

22 AUG 1942

UNION DEFENCE FORCE INSTITUTES "Q" SERVICES CORPS.
(Y.M.C.A. & TOC H).

*Mr. Lamm
to R.R.M.*

P. O. Box 1001,
JOHANNESBURG.

21st August 1942.

The Institute of Race Relations,
P. O. Box 97,
JOHANNESBURG.

MIDEAST PROGRESS REPORT : JUNE 1942.

I have pleasure in enclosing a copy of our Mideast June Report. It is gratifying to note that in spite of difficulties due to the military situation, the Unit continued to serve the men in every possible way.

You will note that we have now been able to extend our work to the Nurses' centres, and also to the Natives from the Protectorates. I would draw your attention to pages 4, 5, 8 and 9.

D.H. Duncum, Lt.

A/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER : U.D.F.I. "Q". S.C.

UNION DEFENCE FORCE INSTITUTES.

(Y.M.C.A. & T.O.C.H.)

(MIDDLE EAST)

PROGRESS REPORT, JUNE 1942.

HEADQUARTERS:

(a) Accommodation:

There has been no development in the finding of further accommodation either as Barracks or Offices. All of the departments, including the Cuna Club kitchen and Mobile Cinema Workshops, have continued to function as efficiently as possible in the circumstances.

"The Upper Room" has continued its ministry on behalf of the U.D.F. Chaplains and for the use of U.D.F.I. weekly staff services.

(b) Staff:

Since my last report Lieut. Watson has been medically boarded to the Union, and we are still without the services of Captain Gilbert. Padre Pester is now out of hospital, but unfortunately, Lt. Harding suffered a slight recurrence of his old trouble, and has been in hospital for a few weeks. Despite the difficulties created in our work due to recent military operations, the Headquarters Staff have carried on and it is felt that no serious dislocation has occurred in our records. The new W.A.A.S. staff have sorted themselves into the various departmental activities, proving most helpful in the growing administrative work.

(c) Records:

Obvious complications arose owing to the rapid changes in our Forward Areas work during the major battles of the month. As far as possible, a tight control was kept on all of the logs and stores records received from the Western Desert. Mails were, naturally, disorganised, and it was most difficult to correspond with our Desert section, due to rapid movements. As far as can be ascertained the Stores and Finance accounting have been preserved quite intact, and it will be appreciated that the occurrences were all the more distressing for this side of our work, because the main crisis came at the end of June, just when we were so well organised for the satisfactory taking of stocks and completion of returns to cover the financial period, January to June. When it is understood that the turn-over for the organisation, during June, nearly touched the record figure of our activities here, it will be seen that extreme diligence had to be exercised by our various sections and Headquarters Officers in the Finance and Supplies departments, to see that dislocations were avoided. A tribute must be paid to these members of our staff for their support and assistance at a time when difficulties seemed to have come from all quarters.

MAIN STORES:

(a) Supplies:

We have had adequate supplies for the month, as a matter of fact, the stocks of South African cigarettes and matches, which are always so acceptable, have now reached the point, due to imports, where we have considerable reserves.

Other popular lines, like tinned stuff, have decreased slightly due to the position on the Western Desert, and it will be noticed that, despite our turn-over being much the same as last month, our local purchases were decreased by 50 per cent. Supplies for the Fixed Establishments have been satisfactorily maintained, and we can quite see that the troops appreciate having South African products on sale in the Clubs and Camp centres.

The Stores Records and Headquarters Costing System have been carried out satisfactorily. We have been glad to have the extra assistance of Sergeant Stewart, who had considerable experience of our costing work in East Africa.

The summary of the Movement Supplies and takings in June is as follows:-

| | | |
|------------------------------------|----|---------|
| Gross Takings | LE | 32,000. |
| Stores ex Union | | 6,800. |
| Canteen Supplies Purchased locally | | 11,800 |

As the figures for May were not quoted in the last report, they are as follows:-

| | | |
|-----------------|----|---------|
| Gross Takings | LE | 33,000. |
| Local Purchases | | 26,800. |
| Stores ex Union | | 16,600. |

(b) Storage:

The move to the new warehouse, as our Main Store, has been fully justified. As a matter of fact, it seems like a coincidence that the Main Store should have been in operation only a short while before the recent military operations in the Desert.

The store was so useful in accepting the bulk stores which had to be evacuated from our Forward storage point, for, if we had remained in the old store we should not have had anywhere near sufficient storage space to take care of the unforeseen situation. New circumstances arose each day during the crisis which entailed the movement of large stocks to the warehouse, and because of the tremendous floor space, we were able to handle the stocks, at the same time maintain, to the best of our abilities, proper stock records.

With the military situation as it is, we have lost two storage points in the Western Desert, but, immediate efforts were made to alleviate the pressure at the Main Stores by moving considerable stocks to our existing store in the Base, and it is gratifying to report that facilities were so available which took care of the tremendous difficulties we were facing.

Of course, we shall have to move carefully in the next few weeks on the subject of our storage and supplies, but, it must be recorded here that all of the members of our staff who were detailed to handle the sudden change worked in the closest of harmony and with exceptional diligence. In some periods, hours counted nothing to some of the men because so many factors had to be taken into account, such as transport, congestion of movements and war dangers.

It will be some little time before it is possible to gauge our needs of stocks, but you can rest assured that the service to our troops is being maintained to the fullest possible measure of our organisation.

CLUBS - EUROPEAN:

(a) Ouma Club, Cairo:

Despite the curtailment of troops using the city during the month, the Club has continued its service to a maximum. The dishes of the buffet are still in demand, as it is noticed that many troops stationed in the city make this Club their regular meeting place for a meal.

