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TONS OF MAPS

—And Where They Come From

(Written for "The Listener"
by H.M.W.N.)

IT was reported by cable a few days ago that "ten tons of maps of Germany" had been dropped by parachute at the headquarters of General Patton's Army as it approached the German frontier. Here is an account of the work involved in preparing such maps by a contributor who was attached to a map-making section of the Army in the Middle East.

WHEN a campaign begins, three things have to be sent up to the front line—food, ammunition and maps. Of these three, maps are by no means the least.

During 1942 and 1943 I was on the Survey staff at General Headquarters, Middle East, and it was from there that the maps for the 8th Army were made. The organisation of the department is tremendous; there are field survey and printing companies scattered about the area, and at Headquarters there are trig, air, map production, and distribution sections as well as the map library.

For the first three months I worked in the library with a staff of about 12 men. Every day maps of all countries and of all scales poured into the library from various parts of the world. From the Geographical Section of the General Staff at the War Office, from Survey of India, from Survey of Egypt, from the directorates of the 9th and 10th Armies, from Survey of South-east Africa—all to be marked up on charts according to scale and country (i.e., map-indexed), card-indexed, examined by the officer-in-charge, and finally filed in presses.

Straight-forward printed maps were easy to deal with, but in addition there were field sketches, portions of captured German and Italian maps, Admiralty charts, sun prints, air-photo strips, and



MAP-WORK IN ITALY

many other items, all of possible great value, and many "secret" or "most secret." All had to be stored so that they could be found speedily, when required. This is no easy task with a collection of hundreds of thousands.

When A Campaign is Planned

Just housing and cataloguing maps sounds a pretty poor job in wartime, but it is a basis from which all the Army maps are made.

As soon as the Director of Survey is notified that a certain country will be the scene of battle in a few months' time, he begins to get the maps ready, and the type of map that is produced depends on the time elapsing before the campaign begins. If it is a short time, enormous numbers of the best existing map are reprinted, but if there is time, the maps are added to and improved from information from various sources. In either case, the library supplies a map index of all available material, large and small, of the country in question, and from these the work passes to the map-producing section.

The officers there send out orders to the printing sections stating the scale and type of map required, the basic map to be used, the additional material to be incorporated, and the date on which the proofs are to be returned to the Directorate. The drawing offices of the printing company get to work, and as soon as possible, the proofs are returned. One is sent to Army Intelligence for comment on roads and bridges, one to the R.A.F. for marking up air information, one to the air-photo section to mark up discrepancies, one to "Trig" for trig points and heights to be checked and one is checked by the officer in charge of that particular country. He (or she) checks that the printing company has carried out instructions, that the marginal notes are correct, that name spellings are consistent (i.e., all in British spelling, or in the spelling of the country concerned), that the type is black enough, that the river "fillings" fit the rivers, that the sea fits the coast—all the hundred and one little things that make an accurate or an inaccurate

(continued on next page)

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