

# THE RAILWAYS AND THE WAR EFFORT, 1914-1915<sup>1</sup>

## Political and administrative background

Subsequent to the creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, steps were taken to combine the armed forces of the four ex-colonies in the new Union Defence Forces. Appropriate legislation was provided in the Defence Act of 1912. Considerable time was needed before all the provisos of the Act could be implemented, and the outbreak of war in August 1914 found the infant Defence Forces incomplete and unprepared for a task of the magnitude confronting them. One specific area where arrangements were inadequate was that of railway transport.

Clause 89 of the Act of 1912 stipulated that in wartime the military authorities might requisition rolling stock and locomotives. In addition, the Governor General could authorize any officer to assume control over the whole or any portion of any railway system within the Union<sup>2</sup>. Since this arrangement was not compulsory, there was a choice between two alternatives. The military establishments could assume complete control of the railways, or control could be left in the hands of the constituted civil administration. Between these clear alternatives various compromise arrangements could also have been made.

The General Manager of Railways had fixed views on the subject, being convinced that control should rest entirely with the civil authorities. He believed that those who ran the railways in peacetime could put their skills and knowledge to good use in wartime<sup>3</sup>. All traffic, whether civil or military, would be dealt with as speedily as possible, unhampered by interference from military commanders lacking experience of railway management. Practical reasoning apart, the General Manager could turn to precedent. He quoted from Lt Col Sir E. P. C. Girouard's history of the railways during the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902: 'Civil railway officials have been heard to say that attacks by the enemy on the line are not nearly so disturbing to traffic as the arrival of a friendly general with his force.'<sup>4</sup> During the American Civil War, one particular incident had led to the remark by the Assistant Secretary of War to the con-

troller of (Federal) railways: 'Be patient as possible with the Generals. Some of them will trouble you more than they will the enemy.'<sup>5</sup> Thus reasoned the civil railway administration.

It remains unclear as to whether the Defence authorities had any particularly determined views about military-railway relationships. In any event, arrangements made in August 1914 and later inclined to accord with the mainstream of the General Manager's ideas. Formal arrangements for top-level liaison were established on 8 August. On that date an officer of the railway administration was appointed Railway Transportation Officer, with the military rank of Major, at Defence Headquarters. He was in direct telephonic communication with all sections of the Department of Defence, as well as with the General Manager of Railways. In addition, two officers of the Railway Administration were posted to the headquarter staff of the General Officer Commanding in the Field, and other railway officials were to be appointed Railway Staff Officers, with military rank, at points where substantial troop movements were continually in progress.

In detail, the system functioned as follows. The General Manager retained control of the railways and acted in an advisory capacity to the Minister of Defence. Railway operation was carried-out by railway personnel under the control of the Defence Department. At Defence Headquarters, the Railway Transportation Officer fell under the authority of the Quartermaster General. Requests from the Defence authorities for rail facilities were transmitted to him via the Quartermaster General. In turn he passed them on to the 'War Section' at Railway Headquarters in Johannesburg. This War Section was set up to direct movements of military trains, co-

1. The author would like gratefully to express his thanks to the Librarian of the South African Railways Reference Library in Johannesburg for the loan of much of the documentary material upon which this article is based.

2. *Statutes of the Union of South Africa, 1912*, p 252.

3. *Report of the General Manager of Railways and Harbours for the Year ended 31st December 1914* (UG 25 — 1915), pp 75-76.

4. UG 25 — 1915, p 76.

5. *South African Railways and Harbours Magazine*, Nov 1918, p 658.

ordinate requests for transport, and maintain direct central control. Between them, the Railway Transportation officer and the War Section were responsible for the conveyance by rail of troops, animals, commissariat, munitions, ordnance and other materials of war. The Railway Staff Officers took their orders from the War Section.<sup>6</sup> A circular signed by the Quartermaster General on 16 November 1914 explained that the Railway Transportation Officer

makes provision under the direction of the Quartermaster-General for the movement by rail of troops, animals, stores, supplies, etc as required, also for harbour and dock requirements in addition to acting generally as intermediary officer between Defence Headquarters and Railway and Harbours Administration in all matters . . .

