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Article Summary: The personal relationship between Charles Gates Dawes and John J Pershing during World War I in France greatly influenced America's French effort. Both men played important parts in the war. Dawes and Pershing first crossed paths in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1891. Their friendship and mutual respect continued throughout their lives, though they never worked together after the close of World War I.

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Photographs / Images: Charles G Dawes with Major General James C Harbord; Military Board of Allied Supply, Coubert, France, 1918; General Enrico Merrone, Brigadier General Charles G Dawes, Brigadier General Jean Marie Payot, Major General Reginald Ford, Major Cumont; Crowded road through Esnes near the Meuse-Argonne front; John J Pershing and William H Oury at the University of Nebraska in 1933; General Pershing and the Prince of Wales, August, 1919, in London

The Dawes-Pershing Relationship During World War I

By Edward A. Goedecken

The study of warfare often contains detailed analysis of strategy and tactics of wheeling and turning armies, of slashing advances. Sometimes overlooked in writing of battle is the significance of personal relationships in determining the larger picture. Maps and charts are important, of course, but so are the friendships that develop during the war time. These relationships are often the glue that holds everything else together; the oil that lubricates. America's participation in World War I, of course, produced many lifelong friendships between infantrymen who fought together in the trenches. It also created deep personal relationships at higher levels as well. One such friendship, which would influence America's effort in France, developed between Charles Gates Dawes and John J. Pershing.

A study of the Dawes-Pershing intimacy during the war reveals more than simply a friendship between two men who liked and respected each other. Both men played important parts in the war. Pershing's role at the highest level is well known; Dawes also served his country well, both as general purchasing agent of the American Expeditionary Forces and as Pershing's confidant. A closer look at their friendship reveals how significant such relationships can be in the conduct of hostilities.

Dawes' and Pershing's paths first crossed in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1891. Dawes had arrived four years earlier, intent on starting a law practice in the Nebraska capital. He was from Marietta, Ohio, and had obtained a law degree at the Cincinnati Law School in 1886. His father's cousin, James W. Dawes, who served as governor of Nebraska from 1884-1886, had invited the young Dawes to Lincoln to begin his law

career. Pershing traveled a different route to Nebraska. Born and reared in Missouri, he attended the US Military Academy at West Point, graduating in 1886. After a few years of cavalry service in New Mexico, South Dakota and Nebraska, he applied for and received a position as military science instructor at the University of Nebraska in 1891.¹

How the two men first met is not known. But in later years they told stories about the times they lunched together at Don Cameron's diner in Lincoln with its good food and low prices. While Dawes dabbled in real estate investments to augment his meager law practice income, Pershing enrolled in the newly opened University of Nebraska law school. In 1893 he earned his bachelor of laws degree and briefly contemplated leaving the Army to become a lawyer. Dawes was against it: "Better lawyers than either you or I can ever hope to be are starving in Nebraska. I'd try the Army for awhile yet. Your pay may be small, but it comes very regularly."² Pershing took Dawes' advice, and 40 years later remembered:³

Charles G. Dawes . . . was another man of promise, though he was then only a struggling young lawyer with an inclination towards business and finance. He was not a 'silver-tongued orator' able to sway masses of constituents, like [William Jennings] Bryan, nor was he apparently ambitious in this direction. . . . It was evident then that Dawes would be successful in the financial world, and possibly in the political world as well.

For Pershing the Nebraska years were important, not only in expanding his own education by obtaining a law degree, but also in enabling him to become more familiar with people who were not in the military. His interest in the civilian world reflected the belief that such contacts might prove useful at a later date. The ability to move comfortably in professional, business, and education fields would not hurt his future military career.⁴

For both men the stay in Lincoln was short. In 1897 Pershing returned to West Point as a tactical officer, and the next year took part in the fighting at Santiago, Cuba, during the Spanish-American War. His tour of duty in the Philippines between 1899 and 1903 impressed President Theodore Roosevelt, and in 1906 he was promoted to brigadier general. After two more tours in the Philippines, Pershing was ordered to lead an expeditionary force into Mexico to capture Francisco (Pancho) Villa in 1916. His work in Mexico showed Presi-

dent Woodrow Wilson that he could command troops and follow orders. When the United States joined the European war in April, 1917, Wilson again called on Pershing to command American troops—the American Expeditionary Force.

Dawes had been busy, too. In 1897 he bought a manufactured-gas plant in Evanston, Illinois, and moved his family there. He soon got involved in Illinois Republican politics and helped in the campaign of 1896 in which William McKinley was elected President. He was rewarded with the position of comptroller of the currency, and Washington, DC, became Dawes' home until 1901, when he resigned to run unsuccessfully for the US Senate from Illinois. His political defeat, however, opened new doors for him. In July, 1902, he became president of a new Chicago bank, the Central Trust Company of Illinois. For the next 15 years he played the part of the successful banker and businessman, patron of the arts, and supporter of various charitable organizations. Despite time and distance the two men kept in touch. For example, in 1903 Pershing asked Dawes to write letters to President Theodore Roosevelt, Secretary of War Elihu Root, and others recommending Pershing for promotion.⁵ Two years later Pershing and his new bride, Frances, stopped by Dawes' home on their honeymoon.⁶ Dawes also periodically advised Pershing on personal financial matters, suggesting what to buy and what to sell.⁷ On the rare occasions Pershing was in the Chicago area, he visited Dawes.