The Lounge is as popular as ever, while the piano is used a great deal by men who find that the pleasant surroundings in the Club give them so much pleasure in their relaxation and enjoyment. The usual "Springbok" dances were held up to a certain date, when it was decided to leave over all such functions until the cooler weather comes again.

The Information Bureau is growing in its usefulness, because hundreds of troops, men and women, are able to get into touch with each other through notes on the personal board, or messages taken by the members of our staff. Advice on events, trips and tours has been much appreciated by those who have not had much opportunity to visit the city from their Desert camps.

Our staff of South African women has proved most successful - the girls are happy and the men visitors more so because they have such pleasant company to serve them and to talk with them. Altogether the atmosphere at the Club augurs well for even a more successful future.

(b) Springbok Club, Alexandria:

This Club is, undoubtedly, one of the best jobs we are doing in the Middle East, and during the recent time of crisis its services have been deeply appreciated by the many hundreds of troops who have been able to spend a short time away from their camps.

One of the greatest services performed by the Club during the month was the provision of showers and meals to dusty and hungry men straight from up the line who were given a few hours leave.

Besides the physical needs being answered, it is felt that the best way to give you a picture of the month's valuable cultural work is to quote the complete report received from Padre Evans. This reads as follows:-

"Several entertainments were arranged as follows:

2 Tea Dances.

Amuseliars Concert Party.

Yugoslav Royal Guards Orchestra.

A Concert by Professor Ceroni and his Pupils.

An Exhibition of Table Tennis.

A Table Tennis Tournament.

A Gramophone Recital of some of Handel's Music

given by Lieut. Loveless.

One Cinema Show.

"We had made arrangements for another Tea Dance, but this had to be cancelled suddenly. Also our plans for the future for the other dances and further gramophone recitals will have to be remade when the situation is once again stabilised. The Sunday night talks were:

Maitre Daniel:- The Last 100 years of Egyptian History.

Padre Evans:- What next, and Christianity in the future.

Pte. A. Kassam:- The Theatre.

They were quite well attended.

The tours have been quite popular; the horse-riding extremely popular, but, unfortunately the number of horses available diminished, and it had to be cancelled towards the end of the month, but will re-start before long, we hope.

Deep-sea fishing and bathing at Sidi Bishr also were enjoyed by a few men, but we hope to extend these two facilities. The Information Bureau plays an increasing part in the life of the Club. The requests are many and varied, amazingly varied, and it has been found from experience that this is one of the best ways in which the men of the staff can make contacts and let the men feel that we are here to serve them in whatever way we can, and regardless of the trouble.

Staff: In order to keep the staff informed of the various works being done in Alexandria and to foster the family spirit, a staff meeting was held each Monday morning after prayers, and a report given on each of the four institutions by the person responsible, with general discussion and suggestions by all the staff. It was also decided to hold a staff dinner each week on Monday at the U.D.F.I. Women's Club, and on Tuesday of next week at Springbok House; only one has been held so far at the Women's Club when Lt. Goble and Mr. and Mrs. Alexander were the guests. Staff prayers are held daily at 8.30 a.m., and seven to eight members attend. Monday mornings all who can attend prayers do so. Holy Communion is celebrated each Sunday; three or four attend this, which at the present is only for the staff."

(c) Springbok Club (Sports) - Helwan Village:

Because of the increasing popularity of this sports club, it has become necessary to consider extensions of the accomodation and the supplementing of additional staff. During the long summer evenings the men have elected to stay at the Club for their evening meal, which our women helpers have tried to make attractive, so that the men can get as much pleasure as possible out of their visits. Some

women who live in the Village have voluntarily helped at the Club for some time, and since we have been preparing a light evening meal, the women have added all sorts of homely dishes, including home-made ice-cream. Some of the sports equipment has been renewed, including new tennis nets, while additional golf clubs have been purchased for the 18-hole golf course. The members of our staff are working every day on improving the grounds, and round the Club House nice flower-beds have been arranged which add so much to the pleasantness of relaxing on the Club verandah. Extensions to the kitchen and store-room are being planned and we feel that, despite the distance which has to be covered to get to the Club, the efforts which have been put into the improvements and establishment of an atmosphere of welcome have fully justified the wisdom in maintaining this Club at the time, some months ago, when it was felt that it would be difficult to make it a success.

(d) Springbok House - Alexandria:

It was reported last month that this Hostel would be ready for occupation before the end of June. This was possible, but military events, naturally, caused us to postpone the acceptance of visitors. It is intended, however, that should the circumstances permit, the House will be used in a few weeks' time. The disappointment of the delay can well be imagined, because all the alterations, re-decorations and furnishing had been completed, making a most comfortable and attractive home. Nevertheless, we feel that our efforts have not been in vain for everything is in total readiness to give what ever help we can to our men when it is possible for them to get leave so that they can stay overnight at the Hostel. Photographs of the House have been taken which will give an idea of the standard of furnishing, and it is hoped that the troops will be well looked after when the time comes for the house to be used.

(e) The U.D.F.I. Women's Club - Alexandria:

This Club was ready by the middle of the month and looked very delightful indeed. The renewed garden was a pleasant sight and afforded cool shade in the late afternoons and long evenings.

The furnishings of the bedrooms, lounges and dining-rooms had been carefully done with the help of our U.D.F.I. women workers.

The nine U.D.F.I. women working in the Alexandria area took up their residence in the Club and immediately formed the nucleus of a happy family. There was, however, only time for one or two guests to stay at the Club because a military order entailed the closing of the premises during the crisis at the end of the month. As a matter of safety the women were removed from the area, and it is regretted therefore, that so far the life of the Club has been brief and almost unknown.

As the military situation improves, there is every possibility that the Club will spring into lively existence again.