The R.T.O. is responsible for the satisfactory marshalling of rolling stock to meet troops' requirements and for ensuring that entrainment and detrainment of troops, animals, and vehicles are carried out with care and due expedition.

He should see that all military stores arriving are properly secured and delivered to consignees promptly . . .

The same circular laid down that

Railway Staff Officers are appointed to Forces where such an appointment is considered necessary and this officer will arrange for all local movements by rail and also where necessary, act as Military Embarkation Officer in addition to performing any Naval transport duties which may be imposed upon him.<sup>7</sup>

These arrangements were made with an eye on intended military operations to take over German South West Africa. The system was planned to secure co-ordination between military and railway officers at organizational level, thereby ensuring efficient rail services in the field. A plan of campaign was finalized by 21 August, and a force under Brig Gen H. T. Lukin landed at Port Nolloth on 1 September, Col P. S. Beves landed at Lüderitzbucht, without opposition, on 18 September, and Col G. Maritz took up position at Upington with 1 000 South African Mounted Rifles. Before it could get under way, the projected campaign had to be suspended because of the outbreak of rebellion in the Union.<sup>8</sup>

## The Rebellion

Operations during the Rebellion were characterized by extremely mobile, fast-moving warfare. The rebel commandos came into being over a period of time and frequently operated independently of one another. Once the few large organized rebel bodies had been broken up, the fighting degenerated into a series of skirmishes and scraps between bodies of organized loyal troops and fragmented rebel groups.

The country where disaffection was most rife was sparsely populated, with wide open spaces that made it easy for rebels to melt away and later regroup away from Government troops. Under these difficult circumstances the Defence authorities had recourse to the railways as a suitable means of moving troops from point to point fast enough either to surround the rebels or to block their passage in a particular direction. Troop trains were placed at the disposal of the Defence Department, and five armoured trains were built.

During the Rebellion, centralized direction of rail movements proved virtually impossible. Rebel movements were often not predictable and military commanders had to react to unexpected situations without losing time.

If a commander urgently wanted rail transport, he frequently overrode the railwaymen to get his way. Many acts of interference occurred, and rail operations during the Rebellion were notable for ill-feeling between defence and railway authorities, unco-operation in some instances and a good deal of frustration to both parties.

As shown above, senior defence and railway officials were agreed that smooth running of the railways depended on the specialist knowledge of the railway staff, and following from this it was desirable that these specialist staff not be interfered with. In fact, local military commanders failed to appreciate this and,

6. UG 25 — 1915, p 75; South African Railways and Harbours Archive, File DX 158; SAR & H Archive, 'History of War Services rendered by the Union Railway and Harbours Administration' (Draft); Archive of the Secretary for Defence, (DC Series), Box 113, File 2395/Z.

7. Archive of the Secretary for Defence, (DC 9199 series), Box 78, File A.274/9199.

8. *The Union of South Africa and the Great War, 1914-1918* (Official History, 1924), p 13.

pressed both by operational contingencies and their natural concern for the comfort and welfare of their own units, would arrange train transport for their men with scant regard for the disruption thereby caused to other, possibly scheduled, services. Two examples will illustrate this.

A train arrived at Krugersdorp from Pretoria with a cargo of mules, trollies, and water-carts. General Myburgh, who was present, ordered that the train be placed in a siding. Soon afterwards the order was countermanded, and each of a number of commandos then at the station had to be issued with all its individual requirements. This entailed unloading some wagons, and transferring the contents of some wagons to others. Once all this was done, the transport officer discovered that mistakes had been made; the train was unloaded and thereafter loaded up once more. The railway official concerned reported that

great inconvenience was caused through the officers commanding the various squadrons being unable to give us the slightest idea as to the number of wagons, watercarts, motor cars, etc etc. which they desired to load, and no one seemed to care. There was no organization of the men who took no notice of their officers and we had the utmost difficulty to find out who was actually responsible for the whole business . . .

