

Quotes by, or about, General John Pershing

Pershing and French marshal Ferdinand Foch (Allied supreme commander for the western front) met to discuss the role of American troops in World War I on August 30, 1918.

“I do not want to appear difficult . . . [but] the American people and the American government expect that the American army shall act [independently] and shall not be dispersed here and there along the Western Front . . . While our army will fight wherever you decide, it will not fight except as an independent American army” (Smythe, 1986, p. 175-176)

Source:

Smythe, D. (1986). *Pershing: General of the Armies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

In February 1918, General John Pershing makes a decision about the African American regiments of the 93rd Division.

“To meet the need for replacements in their units . . . I consented to send temporarily to the French four colored Infantry regiments of the 93d Division” (Pershing, 1931, vol.1, p. 291).

Source:

Pershing, J. (1931). *My Experiences in the World War*. Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Frederick A. Stokes.

Regarding General Pershing, Colonel William Hayward, head of the 372nd Division stated:

“Our great American general (Pershing) simply put the black orphan in a basket, set it on the doorstep of the French, pulled the bell, and went away” (Lanning, 1997, p.138).

Source:

Lanning, M. (1997). *The African-American Soldier from Crispus Attucks to Colin Powell*. New York: Birch Lane Press.

In a January 28th 1919 review of the Division, Pershing stated:

“the 92nd Division stands second to none in the record you have made since your arrival in France. I am proud of the part you have played in the great conflict . . . yet you have only done what the American people expected you to do and you have measured up to every expectation of the Commander-in-Chief . . . I commend the 92nd Division for its achievements not only in the field, but on the record its men have made in their individual conduct. The American public has every reason to be proud of the record made by the 92nd Division” (Scott, 1919, p. 167)

Source:

Scott, E. (1919). *The American Negro in the World War*. New York: Underwood & Underwood.

In a reflection on the performance of the 92nd Division of African American soldiers during World War I, Pershing states:

“It is well known that the time and attention that must be devoted to training colored troops in order to raise their level of efficiency to the average were considerably greater than the white regiments. More responsibility rested upon officers of colored regiments owing to the lower capacity and lack of education of the personnel . . . It would have been much wiser to have followed the long experience of our Regular Army and provided these colored units with selected white officers” (Pershing, 1931, vol.2, p. 228-229).

Source:

Pershing, J. (1931). *My Experiences in the World War*. Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Frederick A. Stokes.

In response to the British rejection of an offer of African American troops to help the British in World War I, Pershing writes a letter to Marshall Douglas Haig, commander of the British Expeditionary Forces, in which he states:

“You will, of course, appreciate my position in this matter, which, in brief, is that negroes are American citizens. My Government, for reasons which concern itself alone, has decided to organize colored combat divisions and now desires the early dispatch of one of these divisions to France. Naturally I cannot and will not discriminate against these soldiers” (Pershing, 1931, vol. 2, p. 45).

Source:

Pershing, J. (1931). *My Experiences in the World War*. Vols. 1 and 2. New York: Frederick A. Stokes.