(f) St. John's Rest Home - Alexandria:

A change in the negotiations here in the Middle East occurred during the month which has been the subject of correspondence with the Union. While awaiting a final decision, we have undertaken the interior re-decorations and the general tidying up of the garden. Here again the latest war situation has affected our plans and we can only hope to report something more definite next month.

CLUBS - NON-EUROPEAN:

(a) Abbas Bridge Club and Hostel:

The Club and Hostel have continued to receive visitors despite the obvious curtailment of leave during the month of June. The average number of men in residence over 28 days was 73, the highest at any one time being 204. The catering proceeded along the same lines as the past, and it is obvious that the non-European troops appreciate the good food that they have been able to get at their meals.

During the month of June parties of men were taken round the sights of Cairo and environs as follows:-

| | |
|--------------------------------|------|
| Sphinx and Pyramids Tour | 123. |
| Zoo, University, Gardens, etc. | 62. |
| Hygiene Museum and Mosques | 71. |
| Bazaars and Cathedrals, etc. | 82. |
| Coptic Churches, etc. | 126. |
| Barrages of the Delta | 22. |
| Wax Museums, etc. | 7. |

For the evenings free entertainment was provided in the shape of 18 cinema shows, four stage concerts and one lecture. Religious services were held on Sundays, and Padre Bacon holds services during the week for any of the men, who are in from the Desert, and who desire such facilities.

The other activities of the Club, such as the library, games and canteen and curio stall have maintained their usefulness. It will be seen, therefore, that those who have been privileged to stay at the Club have been well looked after.

The Officer-Commanding of one of the big South African Units wrote to say "A Big Thank You for the way his men were looked after, because they returned to their camp full of praise for the good time they had received."

(b) Non-European Rest Club - Alexandria:

The report from the Officer-in-Charge of this Club gives a good indication of the ups and downs experienced in running such a venture. His report reads as follows:- "The Club has been rather quieter than usual this month as a result of the general situation. A cinema show was held once a week, with about 40 men attending each performance. The Sunday afternoon tea parties were held and there usually followed a short service. Tours were held whenever opportunity offered, which entertained small parties of six or eight men at a time. Each O.C. of native or coloured Units in this area has been sent a special map, showing the position of the Club with the tram route marked in order to get the Club known as widely as possible. Also, members of the staff of the Club are sent down into the town each day to try and contact men who are on leave and invite them to spend some time, using the amenities provided. It is inevitable that the appeal of this Club will always be very limited, and such work outside the Camp will constitute one of the great problems of our work."

Unfortunately, the Club had to be closed for a short time, but it is hoped to commence activities again in a week or so.

CAMP RECREATIONAL CENTRES - EUROPEAN:

(a) S.A. Base:

(i) Main Centre:- Reports are still being made by so many troops that this large centre of ours is a real haven of relaxation. It has also been mentioned by a Senior Officer of the Camp that the morale of the troops has definitely been maintained by their having such a nice place to visit for their leisure hours.

Improvements have been made in the buffet by the introduction of some dancier sandwiches and cool drinks, but it is very noticeable that the men, despite the warm weather, still love their cups of tea and coffee. There seems to be nothing more pleasant than a good cup of coffee or tea served in nice white cups and partaken of in an atmosphere where there is so much friendliness and goodwill. A remark has been passed, too, that the smiling way in which the men are greeted by our staff adds to the warmth of the place.

Seeing that entertainment in and around the buffet hall has been so popular, the number of musical evenings have been increased. Two South African concert parties, two South African bands and other voluntary artists have maintained an excellent programme of almost daily entertainment. The Piano in the buffet has attracted single pianists, and it does not take too long on some evenings to get the men enjoying community singing.

The Library has had a further increase in books, and there is no doubt that this side of the work has improved a tremendous success. Excellent circulation has been maintained, and it is not possible to gauge the value of the contacts our staff have made with the users of this excellent library.

The Chapel maintains its ministry to those who attend the regular services, in addition to the weekly staff service of the U.D.F.I. members.

(II) Concert and Cinema Hall:- Regular cinema shows by our Mobile Units, and other entertainments have been held during the month. Because of the hot weather we have been led to erect a large open-air cinema screen near to the centre of the camp, as our shows in the Concert Hall have been so popular while the accommodation is limited. The new cinema stage should be ready during next month.

(III) Swimming Bath:- There is no doubt about the popularity of a swimming-bath in a Desert Camp and in local weather conditions. Hundreds of men and several of the women have constantly made excellent use of this wonderful facility. The small trees, plants and flowers are growing, which make the immediate surroundings inside of the main wall, such a pleasant place at which the troops may spend some of their leisure time.

Our Canteen at the swimming bath serves edibles and plenty of cold drinks besides carrying a small range of usual canteen lines.

(b) European Wing, N.E. Base:-

Nothing of any importance has transpired in this centre, but its quiet influence has been maintained for the benefit of the Europeans in the Camp. Because there are a limited number of European N.C.O's in a large Camp with thousands of non-Europeans, it will be appreciated that such a place where the men can enjoy social evenings after duty is something all the more to be looked upon as a distinctive service. The ping-pong tables, library and a good stock of periodicals have always invited the men to participate freely in a homely way.

(c) No. 4 S.A. General Hospital:-

With the improvements reported on last month, this Centre has maintained its job of work. Seeing that it receives wounded men from the battle area, the influence of our staff and the availability of such a live place for leisure, have counted much in recent weeks. In this outpost of our work it is fine to notice the all-round job our Unit is able to do - a Canteen Centre, a library, and the visits of our Mobile Cinema.

(d) S.A.A.F. Base:-

After a few months of building up our work in this Camp centre, our Staff are finding that they are becoming overwhelmed. The Camp is right in the Desert miles from society, so the tea and cake counter have developed into the main feature of the Canteen. By a special arrangement the Staff have been able to get dainty cakes sent out over a long distance, but the effort has been so worthwhile. The attraction of something nice to eat and a good cup of tea invites the men to partake of the many games' tables which are available.

