





# My Experiences in the World War

BY GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING

## CHAPTER XXV

According to my headquarters at December 31, 1917, I was surprised to receive the following cable from Secretary of War in view of the numerous plans for training troops with the French and British.

English and French are upon the President their will have your forces amalgamated with theirs by regiments, companies, and both express belief in impending heavy fighting by Germans somewhere along the western front. We desire loss of identity of our troops but regard that as secondary to the most helpful use of your command. The purpose of course is to determine the drive or drives of the war will take place; and in addition some knowledge of your any redistribution of your troops would be difficult.

President, however, desires to have full authority to use troops at your command as you see fit in connection with the British and French commanders in the field. It is suggested for your consideration that possible places might be selected for your forces at the junction of the British and French lines, which would enable you to throw strength in either direction seemed most likely.

This suggestion is not, however, beyond whatever merit it may have in your judgment, the President's purpose being to act with the representation made here and to authorize you to act with entire freedom to accomplish the main purpose in mind. It is hoped that complete co-ordination of action will be secured in this matter by conference you may have with the British and French commanders and the action that may be taken.

The following cable also was received from Washington which determined the determination of the British to carry their point:

The French ambassador called on the secretary of war today and with him a dispatch from M. Clemenceau to the effect that General Pershing and General Petain had agreed as to the wisdom of sending American troops by attaching them to the regular units of the

**Pershing Replies to Baker.**

The following extract from my cable of January 8 conveys the main points of my reply:

The French have not been entirely frank, as unofficial information indicates they really want to incorporate our regiments into their divisions for such service in the trenches as they desire. As to our instruction, a certain amount of work with French troops is beneficial, and this we are having and expect to have.

Have expressed a willingness to aid in any way in an emergency, but do not think good reason exists for us to break up our divisions and scatter regiments for service among French and British, especially under the guise of instruction.

It thus appeared quite clear that the French were so intent on their plan that Premier Clemenceau presumed to cable Washington as to how our units were to be handled. Upon the receipt of the cable from Washington about the disagreement between Petain and myself I wrote at once to M. Clemenceau, quoting the cable and adding:

"May I not suggest to you, Mr. President, the expediency of communicating such matters to Washington by cable. These questions must all be settled here, eventually, on their merits, through friendly conference between General Petain and myself, and cables of this sort are very likely, I fear, to convey the impression of serious disagreement between us when such is not the case."

**Clemenceau's Reply.**

M. Clemenceau's reply, translated into English follows:

"My Dear General: I hasten, without losing a moment, to reply to your letter dated January 5, 1918. I found myself in the position of cabling to the ambassador of France at Washington because the two contradictory responses which I had received from General Petain and from yourself, when you did me the honor of calling on me, obliged me, in the interests of the common cause, to seek an arbitration between the two commanders in chief."

"I need not conceal that I placed full confidence in the American government with regard to this. However, it was not to the American government that I addressed myself. I cabled to the ambassador of France, which was my right and my duty, in order to give him directions for the conversations which might take place either with the secretary of war or with the President of the United States."

"It might very well have happened that later on I should have addressed the American government, but I insist on this point, that I have done nothing of the sort. I have not authorized the ambassador to read all or part of my dispatch to the secretary of war. I regret that he did so, but I do not disavow anything that I wrote."

"I am giving you here the explanation which I owe you and I am going to exercise all the patience of which I am capable in awaiting the good news that the American commander and the French commander have finally agreed on a question which may be vital to the outcome of the war."

**Clemenceau's Motive Questioned.**

As the French were dead set on getting our troops under their control it is more than probable that the French premier, feeling that their plans were not working out, sought to create some distrust in the minds of our administration at Washington against my management of things in order to pave the way for insisting that we were entirely wrong in not consenting to amalgamation. However, at later meetings with Clemenceau and Petain the alleged differences were seemingly settled amicably, as indicated in my cable of January 14, which follows:

"For chief of staff: Have now definite understanding with French satisfactory to them and to me that our divisions now in France shall complete their training as already begun. In the future divisions arriving in zone of French armies are to have period of training with French, each regiment in a French division. When sufficiently experienced by training in a quiet sector with French our divisions are to be united under their own commander and will be placed in our own sector."

