

# Marshal Joffre, Most Beloved French General, Was Largely Responsible for Speeding American Troops to France

By JOSEPHUS DANIELS  
Former Secretary of the Navy—1913 to 1921.

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The early dispatch of American troops to France, and the selection of General Pershing to command the American expeditionary force, were both due in no small degree to the urging and advice of one man—Marshal Joffre, the hero of the Marne.

Americans hold in admiration the military leaders of the allied countries. The name of Foch will be a source of inspiration for many years to come. It is synonymous with victory.

But the name of Joffre will be loved as well as honored in America as long as there are men and women left who saw him and listened to him when he came to us in those stirring days of 1917.

I doubt if ever in history has there been a great military hero, a winner of mighty battles, a commander of conquering armies, whose personality was so charming, so winsome, so provocative of confidence and affection as that of this French general.

"Thought You Were Papa Joffre." The story is told of a French private soldier who had laid a friendly hand upon the arm of a French officer, only to be stinging rebuffed for his undue familiarity.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said the private saluting and "I thought you were Papa Joffre."

The truth of that story will not be doubted by anyone who has seen "Papa Joffre." There is only one word which I can think of that is adequately applicable to him. I do not think I have ever used it before with reference to a man. The French marshal is beautiful—beautiful in the expression of his eyes, in his complexion, in his simple and dignified bearing and, most of all, in the delightful spirit of his contact and conversation with his fellows.

Now and then during the war when I saw an officer rigid and stern, over-impressed by his own superiority to all ordinary mortals, I wished all men in authority might have learned manners from the man who saved the world at the battle of the Marne.

One of the reasons why Joffre will always hold a distinct place in my memory, a peculiar place in my affection, is because, of all those who came seeking American co-operation, he, more than any man, displayed his faith in the American soldier, his desire to have American manhood at the front.

Joffre Asks for Men. Men of the allied missions were roughly convinced that we could be of immediate use in a very valuable way by providing money, food, munitions. It was on these things most of them were inclined to lay the early emphasis.

But Joffre from the first day asked for men.

Money, food, munitions! Yes, splendid, and thank you, but "how soon can we have men?"

It is possible we would have been several weeks or months longer in getting to France with our fighting forces if it had not been for the quiet insistence of Joffre.

Others talked of the long training that would be necessary to prepare men for fighting in Europe; of the necessity of retaining our regulars at home in order to train a great army that might begin to reach France six or eight months later.

Joffre said: "I hope you can send troops this summer. Our sore need is fresh soldiers—sturdy, vigorous Americans."

Joffre had seen those "sturdy, vigorous Americans" on our streets, in the throngs which had cheered him wherever he had gone. He believed in them. He believed in their capacity to learn quickly the art of war. He believed in their spirit.

Would Revive Tired Armies. And Joffre, with the memory of his own war-worn soldiers and his tired, sometimes discouraged fellow countrymen, knew what a tonic there would be for weariness and depression in the presence of even a few thousand American boys—enough to march through the streets with high set chins, and firm, resilient step; enough to carry the flag, the flag of the Stars and Stripes, and to be the visible proof and promise of American participation.

While other men were thinking in material terms, Joffre was thinking in spiritual terms. He knew the morale of France, of Great Britain, of Italy would be stimulated the minute the news was flashed that American soldiers were on European soil. He knew the morale of the enemy would be shaken the minute Berlin learned that its confident predictions concerning the impossibility of American soldiers reaching France had been disproved.

This was the burden of his plea to Secretary Baker, with whom he talked freely because the secretary of war was one of the few men in Washington official life who understood French. It was the thing which he stressed when he talked to the president.

Joffre Impressed by Wilson. Joffre later expressed to me his surprise to find that President Wilson had such a perfect mastery of the military situation. He had expected to meet a scholar, statesman, and an idealist; he had not expected to meet a practical strategist, fully conversant with all the military movements, and using accurately and freely the lingo of field and camp.

In answer to my question as to whether it would be feasible to send in advance of his army, the general who was to command American troops in France, the president said at once that it could be arranged," said Joffre in substance.

"Then the president asked me," continued Joffre, "what my judgment was as to the type of military leader who should go over ahead of the main body of American troops, and whether he should not be chosen rather because of fitness to train troops for actual warfare than because of his mastery of military strategy."