The piano and concrete stage have become the centre of entertainment and impromptu sing-songs. One really wants to visit a large tentage centre like this Hut, and participate in the joyous company of hundreds of men who have found that such a place for social intercourse can be made attractive and pleasing.

The staff has been augmented and they find themselves serving hundreds of Air Force men from the depot and adjoining squadrons, and because of the movements of the many squadrons, it is possible for the influence of this Hut to be extended to countless men. New schemes were enthusiastically discussed in recent days, but it is feared that they will have to remain tentative until the general situation is stabilised.

(e) No. 106, General Hospital:-

(I) Nurses' Centre: After reporting last month that this was the first of our Unit's efforts to do something in a special way for the nursing staff, it is gratifying to report now that the scheme has proved a success. Already, our women workers have won the respect and ready help of the nurses, which factors have made so much difference to the general atmosphere. The building has been most practically furnished - and most attractively, too - with chintz-covered settees. Morris chairs and window curtaining in colours which are so pleasing to the eyes in a Desert camp. A fully-equipped canteen for light refreshments, and a limited number of canteen lines has been arranged. This side of the work was just beginning to develop when, as in many of the other places, the general situation had serious effects.

(2) Patients' Centre: This is a large auditorium made up of groups of E.P.I.P. tents, kindly supplied by the O.C. A stage, complete with brightly coloured curtains, has been installed by us, which has made possible several enjoyable concerts. E.N.S.A. Concert parties were on tour, and we found that co-operation in asking them to show our centre gave the troops and staff the opportunity of seeing their shows. The Mobile Cinema visits this place once a week on a Saturday, and on a recent visit of the acting O.C., U.D.F.I., he found an audience of several hundreds already seated nearly two hours before the show was scheduled to commence. Following this, it is being arranged to alter the circuit of the Mobile Cinema so that at least two shows weekly can be given.

The newly established canteen, especially the cold-drinks counter, has proved a success because the men really look for a complete centre where they can have something to eat and drink while they read a book or play some of the games provided.

(f) Nurses' Centre, No. 5 S.A. General Hospital:

This project is still in the early stages of its development, and the main difficulty has been the fact that the summer weather makes a big marquee so hot. Despite this, the nursing staff have appreciated very much the existence of a place where they can enjoy quietness and take a friend who may be visiting them. In the evenings, because of the coolness, the numbers using the tent are, naturally, larger. We may have to go to the expense of some fans, and this is being looked into.

The bright features of the work here are the piano and the sewing machine - two very handy additions for the nurses' pleasure.

(g) European Wing, Protective Troops Depot:

Following on last month's report, it has not yet been possible to enlarge the accommodation due to the fact that there are certain difficulties regarding the buildings. Meanwhile, the tentage centre gives its maximum service, for the games and writing-tables are always in use, and by having such a social centre where we can engender a spirit of friendliness among the N.C.O.'s from various parts of the Empire, the work must always be beneficial. One of the members of our staff lives with the N.C.O.'s so he has a valuable contact with the men who crowd the tents for their social evenings. In addition, the link which this centre has with the two big huts organised for the native troops, helps to mould a spirit of co-operation for all sides of the work.

(h) "Little Wooden Hut":

When one realises the location of this centre in the Western Desert, its influence for the benefit of the troops can be more deeply appreciated. June has been a month in the Western Desert which has attracted the attention of the whole world, so it will be seen that any work of the character which we have tried to do must have had its twofold blessings from hundreds of men. To give an idea of what has been achieved in the 24 days prior to the compulsory evacuation of this Centre, the following catalogue is recorded:-

In the 24 days 5,900 gallons of free tea were served at the tea counter. This is equivalent to, approximately, 90,000 mugs of tea.

In entertainment, eight cinema shows and four concerts were given free to all-comers.

On two of the Sundays the Area Padres were given the use of the halls, resulting in seven services being held for any of the men who wished to attend.

The dry-goods counter had a turn-over of 3,460 Egyptian pounds, indicating that a satisfactory range of stocks and plentiful supplies were available.

The relinquishing of our work in this Centre has caused a deep pang of regret, because it will be remembered that it was in the same area that the U.D.F.I. started its first Centre in May 1941, in a bombed and shell-blasted building. All that has been done for

thousands of men in the twelve months could never be measured; and despite the evacuation we feel that our job of work has been done, against tremendous odds, to the noble men who have traversed this most famous Desert in history. After recent operations we do not know whether "The Little Wooden Hut" still stands - we are certain, however, that the spirit of the work and the influence of good-will will remain forever. Truly it can be said that the witness of the U.D.F.I. from May 1941 to June 1942 in this "social centre of the Western Desert" has formed a most worthy chapter in the history of the work of the Unit. The ebb and flow of the tides of the Western Desert battles have caused surges of men to pass through the doors of the Little Wooden Hut - the place has always remained a beacon giving welcome and refreshment, and though its visible light may have been extinguished for a time, we are confident that while we hold the essence of the flame the light will burn again.

(I) Padlangs:

This most forward outpost of U.D.F.I. "Free Tea Service" managed to give away over 4,000 gallons in 22 days in June, which would approximately mean 70,000 mugs of tea. "Padlangs" has been true to its name - a haven by the wayside, known to all travellers on the Desert. And then, although it has very limited accommodation; its dry-goods canteen maintained a fine selection of canteen lines and had sufficient stocks to dispose of LE 1933 in about three weeks. This dual service has meant a tremendous lot for the seven months in which we have been able to maintain our work here. As a matter of fact, a British General recently sent a message to us through a South African Staff Officer, the gist of which is as follows:-

"Your South Africans know how to give service, for I went to your Roadhouse at -----, where I asked to purchase some refreshment when I was given a first-class cup of tea, and then I went to the dry-goods counter and found that I was able to buy a certain brand of cigarettes which I had not been able to purchase for over three months."