This all changed in April, 1917. Pershing's duty was clear. He was a soldier, and in war soldiers went to fight. Fifty-two-year-old Chicago bank presidents were not under the same obligation. Dawes could have stayed in Chicago. He could have gone to Washington and worked in some war-time agency. Instead he joined a newly formed Army Engineers unit and headed for training in Atlanta, Georgia. This behavior is explained best by looking at the way Dawes men had behaved in other wars. Charles Dawes' great-great-grandfather, William Dawes, rode with Paul Revere that famous night in April, 1775. In a later conflict Charles' father, Rufus R. Dawes, fought with distinction for President Abraham Lincoln at Antietam, Fredericksburg, Gettysburg, and in other battles.⁸ Charles had grown up with stories of his family's contributions to their country in time of war. Now in 1917 America was at

war again, and again a member of the Dawes family would serve.

Pershing helped Dawes get a commission as a major in a Corps of Engineers regiment. The AEF commander did not think much of Dawes' engineering credentials, which were based on some college experiences in railroad surveying. Pershing was impressed with Dawes' business abilities, and thought he "would be valuable in some position" in France.⁹ While Dawes headed to training camp, Pershing sailed for Europe and arrived in England in early June. For the next few weeks Pershing and his staff worked night and day laying the groundwork for the impending influx of American troops. The ports of St. Nazaire, Bassens, and La Pallice were selected to handle American shipping; the temporarily quiet area of the battle front south and east of Verdun became the American sector. Having established the ports and the front, Pershing quickly worked out the lines of communication.¹⁰

The problems plagued Pershing from the beginning. The first was the German U-boat threat. By August, 1917, the nations allied with the US against Germany were losing an average of 500,000 shipping tons a month, with little hope that this situation would improve in the near future. With trans-Atlantic shipping so unpredictable, supplies for the AEF would have to be found in Europe. This led to the second problem: competition among the Allied armies for existing supplies. Pershing unhappily discovered that not only was his Army competing with the other Allies for military goods, but individual AEF departments were also bidding fiercely among themselves for scarce items. When a bitter contest erupted between the Engineer and Quartermaster Departments for lumber, the price skyrocketed, and the French immediately put a lid on American purchases for fear all their lumber supplies would be depleted.

Pershing approached the situation by appointing a committee to study the problem, believing some type of central board could be created to oversee AEF purchasing and provide coordination. The committee, however, viewed with suspicion any plan that might take purchasing out of Army hands and voted against it. Pershing ignored the committee and created a General Purchasing Board consisting of a representative from each of the AEF departments. They would meet daily to



Charles G. Dawes (right) with Major General James G. Harbord, commanding general, Service of Supply.

determine what supplies were available and who should get them. To head the new coordinating board, Pershing needed a "man of large business experience."¹¹ One man came to mind immediately: Charles Dawes.

While Pershing was struggling with his purchasing problems, Dawes finished his Atlanta training and sailed for France. On arrival in August, his unit was assigned the task of getting St. Nazaire ready for the AEF, and there was much work to do. It soon became evident to Dawes and his fellow officers that more dock equipment was needed. Since Dawes knew Pershing the best, he was sent to Paris to report to the commander-in-chief. Dawes carried out his assignment, then learned that he would not return to St. Nazaire but would instead stay in Paris as general purchasing agent and head of the new General Purchasing Board. He was now a member of Pershing's staff with a direct telephone line to the commanding general. Dawes was thrilled with his new job. Counting railroad ties at the port had not been very exciting. He was correspondingly grateful that his friend had made him "an important element" in the war. "It is a man's work, but I am thankful beyond words that now I have come here instead of remaining in America, it is work which will count for my country in its time of greatest trial." He only hoped he would not disappoint Pershing: "Dear fellow, and loyal friend. I hope I do not fail him."¹²

During the next few days Dawes and Pershing toured the area and brought each other up to date on what had been happening in their lives. The times in Lincoln were recalled with smiles, especially the meals and conversations shared at Don Cameron's lunch counter. In the intervening years both men had suffered personal tragedies. Dawes lost his only son in a drowning accident in 1912. Pershing experienced horror when his wife and three of his four children perished in a house fire in San Francisco in 1915. While riding back to Pershing's Paris quarters one afternoon, both men fell silent. "Neither of us saying anything," Dawes recalled, "but I was thinking of my lost boy and of John's loss, and looking out the window. . . . We both turned at the same time and each was in tears. All John said was, 'Even this war can't keep it out of my mind.'"¹³ Sharing similar misfortunes often brings people together. This was especially true of Dawes and Pershing.

With Dawes now in Paris and a direct phone line hook-up established with Pershing's headquarters in Chaumont, communication between the two men occurred almost daily. Throughout the next 18 months Dawes and Pershing spent countless hours together, most often when Pershing was in Paris, although sometimes Dawes was called to Chaumont if Pershing could not get away. The Dawes-Pershing wartime relationship was not equal. Pershing had the power to make Dawes' job easier and more effective. And Dawes used Pershing's authority to the fullest to get what he needed done. In exchange Dawes provided Pershing with a willing ear and a loyal heart when the general was troubled with the burdens of command. Although the two men were the best of friends, this closeness sometimes caused them embarrassment.

