

[Partially taken from publications from World War II]

“The Iron Horse

WAR OF MOVEMENT. Troop movements by rail are more than four times greater than they were in World War I. Some of the forces travel aboard regular trains -- but most go by special troop trains. Nearly a hundred such trains start out over America's wartime rails every day.

COMMISSARY PROBLEMS. Nowhere has the enormous increase in essential wartime civilian travel posed greater problems than in New York Central's dining cars. For here the task is complicated, not only by military demands for dining car service, but also by food shortages and rationing.

RAILROAD STRATEGY. General plans for today's complex war traffic are made by the Divisional Dispatchers office. But out on the line, every signal tower must put these plans into execution. In each of the New York Central's 579 signal towers, hundreds of quick decisions must be made daily to keep the Victory trains moving.

COMMUNICATIONS. In war as in peace, mail rides the rails with such complete regularity that this important railroad service is apt to be taken for granted, even forgotten. U.S. Railway Mail Cars travel daily over New York Central's 11,000 mile right of way.

HOSPITALS ON WHEELS. Army Medical Department trains speed wounded fighters to hospitals throughout the United States, either for special treatment or to place them as near home as possible. Regular sleeping cars made up of individual rooms are also on call to supplement those hospital trains..... another reason why the traveling public must help make the most of cars that are available.

LOGISTICS. Logistics was once the science of supplying an army. But in the total war of today,



Is On The Warpath!

logistics also involves supplying the home front, the war production centers and the millions of workers behind the gigantic Victory drive. Railroad freight service is the backbone of this mighty task. New York Central's 1,500 daily freight trains is commanded from its "field headquarters", the caboose.

Just as railroads are important in the development of a country, they are still more important in its defense. In any time of great need, such as war, they are absolutely necessary. It takes a hundred tons of guns, ammunition, trucks, tanks, food, tractors, tools, and all kinds of equipment per man who is at the Front overseas. A whole shipload of tanks, ammunition, machine guns, hospital supplies, can be hauled in a single mile-long freight train!

It used to be said that whichever side "Got there fastest with the mostest men," won. But there are also those vast quantities of heavy materials, in modern war, as well as men, that have to be there too. A million tons of equipment, for a modern, mechanized army of even 10,000 men that goes overseas!

Within a year after Pearl Harbor, when we entered World War II, the railroads had moved more than 11,600,000 troops besides other millions on furlough. Within about three and a half years the number had swelled to 43,730,000 members of the armed forces, in special troop trains or special cars, in addition to millions and millions of regular passengers. The total number of troops and passengers carried in 1944 was about 913 million!

To move a single army division (15,000 men and their equipment) even in this country means getting together and loading, in addition to 500 passenger cars, about 3000 freight cars. That is, in all, from 50 to 70 trains. Again and again, between the end of 1941 and 1945, all those trains, jam-packed with troops and their equipment were rolling on their way within 48 hours after the request or order came in.



Materials to build war plants have to be hurried to their destination. Great machines of all sorts have to be transported for factories. Steel for guns, leather for shoes, parts for planes and jeeps and trucks of all sizes, cloth for uniforms and overcoats, silk or nylon for parachutes - tons and tons of raw materials and finished products of every description have to be rushed smoothly along if the boys at the front are to have even a chance of defending the country successfully and winning the war.

During World War II the railroad industry carried more than 97 per cent of all organized military traffic and more of the war freight. The involvement of the railroads in World War II started even before Pearl Harbor. On March 11, 1941, America implemented its Lend Lease program, in which equipment, including that of the railroads, was sent to the aid of the Allies. Russia alone received 1,900 steam engines and 50 diesel engines. After the declaration of war by the United States, the burden placed on the railroads grew. During mobilization, the railroads were called upon to transport the troops as well as military equipment heading overseas. They were also called upon to operate several small lines used on military bases and installations. By the end of the war, the railroads had moved 91% of all military freight within the country and 98% of all military personnel. In addition to the military, they also had to deal with growing civilian traffic, especially in the east. Due to the rationing of rubber and gasoline, civilians were using the railways for transportation instead of cars.

More and more freight businesses turned to the railways because the presence of German submarines in the Atlantic had disrupted the flow of goods transported by ship through the Panama Canal and along coastal shipping lanes between Texas and New England. Because of the war, revenue freight tonnage on the railroads went from 1.8 billion tons in 1940 to 3 billion tons in 1943.

That the railroads would handle these increased demands was vital. Although railroad employees started to join the U. S. fighting forces in large numbers, the companies were initially not concerned. The Depression had left a large group of unemployed men they thought they could tap into. It was when these men also left for the war in large numbers that the railroad companies began to realize that they would have to draw on personnel resources seldom used before - women and ethnic minorities.

Even though by the end of the war, 351,000 of their employees had joined the war effort, the workforce of the railroad companies actually increased from 1,140,000 in 1941 to 1,420,000 in 1945 through the hiring of women and minorities. The hiring of women by the railroads was not unprecedented. <http://www.rrmuseumpa.org/about/rrhall/facesissues/women2.htm>]