

PRESS NOTICEA I R G R A P HNovel and Speedy Letter Service
From the Middle East Forces

The Postmaster General announces that in order to meet the need for cheapening and expediting homeward postal communication from the British Forces in the Middle East the Post Office is introducing an Airgraph Service - the first of its kind in the world. Under this system a letter will be less than a fortnight in transit. The charge from the Middle East to this country will be 3d.

Ordinary air mail letters, owing to the weight involved, have to be carried part of the way by sea and take much longer on the journey.

This remarkable change in the speed and cost of letter transmission is being effected by harnessing photographic science to the postal services. Working in co-operation with Messrs. Kodak, the War Office, the Air Ministry and the Admiralty, the Post Office believes that a solution to the problem of the long time taken by correspondence from our Forces in the Middle East has been found.

The operations of the Airgraph Service can be summarised as follows:-

- (1) The sender writes his message on a special form 11 inches by 8 inches. In a panel at the foot he prints the address in block letters.
- (2) The completed form is then photographed on to a very small film, the letter being reduced many times its original size.
- (3) The miniature film is sent by aeroplane to its destination.
- (4) On arrival of the film an enlargement measuring 5 inches by 4 inches - about a quarter the size of the original - is made.
- (5) The enlargement is placed in an envelope, with the block printed address showing in the cut out panel, and delivered in the usual way.
- (6) The original letters are eventually destroyed.

The homeward Airgraph Service from the Forces in the Middle East to this country will begin almost at once, and a similar outward service from Great Britain to the Middle East will be started as soon as the necessary technical arrangements can be completed.

In the Middle East members of His Majesty's Forces will be able to obtain the necessary forms which, when completed would be handed in with stamps affixed in accordance with information issued locally.

The Airgraph Service is being introduced because of the great reduction in weight and space caused by films replacing the original correspondence.

Thus 4,500 film negatives of letters will weigh only one pound. An equivalent number of ordinary letters would weight one and a half hundred-weights. Therefore, all the negatives can be sent by air to their destination, and it is possible to fix a much lower charge than is at present possible for an ordinary air~~mail~~ letter.

It may be said that this system will be less private than ordinary correspondence, but the difference is more apparent than real. Under an arrangement of this kind it is obvious that a communication cannot be sent in a sealed envelope throughout its transmission, but the Airgraph letters will be delivered in envelopes and in this respect they can be likened to telegrams.

Of course, the Airgraph Service is only supplementary to the normal service, and correspondents not wishing to avail themselves of this cheap and more speedy method of communication can continue to use the existing facilities.

A great deal of effort has been spent upon organising this Airgraph Service as quickly as possible. Special filming equipment has been sent to the Middle East, and an expert of the Kodak Company has gone out.

Owing to certain difficulties the inward and outward services cannot commence at the same time. It is hoped, however, that the first Airgraph letters from the Middle East will begin to arrive in this country very shortly.

The outward service will be started as soon as the necessary technical arrangements can be completed.

22nd April, 1941.

GENERAL POST OFFICE.