The logs from this outpost tell of many distinguished visitors stopping for a break, a chat and a cup of tea. Other incidents of service recorded are "I have arranged with ambulance drivers to let me know approximately what time in the evenings they expect to pass through, so that I can arrange for tea for wounded men", and, another like this:- "Convoys passing through, not stopping here, but our men detailed to pass tea on to the drivers of vehicles as they pass."

Surely a veritable chain of service.

With regret, "Padlangs" had to be evacuated, and the area is now in enemy hands. The oasis, however, continued its service to within two or three days of the enemy occupation. In this place, as with "The Little Wooden Hut", the influential work of the U.D.F.I. will long outlast any destruction which may befall the building; which was such a welcome sign to thousands upon thousands of men. In this regard, an official war artist has reported to our Headquarters that he is in the midst of painting a x canvas of "Padlangs" for official war records, as he maintains that it is one of the best-known landmarks in the Western Desert.

CAMP RECREATIONAL CENTRES - NON-EUROPEAN:

(a) S.A. Base:

(i) The Base Hut:- Nothing of any important development has taken place during recent weeks, but the hut and its staff continue to be of extreme usefulness to the non-Europeans who are attached to the administrative work.

(ii) N.E. Wing No. 1:- This Hut, under the leadership of Sgt. Mothiba, has proved a great help in looking after the men in their leisure hours. The complete set-up of indoor games, writing room, library, physical training classes, sing-songs, religious services and many other personal services, has functioned with a staff that works harmoniously. Of course, the huts in the N.E. Wing have the benefit of the advice and supervision of the U.D.F.I. Sergeant Major, and this idea has helped to mould the work for the benefit of all. Besides entertainment which the men themselves organise, our U.D.F.I. Mobile Cinema has given regular free shows.

(iii) N.E. Wing No. 2:- The new brick hall, provided by the camp authorities, has been opened, proving a tremendous

asset to the special area set aside for Cape Coloured troops. Next to the hall is the large, open-air stage and cinema auditorium, and also near by, two tents which are being used as a library and quiet room. Entertainment by way of Cape Coloured band and singing concerts, and cinema shows from our Mobile Cinemas, have all helped in the welfare work for the many men who pass through the depot.

(b) Quassasin:

(i) This hut has been closed for the month due to troop movements.

(ii) The usual programme has been maintained by our specially-trained U.D.F.I. non-European staff. These men have the benefit of advice from Sergeant Lator who helps in the arrangements for supplies, games and equipment.

(c) Leave Camp:-

This hut is our most forward one in the Desert, so its work during June has helped tremendously in the function of the camp because use was made of the area for transit troops evacuated from the Desert. Cinema shows and other entertainments, besides our dry-goods canteen service, were all maintained until the work was closed down, due to military operations.

(d) Suez Non-European:

Although the tentage hut is not very big, our U.D.F.I. worker has done his best to be of whatever service he could to the native troops passing through the camp. Whenever allowed, cinema shows have been given, otherwise the logs of the hut only record the continued sales of the dry-goods counter, and religious services, which have been well attended.

(e) N.E. Hut at No. 4 S.A. General Hospital:-

This hut had only been opened for a few days when military operations necessitated its closing. There had, therefore, been little chance for development, but opportunity may come again soon for the renewal of this project.

(f) Special Work with Engineers Brigade:-

Two of our U.D.F.I. non-European staff were sent to help in the welfare work among several hundreds of South African natives who are attached to a special Unit. Although the workers do not have control over the stocks in the recreational centres, they help in the Canteens, but, more particularly are there for the special type of work for which they are suited. The O.C. of the camp was, because of its location, better able to arrange for the accommodation furniture and supplies, and in the round-table discussions with U.D.F. Staff Officer Welfare, it was decided that such arrangements could be left to him, and that the U.D.F.I. would be rendering a signal service by allowing two of its workers, who organise indoor and outdoor games, for the welfare of the native troops, to be stationed with this particular Unit.

MOBILE CANTEENS:-

The main feature of our Mobile Canteen work in the advance Forward Areas were reported to you in a special report on the 25th June. After that date, the withdrawal of our work to the rear areas was being carried out, but whenever and wherever possible, the Mobile Units kept up their work. It will be some weeks before cohesion can be brought about as far as our Western Desert section is concerned. We have, however, had the satisfaction of having carried out a complete Mobile Canteen service during the weeks which produced so many answers to the needs of the fighting troops. The Mobile Canteen logs revealed thrilling stories as to how much the men appreciated being able to get comfort specialities under trying conditions.

MOBILE CINEMAS:

Due to obvious curtailment, the number of our free cinema shows dropped to 260 for the month. It may be said, however, that that figure meant an achievement. Right to the last, in the Western Desert, five Mobile Cinemas found their way to camps and places where it was

possible to give entertainment, and when the compulsory withdrawal took place the Cinema units took up their position in a certain area from which they were able to radiate and give 35 shows in a matter of 10 days - most of these shows being given to forward troops and air force squadrons. All sorts of ingenious methods were undertaken to overcome the extreme difficulties of concentration of troops, blackout regulations etc.

Of course, the Mobile Cinemas, working in the remaining areas, were able to maintain almost normal circuits, and appreciation was most sincerely felt by hospitals where slightly wounded men were able to participate in entertainment. Certain Air Force squadrons whom we had not been able to serve while forward in the Desert, were especially treated when we located them in some air camps having very short breaks. To two of our South African squadrons, at one time, we were able to give three shows in a week, one of the features being a George Formby film. It can be gathered what such relaxing entertainment can mean to the "men of the air, whose duties are fraught with hazard and strain.