**Vice in Army Denied.**

About this time a cable was received from Washington that some publication at home had made a sweeping charge of both immorality and drunkenness against our men. No such statement could be based on fact, nor could it serve any purpose except to cause unnecessary anxiety to parents and relatives and perhaps satisfy on

universal custom of the people of having wine with their meals. The wines and beer were not so objectionable, but strong alcoholic spirits were regarded by the French themselves as dangerous and were prohibited for their troops, but enforcement of the zone of well enforced outside the zone of the armies.

The problem of preventing our troops from drinking the stronger liquors was difficult, especially at the ports of entry. Efforts to obtain enforcement through conferences with local authorities and through agreements with the port and district officials were made from time to time, but with little result.

I finally appealed to Prime Minister Clemenceau for support, but he would only counsel local officials, as he did not wish to declare a "state of siege" (martial law). In the end it was necessary to take the matter in our own hands and declare every bar and restaurant where the heavy liquor was sold as "off limits" for our troops.

**British Wanted U. S. Men.**

When General Robertson came for the conference regarding the shipment of troops for training with the British as mentioned in my diary, we began to discuss the details of the proposition to be made of our forces which might be brought over in British shipping. It was found that General Robertson's proposal was practical by the same as the one submitted to E. M. House through Mr. Lloyd George. He wanted to bring our infantry and machine-gun units by battalions only, and pointed out how much more expeditiously this would meet the shortage of men in the British army than to ship whole divisions with all their equipment and stores.

He believed that the British government would take the risk of releasing temporarily some shipping engaged in carrying food and raw materials if America could see her way to provide the men, although, he said, it could not well undertake the transportation of complete di-

visions as not enough men would be brought over in this manner to justify the great risks involved. In other words, the British had the shipping to transport American battalions on condition that they would serve in the British armies.

However, as General Robertson's proposal would enable us to increase our strength more rapidly, my preliminary cable to Washington reporting the conference recommended that it be given consideration and, in view of our national attitude regarding service with another army, that if approved the plan should be regarded as a temporary measure to meet an emergency; that as soon as possible the remaining troops of our divisions thus temporarily broken up should be brought over and the units reassembled; that division, brigade and regimental commanders and their staffs be sent with their infantry for training with the corresponding British units, and that the infantry be taken from those divisions that would not otherwise be transported until after June.

(Continued next week)

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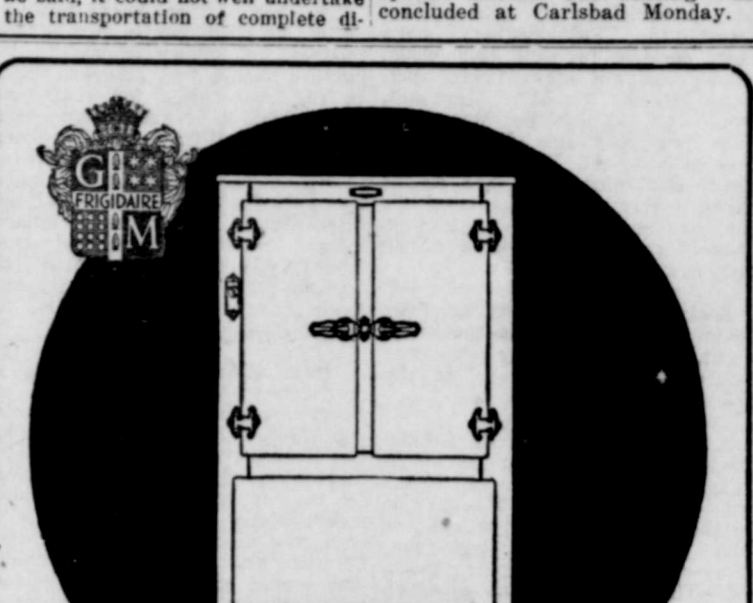
The Hope Community Ditch case which was transferred from Roswell to Carlsbad has been closed by George E. Remley, special master. The hearing was concluded at Carlsbad Monday.

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