

A NEW HEADQUARTERS

LIFE IN CYPRUS

This is our first contribution to THE COMMUNICATOR but with the changeover from Egypt to Cyprus, when we said goodbye to our Wrens, followed by the current slight unpleasantness, we feel that there is some excuse.

Our base is in Nicosia at Army G.H.Q. where we are completely surrounded by soldiery and barbed wire, and our job is to keep F.O.M.E. in touch with the outside world.

To this end we have two SWB8s mounted in trailers, to which has recently been added an 89Q, the whole being situated a dozen miles away in the middle of nowhere; and this with a couple of diesel generators constitutes our transmitter station. A few B28s and a recently acquired B40, a perforator and auto head together with the usual CYP equipment, were all fitted into a large nissen hut close to G.H.Q. This is our M.S.O. With the advent of the Commandos, the Amphibious Warfare Squadron and recently half a dozen Coastal Minesweepers in addition to our Patrol Boats, our traffic level has shot up into the clouds. In September alone we handled 951 encrypted signals with a total of 70,033 groups and 1,019 unclassified signals. This of course necessitated an increase in staff and a number of unsuspecting Signalmen and Telegraphists and one or two Petty Officers as well, resting in Chatham or spread around the Med. Fleet suddenly and unexpectedly found themselves in aircraft bound for Cyprus.

Living conditions are a little different, to say the least of it, from normal naval standards—army tents, army messing in an army camp, and NO TOT.

However, the weather is generally pretty good and we don't get snowed in, although we occasionally get snowed under. Working with the Army presents all sorts of problems in message handling, but now that we have got the hang of their peculiar filing system, it isn't too bad. The question of minor alterations to offices, when we have to rely on the Army completely, is rather a different matter. To get a bench altered, a shelf put up or a small rabbit arranged are all relatively easy matters in the Navy, but not so with the Army. The number of formalities

to be gone through is staggering and by the time that the R.E.s get round to the job, anything up to three or four months may have elapsed.

After prolonged and complicated negotiations, we recently acquired a bench for our newly constructed S.C.Y.O., the only equipment at the time being two chairs and a safe. As the bench was a little too long to fit into the office we shortened it quite simply with a saw, replaced the legs and fitted it in the S.C.Y.O. with the minimum of trouble. When the army form one thousand and something dealing with office furniture arrived we pointed out politely that the bench was 11 ft. 6 in. and not 12 ft. 6 in. long. The army 'Q' Section is still trying to puzzle out a way to substitute Bench, Office, 11 ft. 6 in. etc., etc., for Bench, Office, 12 ft. 6 in. etc., etc., in their records. Our suggestion that the desk had originally been made of green wood and that it had shrunk when it dried out in the hot weather was received in stony silence.

However, lest we give a wrong impression, we hasten to add that the Army is very helpful whenever it can be.

A run ashore in Nicosia is always interesting. There are the usual cinemas (some open air), cafes, bars, cabarets, etc., that can be found throughout the Middle East. Strangely enough, there is no public transport system so one has to walk, or, if a baron, take a taxi. The alternative is to take one's life in one's hands and cycle, as most of the locals do. They seem to have a complete disregard for any other road user, be devoid of any road sense and of minor items such as brakes, lights, or rule of the road. Talking of this, the only rule here appears to be that if you meet another car you should leave it to starboard, but apart from that you can do pretty well what you like. The local population, especially the older people, do not appear to be particularly ill disposed or unfriendly, at least, not in Nicosia, and even when the younger members of the community decide to liven things up a little with a demonstration or a bit of flag hoisting, their energy seems to be directed more against property than against any personnel in particular.

Recently things have livened up in Cyprus, culminating in the island wide disorders and

demonstrations of Friday, 28th October—the anniversary of the Greek entry into World War II. These demonstrations, in defiance of H.E. The Governor's orders, were quickly and effectively dealt with by the "South Staffs," the Gay Gordons and of course our own R.M. Commandos, who are well trained in anti-riot and street fighting. Armed with batons and protected by steel helmets, shields and anti-gas masks they waded into the demonstrators and wielded their batons with great effect.

With the aid of tear gas bombs the demonstrations were quickly broken up, numbers of prisoners were taken and there were quite a few broken heads. It is hoped that these very firm measures will prove to the "locals" that to quote Sir John Harding, "They will achieve nothing by lawlessness." However, as far as we are concerned these things only happen occasionally in Nicosia and our only real discomfort is that the town, including most of the best night spots, is placed "Out of bounds" about once a week.

Limassol and Famagusta, of course, have been under curfew off and on for a number of weeks, but to quote an old Naval saying "Up ladder, Jack, I'm inboard"—we don't live there!

In conclusion, we repeat—its never dull here.