For his part Pershing entertained little hope of ever turning Dawes into a military man. On one occasion Dawes was standing in front of Pershing's headquarters when he noticed that Pershing was looking at him with an expression of "mingled friendliness, admonition, and concern." Dawes had seen that look before and immediately searched his person for any irregularity. Meanwhile, Pershing whispered something to his chief of staff, Brigadier General James G. Harbord, who rapidly approached Dawes and carefully buttoned up his overcoat which had been sloppily left undone. As he finished the chore, Harbord growled that it was a "hell of a job for the Chief of Staff to do," but Pershing had insisted. Dawes later learned that a picture of Pershing with one breast-pocket unbuttoned had been taken in England, and he vowed to search that country for the picture to use "for justifiable defensive personal purposes."¹⁴

Dawes countered Pershing's strict insistence on correct military etiquette by casually greeting the general by his first name. This was all right in the confines of Pershing's home, but it was a different matter in front of other men. One day after Dawes had greeted his friend in his usual fashion, Pershing's patience collapsed. The lecture went something like this:

Charley, while I'm in front of men, don't come up with your cigar in your mouth and say 'Good morning, Jack'. I don't give a damn what you call me when we're alone, but after all, I'm the official head of the AEF and you're one of my officers.¹⁵

It is doubtful whether Pershing's little talk did much good; to Dawes, he was Jack, and always would be.

But these personal annoyances were minor. The primary job was to win a war, and both men bent eagerly to their respective tasks. While Pershing labored to mold an effective Army, Dawes struggled to procure supplies for that Army. By the end of September, 1917, Dawes had whipped the General Purchasing Board into shape, as daily meetings produced decisions and agreements for the allocation of available supplies, and Pershing soon recognized that his friend might be helpful with other problems as well.¹⁶ The AEF needed coal and the French were not sure they could provide any. Pershing put Dawes in contact with Admiral Henry T. Mayo, commander of the United States Atlantic Fleet, who suggested that the War Department might still have a few old naval colliers which could be pressed into service as coal transports. Dawes drew up the recommendations for the War Department; Pershing signed them and fired them off to Washington. Within a few days the AEF had its colliers.¹⁷ This set a recurring pattern: Pershing or Dawes conferred on problems by telephone or telegram. Dawes' plans of action were made into official orders by Pershing.

Dawes' success with the coal problem had prompted Pershing to give his friend added responsibilities. In October, 1917, he asked Dawes to find a minimum of 50,000 workers Pershing estimated would be needed to build the railroads and buildings for the AEF. Dawes pleaded overwork, but when Pershing persisted Dawes gave in. In February, 1918, Dawes formed a Labor Bureau which combed Europe for available labor. By the end of March, an average of 2,000 workers a week were joining AEF supply services.¹⁸ Recruited workers often came in faster than the AEF could handle them, and Dawes' organization came under fire. The "sneers and criticism" directed toward his new bureau upset Dawes, who though perturbed did not waver: "I was never more certain of success in my life than I am now in this labor work," he said. He warned Pershing not to "get it into your head for a minute that I am weakening."¹⁹

On another occasion when Dawes voiced concern that his presence might be resented by members of Pershing's staff, Pershing wrote Harbord expressing his complete confidence in Dawes:²⁰

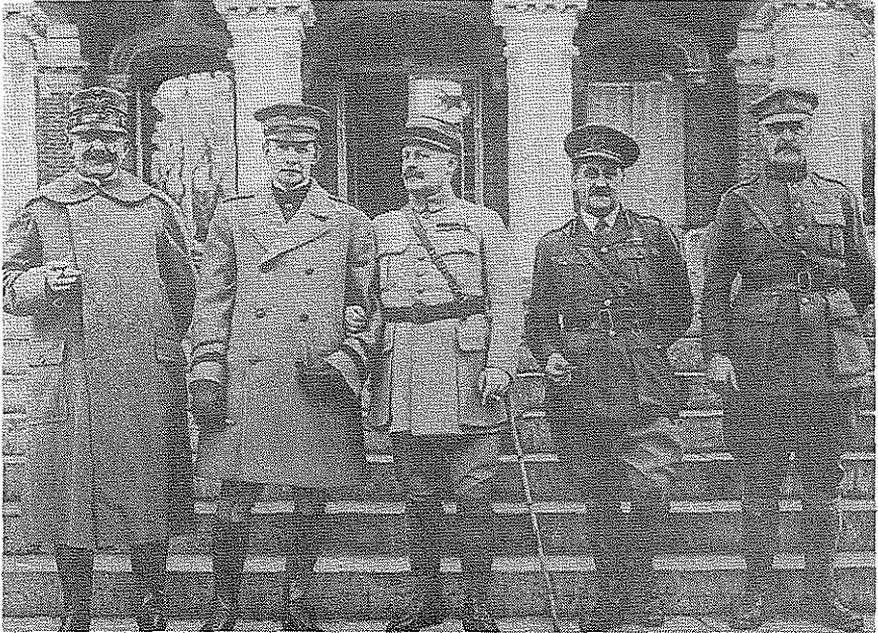
Of course, it would be a waste of time to tell you what valuable service Dawes has given and is giving and how important it is that his status be completely and fully recognized by these headquarters and at your own [in July, 1918, Harbord became commander of the Services of Supply which had replaced the Line of Communications in February, 1918.] Dawes is too valuable a man to allow my staff officers to snub him or fail to appreciate the usefulness of his position. I will not permit it for an instant, and I hope you will not.

Harbord told Pershing he "need not have misgivings about Dawes' standing among the other officers. [Dawes is] most unassuming about the work he has done, and I think is appreciated by the staff officers here."²¹ Pershing's exchange with Harbord reveals a rare glimpse of the depth of feeling the general had for his old friend. He would tolerate no feelings of resentment or disrespect for Dawes from anyone.