At Potchefstroom a delay of seven hours was experienced in the departure of two trains carrying the Potchefstroom Ruiters and their commissariat. The major cause of delay was apparently lack of co-ordination, since troops and equipment arrived at different times. These two examples are representative of what went on in the operational areas.<sup>9</sup>

Greater stress on good organization might have alleviated or even at least partially eliminated instances such as the above, but there were some problems, imposed by the type of warfare, which could not be overcome. Because the Government troops were entirely mounted commandos, troop trains had to provide accommodation for men and horses, not to mention all the accompanying supplies and equipment. Main line coaching stock was provided for the men, and cattle trucks for the horses. This meant that far more rolling stock — and therefore more

trains — were needed than would have been the case for infantry only.

Horses and bulky equipment (which on a few occasions included motor cars) could be loaded and unloaded with relative ease only where fixed station facilities existed. Campaign exigencies often required that commandos detrain and entrain at points where facilities did not exist; this meant considerable time was expended with corresponding delay to rail movement on a single track. Then too, troops and horses could be detrained at one point to participate in a particular operation, might travel many miles in so doing, and retrain somewhere far removed from the first point. None of this could be predicted or planned in advance. The resulting difficulties may be imagined when it is realized that on the Klerksdorp-Kimberley line, a single-track stretch, twenty-two troop trains were continuously operating over a period of several days, and in this context some statistics for rail use in the Rebellion are of interest. The period covered is from August to December, 1914.

Number of troops conveyed :	135 000
Troop mileage :	22 200 000
Number of animals conveyed :	169 000
Animal mileage :	27 065 000
Number of transport vehicles conveyed :	4 855
Transport vehicle mileage :	1 090 000
Supplies, ammunition, etc. conveyed (tons) :	36 684
Supplies, ammunition, etc. (ton miles) :	7 479 000
Number of special trains :	613 <sup>10</sup>

The five armoured trains proved very useful. They were used for patrolling the line in disaffected areas, for repairing the line where it had been damaged by rebels, and insofar as limited directional mobility allowed, for combat duties such as blocking rebel attempts to cross the line.

9. SAR & H Archive, File DX 53.

10. UG 25 — 1915, p 77; SAR & H Archive, 'History of War Services rendered by the Union Railway and Harbour Administration' (Draft).



Armoured Train No 5, 'Schrikmaker'

Numbered from one to five and individually named, the armoured trains were:

- No. 1 : 'Trafalgar'  
(Commissioned 22 Oct 1914)
- No. 2 : 'Scot'  
(Commissioned 6 Nov 1914)
- No. 3 : 'Erin'  
(Commissioned 9 Nov 1914)
- No. 4 : 'Karoo'  
(Commissioned 6 Nov 1914)
- No. 5 : 'Schrikmaker'  
(Commissioned 18 Nov 1914)

In addition to the armoured trains proper, two steel bogie trucks were fitted with loopholes at Bloemfontein and used as an improvised armoured train for patrol purposes, manned by local Defence Force members. 19 bogie trucks were fitted with sandbags and distributed at various points in the Transvaal and Orange Free State. They were either attached to armoured trains or used as improvised armoured trains as circumstances demanded.

The five true armoured trains comprised standard rolling stock, suitably reinforced with steel plating to withstand bullets, and provided with loopholes. The composition of the 'Trafalgar' was:

- One engine.
- One guntruck.
- One breakdown van.
- One bogie truck.
- Two bogie cattle trucks.
- One short van.
- One water tank truck.<sup>11</sup>