The marshal's answer to the president was that in order to meet the situation fully the general chosen to send over first should combine the qualities of a capable trainer of soldiers and a genius for strategy. It was the marshal's urgent advice to this effect which led to the decision to recall General Pershing from the Mexican border and to send him to France. Events justified the decision. General Pershing measured up to the standard Joffre had set.

When the president and the secretary of war had fallen in with the desire of Joffre for the earliest possible dispatch of American troops to France, the objection was heard

house," she said, "for the third time during the war. The Germans were coming and we must take our little belongings and hurry toward Paris. All along the road were men and women and children—a pathetic sight—some with poor old horses and many carrying their little household necessities in packs. Hopeless and desperate they were plodding along out of the track of the invaders. Suddenly we heard a rumbling in the distance like thunder. It came nearer and nearer, louder and louder was the sound. It was a hundred, yes, monsieur, it was a thousand. Oh! it seemed like a million trucks moving toward us.

Sang the American Classic. "Clear the track. Get out of the way! came the command in a tongue strange to most of us. We huddled together on the side of the road to escape the trucks as they wheeled by. They were filled with handsome, ruddy cheeked, stalwart lads, with the glory of youth upon them. And as these robust boys in khaki rode along they were singing a song. You could hear their loud and cheery and heartening voice all down the valley. Oh! monsieur, it was so beautiful, it was so inspiring. I could not fully understand it, but it gave me confidence and courage. It must have been an American classic. I understand English—so poorly, monsieur; but it sounded something like this:

"Hail, hail, the gang's all here. What the hell do we care. What those words mean I do not know, but one thing I know is that after they passed singing that song we were told we could go back to

our homes, and we have lived in peace and quiet ever since. Heaven's blessings on those American boys and upon their national air, if it is their national air."

(Another article by former Secretary Daniels will be printed tomorrow.)

that it was useless to send troops until we were in a position to munition them amply.

Every munition plant in the United States had been running at full speed since 1915 turning out munitions for France, Great Britain and Russia. It was manifestly impossible that they could immediately supply with artillery and shells the additional millions of men America was to put in the field. New factories would have to be built, and in an incredibly short space of time this was done.

"Meanwhile," said Joffre, "we can equip our soldiers from the large supplies we have." He was wise enough, since we were now allies, to propose that pooling of supplies which in the end made the exercise of the united strength of the allies so much more effective.

"For months our troops had to depend upon the French for shells," critics of the war administration have said.

It is an absurd criticism at a time when the allies were depending upon us for troops, and we were turning out vast quantities of munitions.

Each Gave What It Had. All of us gave them what we had most of to give, and what we could give most promptly and usefully. That was the understanding reached in those Washington conferences. America began giving men at once, and France gave shells. But America was making shells for France, and had been for two years, and it began at once making shells and every other needed munition for itself.

Our allies had no criticism to offer for inability to continue to provide them with all they had been taking in munitions, and at the same time to provide everything necessary for a new army of 4,000,000 men.

Joffre heard people say "Ships will win the war," or "Coal will win the war," or "Food will win the war." He recognized the importance of all the necessary agencies. But he was too good a soldier to believe that anything could win the war except fighting men.

And he was wise enough, too, to know what it took a long time to

teach some military and civilian leaders, to-wit: That sending troops first would insure sending food to keep them alive and guns and ammunition to fight with. He knew Americans, who had sent their boys to France with only a few weeks' supplies, would make or find a way to get to them everything they might need of which their allies did not have a surplus in the field.

Rush Men to the Front. Our War department rushed making ready to send soldiers abroad, rushed training of men here, and took to heart Joffre's repeated suggestion that as quick as possible the American flag floating over American soldiers should be seen at the front. The secretary of war and his assistants lost no time in hurrying troops to the front after General Pershing had arrived and was making wise disposition of them as rapidly as they could be transported.

I think Marshal Joffre had the vision then to see and hear what an old French woman told about when our soldiers actually did reach France and did all the things which Joffre foresaw they would do. It was shortly after the American soldiers were on the move, but before they had got fully into action.

"I had been ordered from my

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