

SALUTE TO THE R.A.F.

The over riding efficiency and endurance of the R.A.F. and Allied Air Forces in the victorious advance through Libya, is the subject of this pictorial tribute by Pathe Gazette to the airmen and ground personnel who, by magnificent technique, crippled the Luftwaffe in this theatre of operations and dominated the skies from the outset of the great offensive.

By overlapping raids during every twenty-four hours, Rommel's retreating transport was subjected to constant bombardment. The havoc they wrought to the jammed masses of German and Italian lorries, tanks and supply vehicles, tore the heart out of an already demoralised enemy. A great army was being crushed as it ran.

The speed of our advance imposed a great strain on ground staffs, but they rose to the occasion magnificently. R.A.F. Lorries stream along the coast road, pressing on to occupy new landing grounds and aerodromes where the dust raised by evacuating Axis aircraft has hardly settled.

Bombs, ammunition, fuel - whole workshops rumbling by a German Military Cemetery which fringes the route of the convoy,

Squadrons of planes leap-frogging their way from one drome to another. Keeping pace with these rapid moves means almost superhuman effort by the ground crews. A squadron of shark-nosed Kittyhawks ups-camp again. From a desert refrigerator come bottles of lubricating liquid (most important).

Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder who has been A.O.C.in.C of the R.A.F. in the Middle East has now been appointed Vice-Chief of the Air Staff in England. Air Vice-Marshal Coningham, in his capacity as A.O.C. Western Desert, has commanded operations in the field. The plane they use is a captured German FIESELER-STORCH (or Grasshopper). A useful Army Co-operation plane with a performance similar to our Lysander.

And here goes one more unit moving out lock-stock and barrel for another advance aerodrome. With amazing thoroughness they up-stick to plant themselves one stage nearer the shifting scene of Battle. Unremitting toil willingly undertaken by ground crews whose motto is "Keep 'em Flying".