The crew of the same train was assembled approximately as follows:<sup>12</sup>

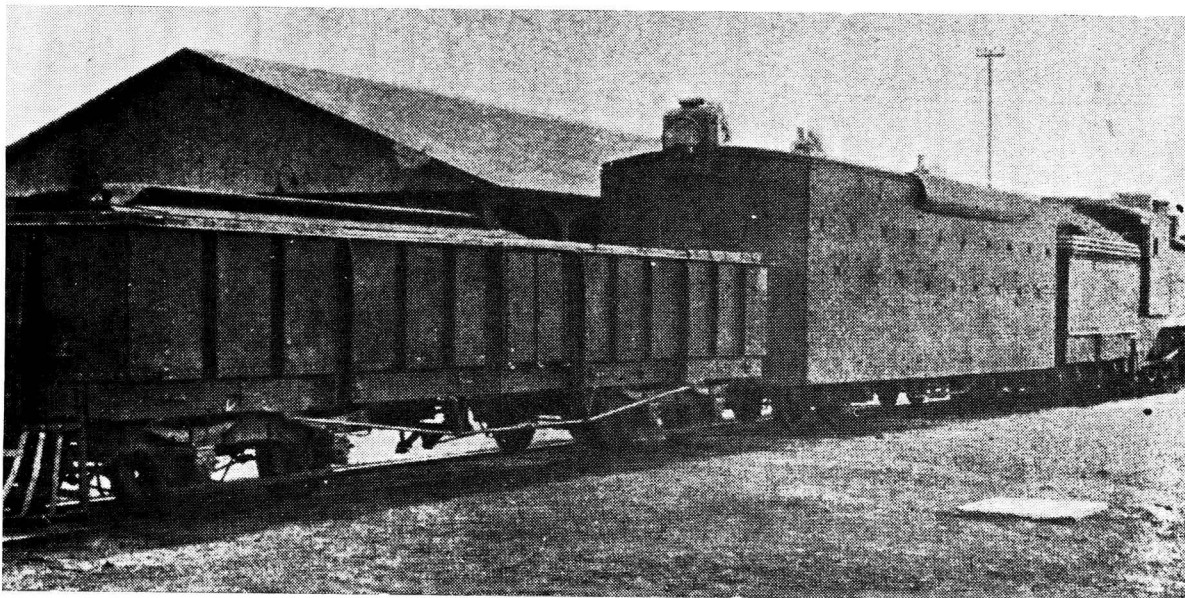
- 1 Captain (From civil railway administration; only temporarily in uniform)
- 4 Lieutenants (Three from civil railway administration; one from Dept of Defence)
- 30 Riflemen (From Dept of Defence)
- 9 Machine-gunners (From Dept of Defence)
- 20 Gunners for heavy gun )
- 12 Train operating men ) From civil railway administration and temporarily attached to SA Engineer Corps<sup>13</sup>
- 4 Electricians to operate searchlight )
- 25 Skilled men for other duties )

11. UG 25 — 1915, p 79; SAR & H Archive, File DX 158.

12. Archive of the Secretary for Defence, (DC 9199 series), Box 55, File A.188/9199. Precise establishment figures are not available.

13. The SAEC was composed of railway staff. It was responsible for railroad repair and construction work in GSWA.





Armoured Train No 2, 'Erin'

Reading through the files of the Archive of the Secretary for Defence, one perceives that the Rebellion did not occasion any serious interruption in planning for the campaign in German South West Africa. Experience gained during the Rebellion was put to good use in the subsequent campaign and in this connection one may engage in an interesting speculation regarding a change in the system of railway management. With effect from 15 December 1914 Mr. W. W. Hoy, General Manager of the SA Railways and Harbours, was appointed to temporary commissioned rank as Colonel in the Active Citizen Force. His post was designated 'Director of Military Railways' and he was attached to the Permanent Force Staff of Defence Headquarters.<sup>14</sup> His authority and the limits of his powers were laid down as follows:

. . . under and subject to the authority of the Minister of Defence, [he] will issue instructions to officers of the South African Engineer Corps, as to the construction and maintenance and working of railway lines and harbour works in those areas.

While officers of the South African Engineer Corps and South African Railways and Harbours Administration . . . are as a matter of course subject to the orders and instructions of the General or other officer commanding . . . they must carry out any general or specific instructions

issued by the Director of Military Railways . . .