One had little difficulty in discovering how Dawes viewed the general. His diary is filled with praise for Pershing. Part of Dawes' feelings resulted from his conviction that Pershing was "the man for this great emergency. He has an immense faculty for disposing of things. He is not only a great soldier, but he has great common sense and tremendous energy."²² Dawes, grateful to have a larger role in the American war effort, had joined his engineer unit because it was one of the first going overseas. Disappointed when he seemed destined to spend the war at the port of St. Nazaire, Pershing appointed Dawes general purchasing agent, a job more to his liking and more suited to his talents. He wrote Pershing: "I am so glad to be with you, even in my humble way, in the work, and I will never cease to be grateful to you for your trust and confidence in me and for the opportunity you have given me."²³

From the outset Pershing informed Dawes, who is "using his vast power to strengthen and uphold my hands"²⁴ that "no written request for the issuance of orders" from him would be denied and disagreements would be worked out verbally. When Dawes suggested that the General Purchasing Board might be used to purchase supplies throughout Europe, Pershing agreed. After Dawes had been on the job a week, he wrote:

General Pershing demands results. Unless one can show them, he must step aside. When one does show them, the General does not stint his appreciation either in word or act. He has told me how much he relies upon me and how gratified he is at what I am doing and what his officers say of it. He will never know how much these words mean to one in the quiet of the night,



Military Board of Allied Supply, Coubert, France, December 15, 1918: General Enrico Merrone (left), Italian Army in France; Brigadier General Charles G. Dawes, American Expeditionary Forces; Brigadier General Jean Marie Payot, French Army; Major General Reginald Ford, British Expeditionary Forces; Major Cumont, Belgian Army. . . . (Below) Crowded road through Esnes near the Meuse-Argonne front.



weary with the work and battle of the day, he takes mental account of himself and his task. Great is a Commander who inspires in his followers a love and devotion toward him only second to that which they feel for the cause of their common effort.²⁵

A general summary of Dawes' activities as general purchasing agent will indicate the extent of his dealings as agents scattered from Italy to England scouring the European countryside for every item the Army could use. The Labor Bureau employed manpower from every Allied country, as well as from their colonies in Africa and Asia. Dawes found locomotives in Belgium, railroad ties in Portugal. Trade agreements reached with the neutral countries of Spain and Switzerland required the intervention of the State Department and the War Trade Board. Dawes used ambassadors, generals, Treasury Department officials, even Spanish smugglers to obtain war material. He moved without fear or intimidation among high ranking Allied officials, knowing that General Pershing was behind him all the way.²⁶

The supply-procurement statistics at the end of the war showed clearly the effectiveness of the General Purchasing Board. Of the 17 million tons of war material the AEF consumed during the war, 10 million tons were found in Europe by Dawes and his agents; the rest came from the United States.²⁷

By the end of 1917, after working closely with Dawes for nearly four months, Pershing sent Dawes a Christmas card which really "bucked" him up. Dawes replied tenderly: "I care for you very much. You are the best friend I have. I pray for your success—and bet on it, too. Hell! I can't write religion somehow."²⁸ While the two were together for a few days, Dawes also had a chance to see the iron in his friend's blood. It was cold one morning, and Dawes had just shivered his way through some morning exercises beside the fireplace. Pleased that he had enough fortitude and self-discipline to do his stretching and bending routine while suffering in the chilled air of his room, Dawes glanced out his window and gasped: "There was 'Black Jack' clad only in pajamas, bathrobe, and slippers, his bare ankles showing, running up and down in the snow outdoors." Dawes turned from the window shaking his head and marveling at the physical fitness of his friend.²⁹

And sometimes it took all of Pershing's stamina and iron will

to cope with the task of commanding the AEF. From the moment he stepped on French soil, the Allies pressed for commitment of American troops piecemeal to bolster sagging morale in non-American units.³⁰ Pershing fought this pressure and remained steadfast in his determination to forge an American force. In his efforts he had no stauncher ally than Charles Dawes.

Allied pleadings grew more intense in November, 1917, after the double shocks of the Italian reverses at Caporetto and the Bolshevik takeover in Petrograd. The possibility of an Italian and Russian surrender spurred the Allied leaders to begin considering some kind of common action. Out of this new cooperative attitude came the Supreme War Council, formed on November 7, 1917.³¹ Representatives from each Allied government met in Versailles to discuss the military situation on the Western Front. Led by Prime Minister David Lloyd George of England and President Georges Clemenceau of France, the council urged Pershing to consider amalgamation of the fresh American troops. Pershing discussed the situation several times with Dawes, explaining how the Allies wanted to divide the Americans between them. Dawes counseled against it: "America has a pride which should not be ignored unless extremely strong military considerations demanded it." Pershing and Dawes agreed that Americans back home would be "disappointed at any loss of what might be termed the 'individuality' of our troops." Dawes prodded his friend to announce publicly that the United States would remain a single force determined to bring ultimate defeat to Germany. Such an announcement, he said, would have "a strong effect if Germany is wavering."³²

Dawes could listen as his friend poured out his problems; he could advise, but he could not make the decisions. He could nevertheless be there when the weight of the world seemed to be on Pershing's shoulders. Referring to the amalgamation pressure in early June, 1918, Dawes noted: "John is . . . in one of those crises at the beginning of military movements, alike so annoying and yet so valuable as establishing his unquestioned leadership. To me, his firmness and his great strength of statement—his breadth of view and his utter indifference to the personal importance of anyone opposing him—are a source of pride and satisfaction as well as

relief.”³³ From Dawes’ diary one can see that during this period when the Supreme War Council was meeting in Versailles, Pershing spent a lot of time with Dawes, either going to occasional plays or enjoying meals together. Having a close friend like Dawes in Paris gave Pershing the opportunity to get away from the war once in awhile.

