshall as Defense
Secretary. This may establish a
dangerous precedent.
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 $30 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 Gen. 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 bannishment 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.