

THE NEWS DID LEAK.

Even Civilians Had Advance Knowledge of War Troop Movements.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

In one of General Pershing's instalments last week he told how, in 1917, he was gravely concerned over the fact that not only the enemy but also the French civilians were familiar with the sailings and arrival of American transports before he himself had received official notification. Two incidents can well illustrate the condition.

In September, 1917, the supply train which had been with Pershing in Mexico the previous year (and resting on the border since) was ordered to Chickamauga Park, Ga., to recruit to war strength from the regular army units there before joining the Second Division in France. We shared barracks with the Fifty-fifth Infantry. For two months we lounged about, waiting for the order, when, without warning, at 4 o'clock one morning the truckmaster (first sergeant) stole among the sleeping men, arousing them and telling them to get up quietly, dress and make up their packs. We knew then the hour had struck. While getting ready, there was much speculation as to the port from which we would sail, many selecting Savannah as the most convenient, while others chose Norfolk. In the darkness stepped a "Y" secretary, who called me and beckoned me outside.

The "Y" published a weekly paper called Trench and Camp, which was conducting a limerick contest for which two prizes were offered, and I had contributed two. Outside he showed a gold-mounted fountain pen and a set of military brushes and asked me to take my choice. In doing so he said: "We really should not do this, because the contest has still two weeks to run; but, knowing your company is leaving, the judges held a secret meeting and decided to present the prize to you now, as there may be difficulty in getting it to you in France. They all agreed that there is no chance of beating your limericks. We only ask one favor—that you make no mention of the award until after a sufficient time has elapsed after the closing of the contest for it to reach you in France." I asked him how he knew we were leaving that morning, and he smiled and replied: "Oh, we knew it several days ago." Quickly I shot back the question, "Where are we sailing from?" and he replied, "Hoboken." We filed out in the darkness through the sleeping camp to the railroad station. While lined up awaiting the troop train we were cautioned by officers to furnish no information as to our identity, where we were from or probable destination to any strangers at any stop en route. We landed at Camp Merritt, New Jersey.

Assigned to barracks, I went to the company commander and asked for a pass. He replied that an order was posted strictly forbidding the issuance of passes to outgoing troops. I told him that was unfortunate, as I lived in Mount Vernon, a short distance away, and had not been home since joining the army over six months previously. He thought for a moment and said: "Well, your name will not be called today; but for God's sake be here tomorrow. Remember, I am not giving you permission."

I put on my coat and boarded the train at Dumont for the Fort Lee ferry. Hardly was I seated, when a civilian, a total stranger, arose from an opposite seat and advanced smiling with an extended hand, greeting me by name and saying he knew two or three Mount Vernonites. He mentioned the company to which I belonged and expressed surprise that the train was leaving with only five companies, which was true, as the sixth company did not join us until the following February. Since he had done all the talking and seemed to possess so much information, I asked: "I wonder on which transport we are to sail?" He promptly replied: "The Aurania; but you are not leaving for a week. You will board the boat at 5 o'clock next Monday morning and leave at daybreak, sailing alone for Halifax, where the boat will await the arrival of other transports before being convoyed to Liverpool."

The next morning I told the company commander of the stranger, but he said nothing; but when the following Monday morning at 5 o'clock we actually boarded the Aurania and with the first gray of dawn passed the Statue of Liberty, he did show some concern over the incident. Everything turned out just as the man had stated.

Now, how did that "Y" secretary and the stranger possess advance knowledge of our movements which even our officers did not enjoy? Surely, there was a tremendous leak somewhere.

J. GARDNER MINARD.

Pelham, N. Y., Jan. 26, 1931.

As to War Debts.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

Now that Sir Robert Horne, former Chancellor of the British Exchequer, has informed the world that Great Britain pays into the United States Treasury as much as she receives from Germany, France and other war claims, with the result that her debt to the United States constitutes no burden to the British taxpayer, is it not time that the world be equally enlightened with regard to the quasi-burden of war debts of our other allies to the United States?

OSCAR L. RICHARD.

Lake Placid, N. Y., Jan. 27, 1931.

Bootstraps and Lifting Power.

To the Editor of The New York Times:

If high wages bring prosperity, how will the recipients of higher wages be any better off than at medium wages, when they have to buy the products of high-wage employment?

And if high wages do away with unemployment, how is it that in France, where wages are very low, there is absolutely no unemployment?

ROBERT GRIMSHAW.

Brooklyn, Jan. 27, 1931.

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