Although Pershing had his hands full with getting the AEF put together while keeping the Allies at bay, other problems also sometimes made him turn to Dawes for advice or comfort. One vexation came to France in the form of Major General Leonard Wood. Pershing had known Wood for years, going back to 1900, when both had served in the Philippines. Wood had recommended Pershing for a brigadier generalcy and later urged that he command the Mexican Expedition in 1916. Disappointed after being ignored for service in France, Wood finally wangled a trip to Europe as an observer in February, 1918. Pershing flatly opposed the visit, but to no avail. Wood showed up first in London and then in Paris, where he was entertained by Allied officials, who hoped he would replace the less well-known and still untried Pershing. When the two finally met, the atmosphere was cool and correct. In his diary Pershing noted that Wood had been a guest at headquarters, but said nothing more.³⁴

To Dawes, however, he revealed more concern. Wood’s presence had been upsetting, although Pershing did not want to let it appear that too much was being made of it at Chaumont. Still, the rancor lingered. “While I do not think his activities are of any particular import, yet I do know that his entire attitude is one of criticism. . . . He assumed a superior attitude in all his conversations and in his written communications,” Pershing wrote. Dawes did his best to soothe his friend’s ruffled feathers. He was not surprised that Wood had done his utmost to get to France. Given Wood’s past military service, it seemed only natural. But it did not mean that “in so doing he expects to displace you,” he told Pershing, whose position he viewed as secure: “Remember . . . that your great organizing ability has been so exercised that your organization is functioning with the minimum of friction.” Not only was the AEF functioning relatively smoothly, but American troops were receiving praise from English and French officers with whom Dawes had visited. “As a matter of fact,” Dawes wrote

Pershing, "after seven months' conduct of affairs in France your personal prestige was never higher with the public at home and so far as I can learn with the people of France." ³⁵

Although Pershing found comfort in Dawes' words, his feelings about Wood were unchanged. Even after the war Pershing's dislike for his former superior was strong enough to cause him to seriously consider running for the presidency of the United States if it would keep Wood out of the White House. ³⁶

All of Pershing's political problems with Wood and with the Allies were quickly forgotten with the thundering German attack that began on March 21, 1918. Wood went home, and the Allies decided to stop arguing and start cooperating. Within a week they agreed to put their trust in General (later Marshal) Ferdinand Foch as supreme commander of the Allied Forces. Pershing seconded the idea, and for the first time Allied command at the front was under the control of one man. ³⁷

The coordination of the front gave Dawes an idea: Why not do the same thing for the Allied supply organizations? Only military unification of the rear "could bring about a proper perception—and then take the action called for it—of the relation of what we are doing and propose to do for our army as a unit to what we should do and propose to do for our army as merged with other armies." Actually Dawes had considered such supply coordination during his early days in France, noting that the "war would best be fought if one commander-in-chief controlled the movement of the ships, supplies, and men of the three nations." ³⁸ But in the fall of 1917 there had been no emergency; now one existed, and Dawes saw his chance to put his thoughts into action.

On April 13, 1918, he sent Pershing a proposal calling for a "merging and consolidation of all supply into one military authority responsible to the corresponding authority at the front." What was needed, Dawes argued, was an officer who would have a "bird's eye view" of the overall Allied supply system with the authority to act where necessary to reduce supply duplication. His experience in France had shown him instances where all three Allied armies could fight if supplies were coordinated under one authority. ³⁹

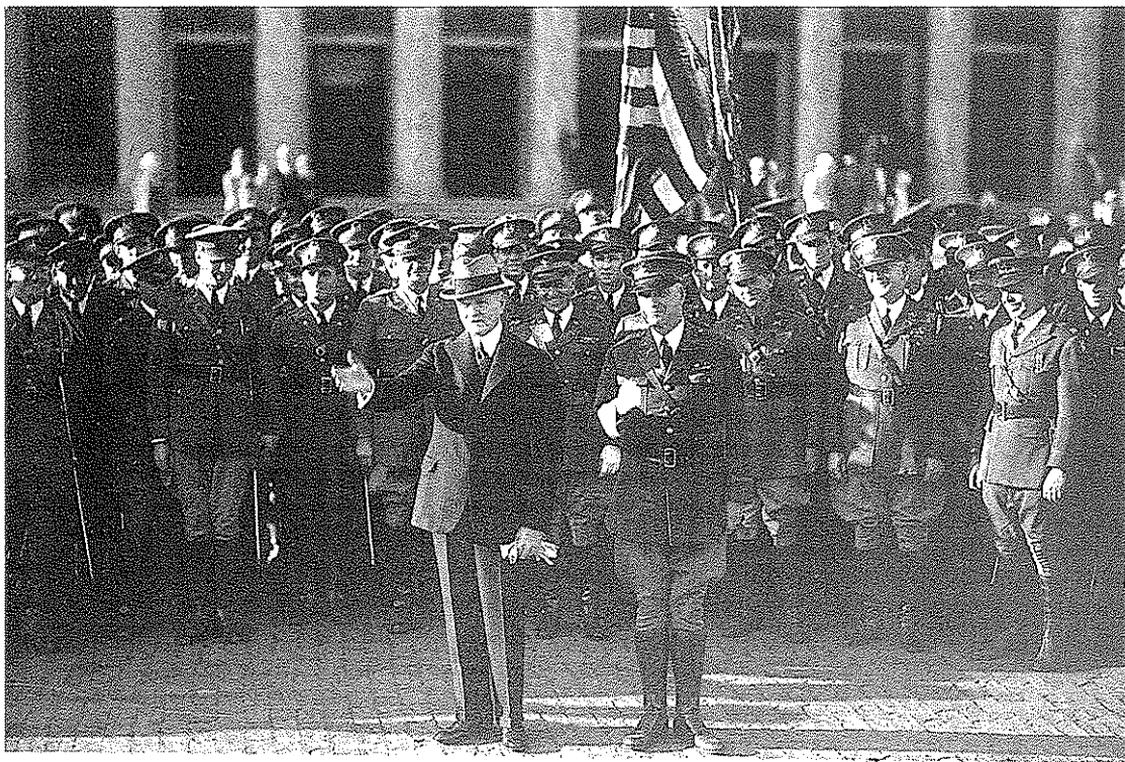
By presenting his plan directly to Pershing, Dawes avoided tiresome AEF red tape, which would have enveloped his idea

