

Horsed transport and pack mule companies were formed for use in Cyria, Cyprus and Eritrea.

Major-General C. le B. Goldney continued to perform the duties of Director of Supplies and Transport throughout the period, and I greatly appreciated his unfailing and steadfast support.

Local Production.—In order to effect further savings in shipping space, local production was stimulated still further. Three and a half million anti-tank mines, forty self-propelled 200-ton landing craft and thirty 100-ton lighters were among the numerous articles constructed in the Middle East. Expenditure on account of Ordnance supplies alone rose from £400,000 to £800,000 Egyptian.

Salvage.—The salvage organisation, which had developed enormously by November 1941 as a result of intense propaganda and the inculcation throughout the Command of the need for economy, continued to grow and to extend its activities. Seven salvage depots were operating in Egypt, six in Syria and Palestine, five in Eritrea and one at Khartoum. These depots were staffed largely by local civilians, supervised by a few British personnel.

Among the salvage shipped to the United Kingdom, India and elsewhere, were 5,000 tons of scrap steel, 1,000 tons of tyres and rubber, and 380 tons of brass. Over 30,000 tyres, 1,750,000 bottles, mainly for distilled water for motor vehicles, 865 tons of camouflage material, and 32,000 forty-gallon drums were made serviceable and reissued, besides thousands of tons of re-manufactured metals and other materials.

For the operations in Cyrenaica special salvage officers and units were attached to the Eighth Army. Salvage depots were established as the troops went forward; and, although collection could not keep pace with the advance, much material was salvaged. Amongst the equipment collected and sent back to the base were 164 British and 330 enemy guns, over 15,000 rifles, more than a million petrol tins, 3,000 tons of ammunition and 1,200 tons of scrap metal.

In view of the poor design of our own petrol containers, a special effort was made to salvage as many as possible of the very efficient German petrol and water containers. At Bengasi over two million of them were discovered, but only a few could be removed before the enemy made his counterstroke.

Printing and Stationery.—The Army Printing and Stationery Service assumed responsibility for supplying the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force, and also for providing newsprint for military and semi-military purposes. The base depot at Suez was enlarged to handle five hundred tons a month.

The General Headquarters Printing Press was greatly expanded, the number of machines being increased from thirty to sixty-two, while the output was trebled. The importance of an efficient and adequate printing service to the Army cannot be over-estimated.

Postal Services.—Under Colonel W. R. Roberts, Deputy Director, the Army Postal Service continued to serve the troops most satisfactorily and to deal efficiently with an ever-increasing volume of business in spite of considerable transportation difficulties.

The airgraph service was further developed and the number of letters despatched and received weekly by this system increased from about three hundred thousand in November

1941 to just over one million in August 1942. Articles of all classes posted weekly in British Army Post Offices in the Command during May 1942 averaged a million and three-quarters.

Ordnance Services.—A chronic shortage of base ordnance workshop units was experienced, and as a result it was some time before the accumulation of tanks in need of repair could be cleared. Moreover, every tank imported from overseas had to be modified for the desert. Workshop accommodation was increased, nevertheless, chiefly by impressing civilians and civilian firms. This enabled methods of working to be improved, and repairs and overhauls are on a mass production rather than on an individual basis. Since November 1941 the number of guns and vehicles overhauled in workshops was doubled. Nearly 40,000 vehicles and 5,000 guns were overhauled and 15,000 vehicles and 5,000 guns modified.

The recovery organisation was improved by every means that could be devised subject always to the shortage of recovery vehicles. In the campaign of November-December 1941 recovery fell far short of the standard achieved by the Germans, partly because there were very few recovery vehicles and partly because the organisation itself was defective. By June 1942 we had received more recovery vehicles and the organisation had been thoroughly revised with the result that recovery from the battlefield of Gazala was at least as good as if not better than the German.

Major-General W. W. Richards continued to inspire and direct the work of the Ordnance Services with energy, foresight and determination and it is largely due to him that they reached so high a standard of efficiency.

Signals.—The signal organisation continued to operate with the utmost efficiency throughout the period and the service was further developed. A serious shortage of personnel as well as equipment continued to be experienced; and it was due to the ingenuity and efficiency of Major-General W. R. C. Penney, my Signal Officer-in-Chief, and his staff that operations and administration did not suffer as a result of these shortcomings. To meet the shortage of signal personnel, it was necessary to convert two Yeomanry regiments into signal units. The regiments concerned accepted this decision most loyally, and rapidly became efficient in their new role.

Medical Services.—The medical services continued to function with great efficiency under the able and energetic direction of Major-General P. S. Tomlinson, my Director of Medical Services.

Experience in operations in Libya showed that casualty clearing stations should have their own transport and be fully mobile. It was also clear that all mobile medical units should have their own means of wireless communication. Mobile surgical teams were formed and attached to main dressing stations and casualty clearing stations. These teams worked on the battlefield and proved of inestimable value, as did mobile blood transfusion units. A small number of air ambulances was available, and it is essential that more should be provided to enable serious cases to be evacuated rapidly and smoothly.

Conclusion.

It may be thought that the administrative effort and the number of persons employed in