General or other officers commanding the Southern, Central, or Northern Forces, should refrain from giving any instructions in conflict with the Director's general or specific instructions, but should represent to the Minister any points in which they are of opinion that the military situation requires any modification of the Director's general or specific instructions.<sup>15</sup>

It is not possible to prove a direct connection between Col Hoy's appointment and the experiences of the Rebellion, but qualified speculation in that direction is in order. For it is indisputable that Col Hoy believed very strongly in the doctrine of non-interference in railway affairs, and he let no opportunity slip past of stating his case. He would have welcomed any arrangement to reduce military interference.<sup>16</sup> On their side, the Defence authorities did not wish to offend highly-placed (and sensitive) persons like Hoy; then too, it was clear that the Railway Staff Officers needed additional backing.

This is not to suggest that Col Hoy was

14. General Orders (No 10 of 1914), dd 15 Dec 1914, Paragraph 133.

15. Ibid.

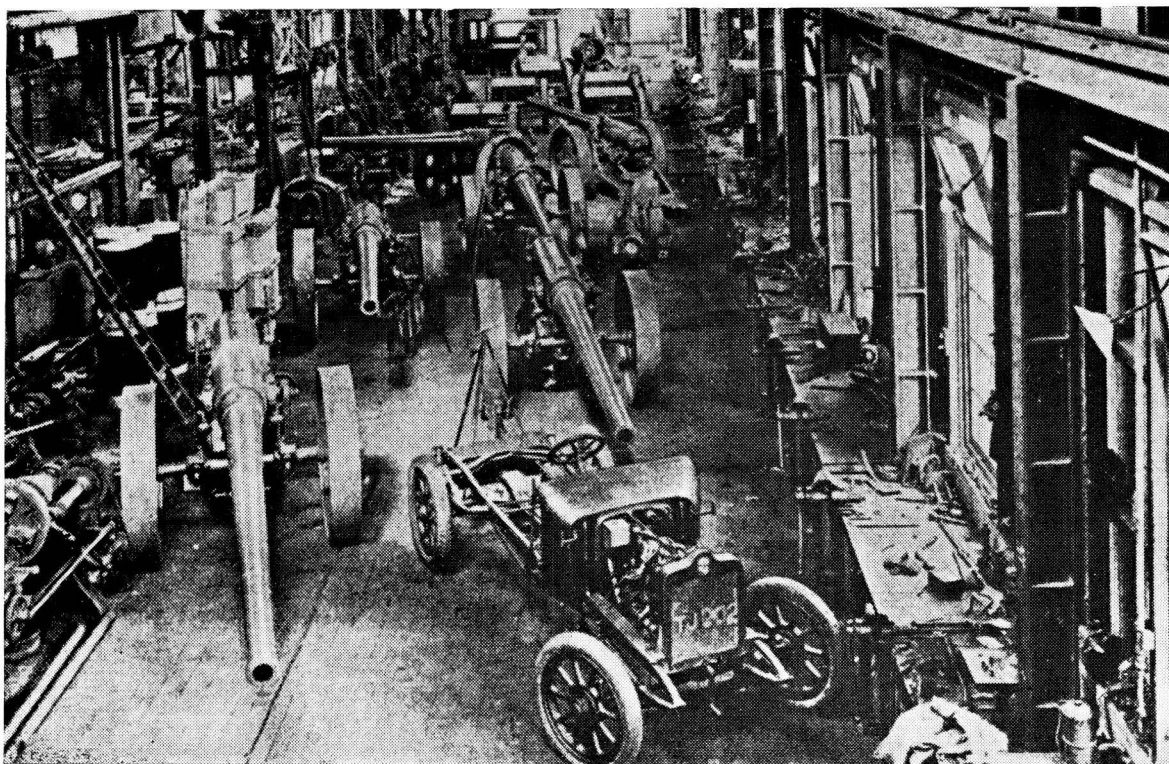
16. For statements of Hoy's approach see UG 25 — 1915, pp 75 et seq; SAR & H Archive, 'Relationship with Defence Dept and organisation to be arranged in time of War'; Archive of the Secretary for Defence, (DC series), Box 113, File 2395/Z.

given an open hand. The terms of his appointment show the Minister of Defence as the supreme authority. However, the Minister's directions were not to be conveyed to Col Hoy by military commanders in the field; the last paragraph of the order reaffirms that liaison between defence and railway authorities would be conducted at top level — that is, between DHQ and the War Section in Johannesburg.