and then buried it in a committee. Dawes usually had ideas that made sense, and this was one of them. The supply demands of the ever-growing AEF had weighed heavily on Pershing's mind during his feverish preparations for the first American offensive. A pooling of supplies seemed the only answer to avoiding a catastrophe just when the Allies most needed smooth coordination. Pershing immediately began selling Dawes' proposal to the Allies.⁴⁰

Clemenceau accepted the plan right away. It seemed so practical he wondered why someone had not thought of it before? ⁴¹ The British proved more difficult. The War Office in London wanted to study the plan, and Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig was reluctant to relinquish control of his supplies. He had just recently agreed to the elevation of Foch to supreme commander at the front. Taking control of the rear from him was simply asking too much.⁴²

Pershing, however, was not to be denied; he redoubled his efforts. While Dawes worked on the details, Pershing wired Chief-of-Staff Peyton C. March explaining the plan. March replied that it sounded "undoubtedly correct in principle" and gave his approval.⁴³ Pershing decided to give the British another try, this time going over the heads of the War Office to Prime Minister Lloyd George. At a meeting of the Supreme War Council in May, 1918, Pershing took the British leader aside and described the pooling idea. Lloyd George saw no problems with it—as long as the War Office agreed. The British military people remained stubborn, however, and Dawes began to fear that his plan would fall through. Pershing again went to Clemenceau. This time the two men produced a document outlining the general activities and responsibilities of the proposed supply coordinating agency. A board consisting of representatives of each country with armies in the field would be formed, and the unanimous decision by the board would have the force of orders.

Dawes had originally hoped the board would be headed by an officer, with full powers to make final decisions. When the British balked at this, he agreed that decisions would require unanimous consent by all board members. Dawes and Pershing both realized that if the British were ever going to join the new supply board, some of its authority would have to be watered down. Finally, after visiting London Dawes was able



John J. Pershing (front left) and William H. Oury at the University of Nebraska in 1933.



General Pershing and the Prince of Wales, August 8, 1919, in London.

to bring the British aboard. One final concession was necessary, however. In addition to unanimity, decisions would have to be approved by the respective Allied commands.⁴⁴ By this time Dawes with Pershing's concurrence was willing to compromise to save his plan.

After nearly two months of tedious and sometimes exasperating negotiations, Dawes and Pershing had finally created a unification of the rear similar to that at the front. The new supply board, the Military Board of Allied Supply (MBAS), held its first meeting on June 18, 1918. Representatives of the British, French, American, Italian, and Belgian armies met weekly to discuss supplies and coordinate resources. Important decisions the MBAS made during its five-month existence included the pooling of ammunition along the front between the French and the Americans; an agreement to standardize the Allied forage ration; creation of an inter-Allied reserve of automobiles and light railroad materials and personnel; development of a composite of Allied motor transport; the pooling of gasoline supplies; a school of driving instruction; and a comprehensive study of all Allied supply systems.⁴⁵

The operations of the MBAS contributed significantly to the Allied war effort during those last hectic months of 1918. That it was ever created in the first place owes much to the untiring efforts of Dawes and Pershing, who together literally moved mountains.

At war's end in November, 1918, after the American Army's attack into the Meuse-Argonne, both men could relax, though there was still much work to do—reversing the great supply engine they had struggled so long to produce. Dawes also insisted that the general do a little playing. With difficulty Pershing once sneaked into an opera house, but was soon discovered and had to scurry out a side entrance.⁴⁶

During the next few months when Pershing worked to disband the AEF and get the boys back home, Dawes agreed to serve on the United States Liquidation Board, which handled the disposal of surplus AEF property. After lengthy negotiations, the commission finally finished its work in July, 1919, and Dawes prepared to go home.⁴⁷ Before he left he went to England to visit his British relatives. There a new Dawes named Charles had recently been born and General Dawes

had been invited to the christening ceremony. Dawes promptly appointed his commander-in-chief co-sponsor and godfather and asked him to go along. Pershing was agreeable, since he was going to be in England anyway. Meanwhile, Pershing's liaison with the British War Office, Colonel Lloyd C. Griscom, had made arrangements for the general to meet Lloyd George on the same day as the christening. Much to Griscom's astonishment and consternation, Pershing explained "rather sheepishly" that he would be unable to meet with the British leader. "I promised Charley I'd [attend the christening]." Griscom obligingly reworked Pershing's itinerary so that the general could fulfill his obligations to Dawes and still get to London to see Lloyd George. That settled, Pershing and personnel from the British War Office, whom Dawes had also invited, motored to the village of Mt. Ephraim in Kent to pay homage to Dawes' newest relative. Dawes and Pershing sat together in a front-row pew. The ceremony concluded, there was a round or two of toasts, then Pershing and the rest piled into their vehicles and sped to London. Even prime ministers had to wait when Dawes wanted Pershing for something.⁴⁸

Once again in Paris, Pershing and Dawes reminisced about the war and the future. "Several times during our long visit we were both greatly affected, but it was when we spoke of the sorrows in our life, not of anything material that there may be left in it for either of us." There had been rumors of Pershing for President, but that was too far yet in the future.⁴⁹ With his farewell said and his bags packed, Dawes boarded the *USS Leviathan* on July 30 and sailed for America, where civilian life awaited him at his Chicago bank. Pershing followed Dawes home in early September. For them the war was over, but their old friendship would continue.