BOOKS FOR THE TROOPS:

Following on last month's report of the distribution of books with the Divisions, it is regrettable that the reorganisation which was planned to be of so much use, has suffered an obvious set-back. The Second Division was in possession of its set-up of circulating library boxes. Since the First Division has been in action in the present defensive situation, we have sent up, and are still selecting and distributing, a large quantity of books and periodicals. As a matter of fact, special attention is being paid to this side of our contracted Desert work at the moment.

Otherwise, the distribution of books to supplement existing libraries has been receiving attention and we are finding interest and assistance from Padres and Information Officers becoming more intense as time goes on. Our libraries in the hospitals in which we are working are busy, thus giving opportunities for members of our staff to be of service to patients.

CONCLUSION:

The weeks of June have been a period in which, most probably, the U.D.F.I. has taken its biggest strain since the formation of the Unit. The weeks of July will, probably, reveal much the same story, if not a more intense one. All departments of our work have dealt with extra pressure created by hurried movements, but, as the report will show, they have managed to maintain a high degree of service. When this report is read, and it is taken relatively to the major events of the Desert battles during the past weeks, you will be able to deduce the important facts that your Unit, of which we in the Middle East have the honour to form such an integral part, has carried out its ideals and work of service through the thick and thin of the events of the world famous Middle East.

Losses of vehicles, supplies and equipment were absolutely inevitable when facing the fast-moving events of the big withdrawal, but, such losses can be taken as indicative of the outstanding feature of our work, which is "at all times to be required". Our Mobile Canteens, Mobile Cinemas and Fixed Establishments operating for the benefit of the Desert troops, were part and parcel of the life of the fighting forces. It has been an honoured privilege for us to have shared in these momentous days.

(Sgd.) M.H. Eddy,
Major.

A/OFFICER COMMANDING U.D.F.I. (YMCA & TOC H)

M. Lewis

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19 OCT 1942



IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE
GELIEWE IN U ANTWOORD TE
VERWYS NA

No. U.11/2.

UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.—UNIE VAN SUID-AFRIKA.

OFFICE OF THE—KANTOOR VAN DIE

U.D.F.I. (YMCA & TOC H) "Q". S.C.
P. O. Box 1001,
JOHANNESBURG.

16th October, 1942.

South African Institute of Race Relations,
University,
Milner Park,
JOHANNESBURG.

Mideast Progress Report for July/August.

I have pleasure in enclosing a copy of our latest report and would draw your attention to pages 7, 8 and 9 wherein you will find items relating to our work with Non-Europeans headed "Non-European Camp Recreation Centres". Also on pages 4 and 5 you will find reference to Non-Europeans.

You are at liberty to reproduce any of this information in your monthly publication should you so desire.

M. Lewis

Lt.

A/ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER : U.D.F.I. "Q". S.C.

MIDEAST PROGRESS REPORT

JULY/AUGUST 1942

A/Administrative Officer,
U.D.F.I. (YMCA & TOC H) "Q" S.C.,
P.O. Box 1001,
JOHANNESBURG.

The period under review has been one in which the Unit has had to take its greatest strain since its inception on active service. Military operations, now so well known to the world, necessitated the withdrawal of the whole of our desert work besides causing a situation in the base areas which, for some days caused considerable anxiety. The most heartening feature of this report will therefore be that the whole Unit took the strain admirably and "kept on its feet", carrying out its programme to the fullest extent - mobile canteens, mobile cinemas, clubs and camp centres continued to function for the benefit of our troops. With this introduction the general report of the work can be made.

HEADQUARTERS.

(1) Accommodation:

Previous Progress Reports have indicated that the accommodation at Headquarters building was most seriously overtaxed. Despite much searching, it has not been possible to find another building so it became imperative to relieve the congestion. The only way out was to move the Officers to a "Pension" and this was done after consultation with them. This step has improved the sleeping accommodation of the other ranks of which there are close on 20 being accommodated (these include "Ouma" Springbok Club staff, headquarters clerks and M.T. men). In addition better office accommodation has been made available because the Finance and Supplies clerks have been moved upstairs thus easing off a situation which was almost impossible on the ground floor. The rest of the accommodation in the building, such as the "Ouma" Springbok Club kitchen, bulk stores, etc., is also getting seriously taxed due to the expansion of our work, but these departments can carry on.

(2) Staff:

During the period under review, we said good-bye to Lt. Parsons who, at his request, was granted release from service. A happy farewell tea party was held at headquarters building to mark the esteem in which Mr. Parsons was held, for he has served the Unit through East Africa and was the first senior member of the U.D.F.I. to reach Mideast. Lt. Harding has joined the headquarters staff in the meantime to take Lt. Parsons' place. Capt. Gilbert returned from the Union and was welcomed after his delayed stay in South Africa. We are most grateful for his help on the administrative side because it has been somewhat of a strain trying to carry on with both Major Ponsford and Capt. Gilbert away.

Among the O.R.'s we have made one or two changes, insomuch that we have brought in Sgt. Levick to relieve Capt. McKenzie of certain supplies administration. Other changes have been arranged so that we can put a further two men from headquarters staff into the field, - this has been made possible by re-arranging the duties of our W.A.A.S. personnel.

It is gratifying to record in this report the excellent spirit of co-operation shown by all members of the staff during the anxious days of July.

(3) Records.

Having in mind the necessity of taking out a full dressed balance sheet as at 30th June, 1942, and its consequent work upon records in the essential period of July, it will be readily understood/.....

understood that the military events over the month-end of June and during the first fortnight of July presented problems of deepest concern. Despite this, stocks were taken according to plan on the 30th June, but in most exceptional circumstances due to the necessity of moving large quantities of stores to avoid capture by the enemy. Creditors accounts and stores documents in addition to cash records had to be watched more carefully than usual, but the period of dislocation was diligently faced and there is confidence that the final figures will not be seriously affected.

