

Libya, the scene of Eighth Army's famous desert victories in World War Two, has been an independent state for a decade. But British soldiers are still stationed there, advising and training the Libyans in the art of war as . . .



The star and crescent of Libya's national emblem is worn as an arm flash by all the members of the British Military Mission.

THEY HELP TO MAKE A NEW ARMY

IN the ten-year-old sovereign state of Libya a handful of British soldiers are pursuing a strange ambition. They are trying to work themselves out of a job!

They are the officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers from many corps and regiments who form the British Military Mission there and whose task is to help train the new Libyan Army and guide it towards complete independence.

When that is achieved, within the next few years, they will return to soldier on with the British Army, justifiably proud of a job well done.

The story goes back to 1951 when, shortly after the new African state of Libya was born, two British officers—later joined by some 30 other British military advisers and instructors—arrived in Benghazi to begin the British Military Mission's work. Soon they had helped to form the Libyan Army's first unit—the Idris el Awal Battalion, from which many have since become officers and non-commissioned officers in other Libyan units and organisations—and in the past ten years have given valuable assistance in the training of Libyan soldiers of all arms.

The members of the Mission were largely responsible for the formation in 1957 of the Libyan Military Academy, housed in what was once the Italian Marshal Graziani's residence and later a palace of King Idris, in Benghazi. Here, some 90 cadets are put through a three-year course and the permanent Libyan staff can call for the advice and assistance of two British officers—Major C. J. C. Humfrey, The Royal Warwickshire Regiment, and Captain J. P. Ward, The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment—and four other-rank instructors.

Training is based on the Sandhurst system and the cadets wear British battledress and maroon berets. They work a 12-hour day which begins at 7 a.m. and ends with lights out at 9 p.m.

When SOLDIER visited the Academy recently a platoon of cadets was drilling with Guards-like precision on the barrack square, a tribute to the two drill instructors—Warrant Officer W. J. R. Pierce, Welsh Guards, and Colour-Sergeant D. A. Alderman, Grenadier Guards, whose main task now is to teach Libyans how to instruct. Four years ago when he joined the Academy, Warrant Officer Pierce drilled all

the cadets himself. Now he stands behind the squads, pointing out faults to his pupils.

Staff-Sergeant Instructor G. Turner, Army Physical Training Corps, who used to conduct all physical training sessions himself, now supervises two Libyan instructors who, with four other Libyan lance-corporals, went to Cyprus for a physical training course with the British Army.

British soldiers are hard at work, too, in most Libyan Army units. In the workshops at Benghazi, Major Philip Edgeley, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, trains learner mechanics, and in the new military hospital—originally planned and organised by Major Roland Watson, Royal Army Medical Corps—Sergeant Reginald Loades, RAMC, assists a lieutenant-colonel of the Turkish Army Medical Service who is serving with the Libyan Army. Much of the hospital equipment was provided by Britain. Sergeant Loades' next job is to help establish medical laboratories in Benghazi, Barce and Derna.

Two British Army Sappers—Captain D. Harman and Staff-Sergeant J. V. Herman—and Colour-Sergeant J. R. Ford, The Durham Light Infantry, play an important part in the training of the Libyan Army Engineer Squadron, teaching demolition, field defence, mine warfare and water supply methods. The Libyan Sappers have learned rapidly and one of them—Warrant Officer Mohammed Yusif, who went on a course with 14 Survey Regiment, Royal Engineers, in Cyprus—now produces all the maps and tracings for the Libyan Army's exercises.

Adviser to the Libyan Army Signal School is Captain Michael Keeling, Royal Signals. Here, too, training is on British lines and, with British help, Libyan signallers operate a radio-telephone system between Benghazi, Tripoli and Sebha, the capitals of Cyrenaica, Tripolitania and the Fezzan, Libya's three provinces.

A section of the British Military Mission also operates in Tripoli where Major Peter Farmer Wright, Royal Artillery, and Captain J. A. V. de Candole, Queen's Dragoon Guards, advise the 2nd Libyan Army Artillery Regiment and Staff-Sergeant P. Reid, Royal Artillery, and Staff-Sergeant Alan Marston, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, teach the handling and maintenance of the unit's 25-pounder guns. British soldiers are also on the instruction staff of the 1st Armoured Regiment which is equipped with *Saladin* armoured cars.

Captain J. P. Ward (bending) and a Libyan lieutenant carefully watch points as two officer cadets from the Libyan Military Academy in Benghazi are put through their paces on the Bren gun range.

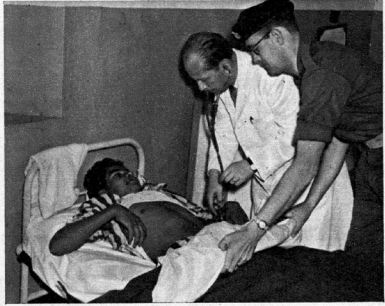




Above: Gunners of 2nd Libyan Army Artillery Regiment train on the barrack square with their 25-pounder guns.



Left: S/Sgt J. Herman, RE, explains, with the aid of a model, how to build an improvised bridge over a ravine.



Right: Sgt R. Loades and the Turkish colonel attend a patient in the new Army hospital.

Below: CSM W. Pierce, Welsh Guards, keeps a keen eye on cadets as they practise rifle drill.