The war was the crowning achievement of Pershing's long military career. Upon his return to the United States, Congress promoted him to general of the Armies, a rank unique in American history. He made a half-hearted run for the Presidency in 1920, then served as Army chief of staff from July, 1921, to September, 1924, when he retired from military service. He spent his remaining years serving on commissions and traveling as much as his failing health would allow. He died in July, 1948.

For Dawes the war served as a transition period between his days as a banker and as a politician. He returned to his Chicago bank, but it no longer seemed as fulfilling as it once had. His experiences as general purchasing agent convinced him that the efficiency he and Pershing created in France could be duplicated in the American government. His outspoken support for reducing the size and operations of the government while increasing efficiency caught the popular mood, and in 1921 President Warren Harding appointed him the first director of the new Bureau of the Budget. Dawes went on to head the Commission on German War Preparations in 1924, become President Calvin Coolidge's vice-president between 1925 and 1929, and finally serve as ambassador to England and head the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for President Herbert Hoover. In 1932 he retired from politics and spent his remaining years in Evanston, Illinois. He died in April, 1951.

Although Pershing and Dawes never worked side by side after war, their friendship continued. They kept in touch with almost weekly correspondence, the rate of which slackened only in Pershing's last few years. They visited each other often.

A year before Pershing died Dawes sent him a brief note expressing his feelings for his lifelong friend. "I often think of you with the deep affection I have always felt for you. I am very grateful to you for being responsible for my experiences in the AEF, which I have always regarded as the most important experience of my life."⁵⁰ The relationship that had begun those many years ago in Lincoln, Nebraska, grew stronger under the stress of World War I and continued for the duration of their lives.

NOTES

1. Although biographical works of the two men are numerous, the following represent some of the most recent literature. On Pershing: Frank E. Vandiver, *Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing*, 2 vols. (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1977); and Donald Smythe, *Guerrilla Warrior: The Early Life of John J. Pershing* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973). Smythe has published numerous articles on various aspects of Pershing's activities before and during the war. Vandiver has also published a shorter analysis of Pershing's leadership during the war entitled, *John J. Pershing and the Anatomy of Leadership* (Colorado Springs: United States Air Force Academy, 1963). On Dawes: Bascom N. Timmons, *Portrait of an American: Charles Gates Dawes* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1953) is the best

published study. An excellent unpublished work is by John E. Pixton Jr. "Charles Gates Dawes: An American Pilgrim," available at the Evanston Historical Society, Evanston, Illinois.

2. Timmons, *Portrait of an American*, 28; and Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior*, 185. More about each man's Nebraska experiences can be found in Richard G. Sherman, "Charles G. Dawes, A Nebraska Businessman, 1887-1894: The Making of an Entrepreneur," *Nebraska History*, 46 (September, 1965): 193-207; and Donald Smythe, "John J. Pershing at the University of Nebraska, 1891-1895," *Nebraska History*, 43 (September, 1962), 169-195.

3. Box 380: "Unpublished Memoirs," 1936, file: Chapters 1-15, Chapter 6, John J. Pershing Papers, Library of Congress.

4. For a recent discussion of the military officer at the end of the 19th century and his efforts to become more involved in non-military society, see John M. Gates, "The Alleged Isolation of US Army Officers in the Late 19th Century," *Parameters*, 10 (September 1980), 32-45.

5. Pershing to Dawes, November 14, December 4, 1903, Box 281: John J. Pershing Correspondence, file (1903-1920), Charles G. Dawes Papers, Special Collections, Deering Library, Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. (The Dawes Papers hereafter cited as DP.)

6. Smythe, *Guerilla Warrior*, 119.

7. Pershing to Dawes, February 19, 1915, and Dawes to Pershing, February 23, 1915, Box 281: John J. Pershing Correspondence, file: 1903-1920, DP.

8. Timmons, *Portrait of an American*, 5-9.

9. John J. Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, 2 vols. (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1931), I, 24 (Hereafter cited as Pershing, *Experiences*).

10. On the formation of the AEF supply network see, *Organization of the Services of Supply: American Expeditionary Forces*, Monograph No. 7 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1921. Also helpful for studying American supply during the war are: James A. Huston, *The Sinews of War: Army Logistics, 1775-1953* (Washington, DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1966); and Erna Risch, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775-1939* (Washington, DC: Quartermaster Historian's Office, Office of the Quartermaster General, 1962). Two other accounts by participants are: Johnson Hagood, *The Services of Supply: A Memoir of the Great War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1927); and James G. Harbord. *The American Army in France, 1917-1919* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1936).

General accounts of the American war effort include: Edward M. Coffman, *The War to End All Wars: The American Military Experience in World War I* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968); and Harvey A. DeWeerd, *President Wilson Fights His War: World War I and the American Intervention* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1968). An excellent recent study devoted primarily to the home front, but with some material on the AEF in France is David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980).

11. Pershing, *Experiences*, I, 147-148. The committee report that Pershing rejected may be found in Folder 64, Official Correspondence of the General Purchasing Agent, Box 4, General Purchasing Agent, AEF, Record Group 120, National Archives. (Hereafter cited as GPA, RG 120).

12. Dawes, *Journal of the Great War*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921) I, 21-22. *The Journal of the Great War* is a nearly verbatim publication of Dawes' wartime diary, which is located in Box 81 in the Dawes Papers. Pershing's *Experiences* is based on his diary, the original of which can be found in Box 4-5 of the Pershing Papers. Pershing's war memoirs expand greatly on his succinct diary, whose entries were often no more than a sentence or two. For a study of the Dawes-Pershing relationship, Dawes' diary provides by far the most information.

13. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 22-23.

14. *Ibid.*, 1:99. Dawes' nephew, Henry Dawes, recalled later that Pershing was "always trying to improve the sartorial appearance of my uncle." Henry Dawes to Professor Donald Smythe, May 8, 1961. This correspondence was kindly provided this writer by Professor Smythe. The picture of Pershing that Dawes sought is reproduced in Donald Smythe, "'General, Police Your Buttons,'" *Soldiers*, 26 (July, 1971); inside front cover page.

15. Lloyd C. Griscom, *Diplomatically Speaking* (New York: The Literary Guild of America, Inc., 1940), 411. Dawes sometimes invited another nephew in uniform, Beman Gates Dawes Jr., to join him and Pershing for lunch. Beman Gates, however, was an enlisted man, and Pershing refused to include Beman when he and Charles ate together. The General would "lecture General Dawes on the idea of inviting an enlisted man to have lunch with him." Beman Gates Dawes Jr. to Professor Donald Smythe, January 20, 1961. Professor Smythe generously allowed this writer to view this correspondence.

16. Correspondence relating to Dawes' activities as General Purchasing Agent can be found in Boxes 62-71 in the Dawes Papers. Other documents relating to the General Purchasing Board and Dawes are located in the General Purchasing Agent records in RC 120.

17. For coal negotiations, see Dawes, *Journal*, I, 28-40. Correspondence relating to the coal problem and its solution can be found in Box 66, Fuel file, DP.

18. Activities of Dawes and the Labor Bureau can be traced in Box 67, Labor File, DP.

19. Dawes to Pershing, April 14, 1918, Box 59, Dawes File, Pershing Papers.

20. Pershing to Harbord, August 26, 1918, Pershing-Harbord Letters (1917-1922), James G. Harbord Papers, Library of Congress.

21. Harbord to Pershing, August 31, 1918, *ibid.*

22. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 20.

23. Dawes to Pershing, October 9, 1917, Box 59, Dawes File, Pershing Papers.

24. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 27.

25. *Ibid.*, I, 27-28.

26. Dawes sums up his work as General Purchasing Agent in *Report of the General Purchasing Agent and Chairman of General Purchasing Board American Expeditionary Forces to Commanding General, Service of Supply American Expeditionary Forces, February 28, 1919*, which is reprinted in Dawes, *Journal*, II, 3-64. The original report can be found in Box 64, DP.

27. For AEF purchasing statistics, see Dawes, *Journal*, II, 34-35.

28. Dawes to Pershing, December 26, 1917, Box 59, Dawes File, Pershing Papers.

29. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 65.

30. See, for example, Pershing, *Experiences*, I, 159.

31. For an analysis of the Supreme War Council see David F. Trask, *The United States in the Supreme War Council: American War Aims and Inter-Allied Strategy 1917-1918* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961).

32. Dawes, *Journal*, 1:68.

33. *Ibid.*, 1:71.

34. Pershing, *Experiences*, 1:327. On Wood's visit to France see Vandiver, *Black Jack II*, 802-804; Hermann Hagedorn, *Leonard Wood: A Biography*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1931), II, 267-273; and Jack C. Lane, *Armed Progressive: General Leonard Wood* (San Rafael, California: Presidio Press, 1978), 219-222.

35. Pershing to Dawes and Dawes to Pershing, March 2, 1918, Box 70, Leonard Wood File, DP.

36. For information on Pershing and the 1920 election see, Lawrence L. Murray, "General John J. Pershing's Bid for the Presidency in 1920— 'The Boys Will Never Call Him Papa,'" *Nebraska History*, 53 (1972), 217-252.

37. Trask, *The United States in the Supreme War Council*, 64; Vandiver, *Black Jack*, Chapters 20 and 21; and Pershing, *Experiences*, Chapter 25.
38. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 41, 92.
39. *Ibid.*, I, 84-90.
40. Pershing, *Experiences*, I, 397-398.
41. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 96.
42. Pershing, *Experiences*, I, 399; II, 4.
43. March's cable is reproduced in Dawes, *Journal*, I, 283.
44. Dawes' and Pershing's efforts to form the MBAS can be followed in their memoirs of the war, as well as in the Formation and Operation of the MBAS file, Official Correspondence of the General Purchasing Agent, Box 4209, GPA, RG 120.
45. The activities of the MBAS can be found in the following: Allied and Associated Powers, *Military Board of Supply, Report of the Military Board of Allied Supply*, 2 vols. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1924-1925); and *Report of the American Member of the Military Board of Allied Supply to the Commander-in-Chief American Expeditionary Forces, March 27, 1919*, reprinted in Dawes, *Journal*, I, 275-344. The original of Dawes' MBAS report is available in MBAS Report File, Official Correspondence of the General Purchasing Agent, Box 4209, GPA, RG 120.
46. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 202-206; and James G. Harbord, *Leaves From a War Diary* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1931), 393-395.
47. For the work of the US Liquidation Commission see, Edwin F. Parker, *Final Report of the United States Liquidation Commission*, War Department (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1920). The deliberations of the Liquidation Commission can be traced in Box 67, Minutes of the U.S. Liquidation Commission File, DP.
48. Lloyd C. Griscom, *Diplomatically Speaking*, 454-55. See also, Vandiver, *Black Jack*, II, 1019-1021.
49. Dawes, *Journal*, I, 270-271.
50. Dawes to Pershing, July 14, 1947, Box 281, File (1920-1947), DP.