In the days of July, while the majority of the staff had been evacuated to a safer area, the senior officers of Headquarters remained on duty through all hours and as a matter of fact preserved the most vital books and records in tin trunks, awaiting any movement. It has taken time to rectify the disorganisation, but we are well "out of the wood" and on the way to the final stages of the balance sheet for the 30th June. Normal monthly records have been kept up-to-date and it is anticipated that during September the whole Finance and Supplies records will be produced for submission to the Committee up to the end of August.

STORES:

The events of June/July brought about an unexpected situation regarding our supplies position. The loss of the 2nd S.A. Division meant a serious curtailment in the activities of our forward canteens. The fast movements of other troops, until the Alamein battle became more static, also affected the services of our mobile canteens. The reduction in sales of canteen supplies, although most unfortunate has brought about the situation in which we find that our stocks are considered ample for the next few months. As a matter of fact in some lines such as cigarettes and tobaccos we have a very useful reserve. Then, due to indents being supplied in the Union more stocks are on the way which will even further enhance our stock position. There is one factor, however, and that is consideration of perishable stocks, so after discussion here it was decided to request you to reduce certain shipments and in some cases cancel portions of indents. The local market for the necessary supplies to clubs and in some instances for forward work is still good and has enabled us to carry out our job without hindrance. The summary of the movement of supplies is as follows:-

JULY

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Stores ex Union | Nil |
| Stores purchased locally | £E.9650 |
| Canteen takings | £E.25900 |

AUGUST

| | |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Stores ex Union | £E.10200 |
| Stores purchased locally | £E.13000 |
| Canteen takings | £E.28000 |

(1) Accommodation.

The danger to which our main supplies store was subjected during July was certainly very concerning. The staff there, however, worked night and day receiving whatever supplies we managed to save from the desert and on the other hand despatching those supplies to other stores which we had established in more safe areas. Quite frankly, we do not wish to go through a period like that again, because all movements had to be done in the fastest time with extremely overtaxed transport, and it was difficult to maintain proper diligence of records for receipt and despatch. The battle was at its height, the danger was increasingly imminent so it will be realised how quickly decisions had to be made for the safe accommodation of our supplies while it was essential for the proper disposal of stocks. Yet it was equally essential that our motto of service to the troops should not be relaxed, therefore, sufficient stores had to be kept near to the troops who needed them in their time of greatest anxiety.

All came out well in the period under review, with the exception of the unavoidable loss of a portion of the stores at Mersa Matruh. The stocks at Gambut, Sollum and Sidi Berrani were successfully evacuated to Matruh, but the accumulation of these three stocks in addition to the large quantities being held at Matruh meant that it was impossible to evacuate everything when it became known that the advance of the enemy was carried out over a matter of a few days. The supplies storage in the back areas has been arranged to meet eventualities and to eliminate possible handicaps to the essential working of the Unit.

CLUBS:

(1) "Ouma" Springbok Club.

Some internal alterations have been made affording a new cubicle in the Information Bureau for the sale of our dry goods. With the cubicle, a display counter of South African products has been erected and the records show that such a step has caused considerable increase in sales. In the Buffet an extension of the serving counter and the provision of extra facilities for cold drinks and ice-cream have helped to ease the congestion which was being experienced due to the popularity of that side of the club.

In recent weeks several band concerts, stage concerts, pianoforte and violin concerts have been held in the lounge. These have been very popular, drawing audiences of 200/300 men.

The writing-room has apparently increased its usefulness for it takes our Officer 8 hours a day sometimes censoring the letters which have been written in the club. This entails a little extra work and sometimes the sharing of it, but the service is paramount. As a matter of fact it would be interesting to catalogue the many eulogistic remarks about the club, which our Officer notices.

The Information Bureau has been busier because it would seem that that side of the Club's activities has become a most valued recognition of service amongst the troops who come in from the desert on leave. Its services include, arranging sporting activities, tours to places of interest, personal favours regarding gift parcels and sometimes the finding of lady partners for social evenings and dances.

There is a possibility of getting more accommodation in the building so that the club's activities can be extended. The negotiations are proceeding and the results will be reported next month.

(2) Springbok Club, Alexandria.

The services rendered by this club during July could never be adequately recorded. Situated, as it is only a short distance from the Alamein battle front it can be realised how longingly the troops would "Make for it" when a few hours leave is available. After the gruelling time of the desert retreat all of the men who could manage to get away simply cried out for a shower and some good square meals. The report from the club in July states "Gradually as the position became stabilised men came down from the front line wanting showers and food. On no day did we give less than a hundred towels out for showers and although we have to close early we were rushed off our feet during the day time. On the weekend of 11th and 12th July approximately 2,500 hot meals were served, while on Saturday the 18th, about 1600 hot meals were served and it is estimated that approximately 3,500 men passed through the club on that day. Naturally, at this time our main activity was feeding and washing the army and everything else had to be subordinated to that. On the 7th, however, we gave a cinema programme in which the opening of the Springbok Club, Alexandria, as recorded by the African Mirror formed part of the show. Informal talks were given by Padre Evans on 19th and 26th in addition to a table tennis tournament on the 30th. While only a few men took part in these activities, yet the opportunities were made for them."

The women workers were evacuated for some weeks, which placed considerable strain on the male staff but in a short time the male staff was augmented to cope with the position.

