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THROUGH AN ARMY LOOKING GLASS

(Written for "The Listener" by ANTHONY BUXTON)

(After the war, the files of a number of armies will contain correspondence like this. Lest it should be thought that we are giving away military secrets, readers will please note that this particular example comes from the Peruvian Army, and not, of course, from the New Zealand Forces. In the Peruvian Army, as in some others, the terms GSO2, 1, etc., refer, not to chemical gas formulas, but to General Staff Officers, and the numbers refer to their grading or seniority).

Erewhon Military District,
12th November, 1942.

Memo GSO2:

Comd WAAC Camp at Dairyville has asked me to place before you what she considers a serious kit deficiency in Army equipment issued to the troops under her command. The girls complain, she says, of the Army's failure to provide them with hand-mirrors. It is claimed that these are essential for both morale and well-being and it is requested respectfully that they be provided. No authority at present exists for their purchase by the Army. Could steps be taken to amend this, please, in the interests of morale?

J. Bloosh,
2/Lt. Liaison Officer.

Memo GSO1:

The attached file brings forward an unusual request. It does not seem our pigeon at all being really a "Q" matter entirely, but the references to morale seem important. With your permission I think we could jack something up.

John Birdinhand, Major.

Memo Dist. Comdt.:

Attached file minuted on for your approval. Personally I think something should be done. Perhaps we could pass the buck to "Q."

Arthur Aniseed, Lt.-Col.

Memo GSO1:

I concur. Must consider morale. However, it is definitely a Q matter. We must always respect usual channels of communication. How much are mirrors, anyway?

J. Weatherbeat, Brig.

Memo. Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General:

Attached file is for your information and necessary action, please. The references to morale are stressed.

Arthur Aniseed, Lt.-Col.

Memo S/Sgt. Halibut:

No provision exists in equipment lists for hand-mirrors, WAACS, for the use



of. In the meantime, hold this file until Monday, when matter will be discussed with Ordnance.

X. Flintheart, Deputy - Assistant Quartermaster General.

Memo Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General:

Further to our conversation of yesterday forenoon, NO authority exists for the issue of mirrors, hand, WAACS, for the use of. I respectfully suggest, however, that in the interests of morale as stressed by you, the matter might be got round this way: Mirrors, hand, signallers, for the use of, could also be used by WAACS for unmilitary purposes without damage or depreciation of the goods. WAACS could be taught



heliograph signalling.

P.S. (Personal Memo): It will be a bad show if we can't get something here, laddie. But it's one buck you can't wish on to me.

J. Canny, Ord. Officer, Erewhon Military District.

Memo 2/Lt. Bloosh:

Re mirrors for WAACS. Your original memo referred to me. Suggest that the mirrors be obtained as heliograph apparatus. No regulation could stop a WAAC looking at herself in one. But the recommendation should come from you, through the usual channels of communication. This, in the light of these new circumstances, is no longer a "Q" matter.

X. Flintheart, Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General.

PERSONAL

Memo Corporal Neverknow:
Dear Corporal,

The bucks fly so quickly round this office you can hear them whistling through the air. As you see from the file, this one has come home to roost. Could you indent on Form 197245 for the requisite number of signalling mirrors, and pass the indent on through the proper channels. WAACO.

J. Bloosh, 2/Lt.