

AUSTRIA TO CHARING CROSS

Corporal Cook and Rifleman Blackman, Desert Rats who drew lucky numbers in the home leave ballot. D-Day Dodgers they ironically called themselves when the Normandy landings stole the headlines, but their lories recall other famous days when the Desert Rats made history. Special trucks eat up two hundred miles a day, but to men who have not seen their homes and the faces they love for two, three, four years, the ribbon of road crawls by at a snail's pace. From the sullen majesty of the Carinthian valleys - on to England 900 miles away.

Rifleman Blackman of Egham, Surrey and Corporal Cook of Watford, (two men whom Hitler forced to put on khaki) ride through broken Munich where Nazism was borne. Along the route, famous names ensure that the Eighth Army, though disbanded now, will live in the memory of its many triumphs.

Once over the Rhine, the long roads ahead that lead towards and into France, bring a quickening of the heart. For Cook and Blackman a Europe twisted and scarred by war drops away behind - ahead is England and a brief savouring of the life a man can hope for in his homeland. At last Calais a final stop before Embarkation. This time the sea trip in front of them is a short and pleasant one, very different from the hazardous days of troopship voyages and the tense silence of assault craft moving in to hostile beaches.

The traveller's journey is almost done - for two Desert Rats Dover's chalk cliffs speak a welcome richer than words.

Happiest job for the ticket collector is to pass through leave men. The London train could have wings and still not be fast enough for two men on the last lap of a five day journey home.

They crossed the Rhine and many another European river but these are the best crossings of all $\frac{3}{4}$ the ones that end at Charing Cross.

Two men of 2A" Company, 7th Battalion, the Rifle Brigade of Klagenfurt, Carinthia - They've come a long way together and seen more than enough of action. Here's the start of their first home leave in years. Robert Louis Stevenson says somewhere that "to travel hopefully is better than to arrive." But Corporal Cook, with a young wife does not agree with Mr. Stevenson.