The August report from the Club indicates that for the greater part of the month the Club's facilities were used very

extensively/.....

extensively. In addition to the serving of meals and the activities under the roof of the club itself, efforts have been made to provide amusements for the men when they visit the town. Thus, tours have been arranged, bathing parties have been taken to the beach, a hospitality scheme has been started, and the staff of the club in "their times off" have taken men around the town. The Quiet Room was extensively used for letter writing and reading and the cultural programme for the month included informal talks and discussions arranged by Mr. Miller, Cpl. Rust, R.A.F., and Padre Evans.

(3) Springbok House, Alexandria.

After many weeks of extensive preparation this residential house was ready for use at the end of June. The military situation turned rather gravely at that time and it seemed as if our job of work in the establishment of such a home was not to see the fruits of labour for some time.

The report from the House reads as follows:-

"The House would have been opened at the beginning of July if Mr. Rommel had not decided to attempt a tour of Egypt. As a result of this untoward excursion the place was locked up until the 21st July. On the 26th we had our first guests but up to the end of July there were few men available to make use of the accommodation. As soon as leave was open more men found their way to the House and it did not take very long for us to become well-known for, on August 7th the House was full for the first time and remained so until towards the end of the month when once again the exigencies of the military situation occasioned the cancellation of leave. The House is very comfortable and attractive having sleeping accommodation for 82 and dining facilities for 100. There are 3 large lounges, a writing room, a library and a Chapel. A nice garden has been developed in the grounds including a small summer house."

The House itself is in a quiet district of the town, so the men are able to enjoy their rest away from all traffic and noise.

On the social and cultural side of the House 3 special evenings were arranged, the last of which was "fun and games" in the dining-room. A pleasant feature of the life of the house is the regular evening tea party which varies in numbers from 6 to 15 - the party is held in the vestibule and enables all sorts of men to meet and chat together and this is considered a most valuable piece of work. One of the rooms has been set aside as a little Chapel in which daily prayers are held for those who wish to participate. No day passes without visitors being present at the family prayers. On Sunday mornings at 10 o'clock a service is held.

Thus we gratefully give our first record of this new project and we are confident that it will contribute very materially to the welfare of our troops.

(4) Womens Club, Alexandria.

Unfortunately, owing to the military situation the club has not yet been used. Also, for a number of weeks our own W.A.A.S. personnel were absent from Alexandria. There is confident hope that we shall be able to make good use of the club very soon because it is anticipated that general leave will be granted to the women's services.

(5) Abbas Bridge Club & Hostel for Non-European Troops.

The month of August has been an exceptionally busy one, creating a record in the numbers of troops who have spent their leave at the Hostel. Most of the residents came direct from the forward areas so we felt very pleased to be able to look after these men and give them a helpful time during their stay. The records show that 803 details were accommodated during August, while, in addition we were able to be helpful to 412 Non-Europeans from the British Army who were in Cairo on "one day tour arrangements", which means that our staff assist those Non-Europeans to visit the sights of Cairo besides having two meals at the Club. During the same month nightly programmes of cinema shows and concerts were held for the benefit of the residents, all entertainments being free of charge. The staff

also/.....

also arranged many tours in and around the city and it is recorded that 534 men availed themselves of these opportunities.

The sporting side of the club is being developed, while the indoor games are always popular.

Church services have been held frequently in addition to the personal work of Padre Bacon who is resident at the Hostel.

Our staff have been co-operating very well, and as an indication of this the S/Major and two Corporals have all learnt to operate the cinema projector in their zeal to ensure the continuity of the entertainment programmes.

(6) Non-European Rest Club, Alexandria.

This Club continues to function in a limited way so there is little to report. Its main functions lie in the supplying of meals at very reasonable prices, the provision of Quiet Rooms where the men can rest awhile, read, write letters and play games, but unfortunately the latter amenities make very little appeal to the majority of the men. Our staff contact the men who have been brought into the city in the mornings to let them know of the facilities the Club offers. Of course recent events have seriously affected the functions of the Club.

(7) Springbok Club, Helwan.

This most useful project of our work continues to show improvement. In recent weeks, so many men have been using the golf course and tennis courts, that we have found it necessary to give assistance to the staff. The records show that, the number of men using the golf course is approximately 100 per week, while nearly the same number play on the tennis courts. All of the sporting equipment including shoes is available free of charge, but the present prohibitive cost of golf balls entails a deposit being asked for when golf is played.

The garden around the club house has been wonderfully improved which makes such a fine contrast to the surrounding desert. The verandah with its newly grown creepers has proved a lovely place during the long summer evenings.

The buffet and dry goods canteen have continued their essential functions so that the men have appreciated being able to get a "complete day in the country"

EUROPEAN CAMP RECREATION CENTRES:

(1) S.A. Base - Main Centre. The hut has been exceptionally busy during the weeks of July, for there was considerable activity in the base due to military events. The number of men using the premises increased by 50% and we found that our staff were happy in the opportunities of serving the men who were getting back to the base for a few days under re-equipment schemes. Altogether we were able to arrange 32 band concerts, recorded musical concerts and indoor sport tournaments in addition to the many outdoor cinema shows.

The large library continued to function most satisfactorily, increasing its numbers of books.

The Chapel has been used more than usual. As a matter of fact out of a spontaneous request we arranged a daily service at 9.30 a.m. just at the time of the fall of Tobruk. Since the beginning of July that service has increased in its numbers and the latest reports state that extra accommodation has been necessary some mornings (the Chapel holds about 60 men). The Padres in camp have also made use of the Chapel finding that they have many opportunities for valuable contacts with the men.

(2) S.A. Base - Swimming Bath Canteen. Although the canteen is not very large, it helps to add to the pleasantness of the visits the troops pay to the swimming bath. The gardens around the bath are being developed adding to this oasis of pleasure in the desert.

(3) S.A. Base - Red Triangle Hall: The hall has been used regularly for entertainments, lectures, etc.

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