**The Campaign in German South West Africa**  
The Railways' involvement in GSWA extended far beyond the provision of transport. Con-

siderations of strategy required that several new railroads be built where none existed previously.

Shipping had to be chartered or otherwise supplied to convey troops and war material from Durban, Port Elizabeth and Cape Town to Walvis Bay, Port Nolloth and Swakopmund. A great quantity of miscellaneous equipment was provided from Railway stocks, and some equipment was manufactured for the Defence Department, leading the General Manager to remark that the railway workshops 'have, to a certain extent, served as the Woolwich Arsenal of the Defence Force.'<sup>17</sup>



Mounting guns at the Salt River works

South African forces approaching from the south would depend on the railways for supplies. But in 1914 a direct rail link with German territory did not exist. The northernmost South African railhead was at Prieska, and the southernmost German one, at Kalkfontein. The intervening distance was 315 miles. On 15 August 1914 the Defence Department requested the Railways to construct a line to Upington as speedily as possible. Work began on 24 August and Upington (South) was reached on 20 November.<sup>18</sup> New mate-

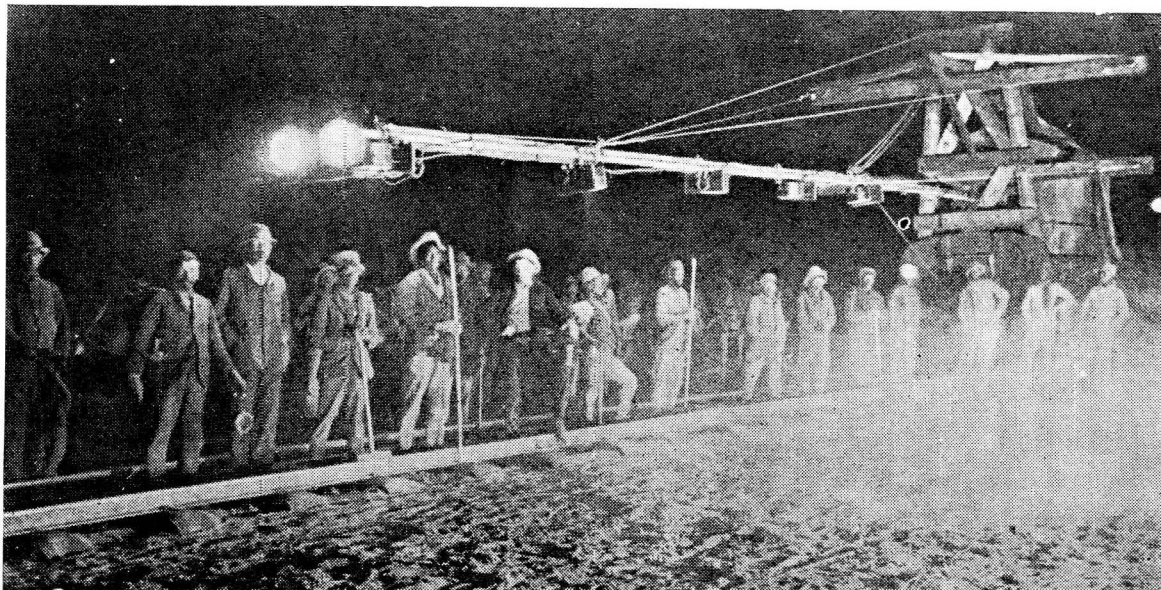
rial for a line of such length was not available and the entire Union was combed for items. Afterwards the railway authorities professed themselves greatly satisfied with progress; in one semi-official publication the line was called 'one of the noteworthy feats in the annals of railway construction.'<sup>19</sup> Construction continued day and night.

17. UG 25 — 1915, p 81.

18. SAR & H Archive, 'History of War Services rendered by the Union Railway and Harbours Administration' (Draft).

19. *South African Railways and Harbours Magazine*, Aug 1915, p 704.

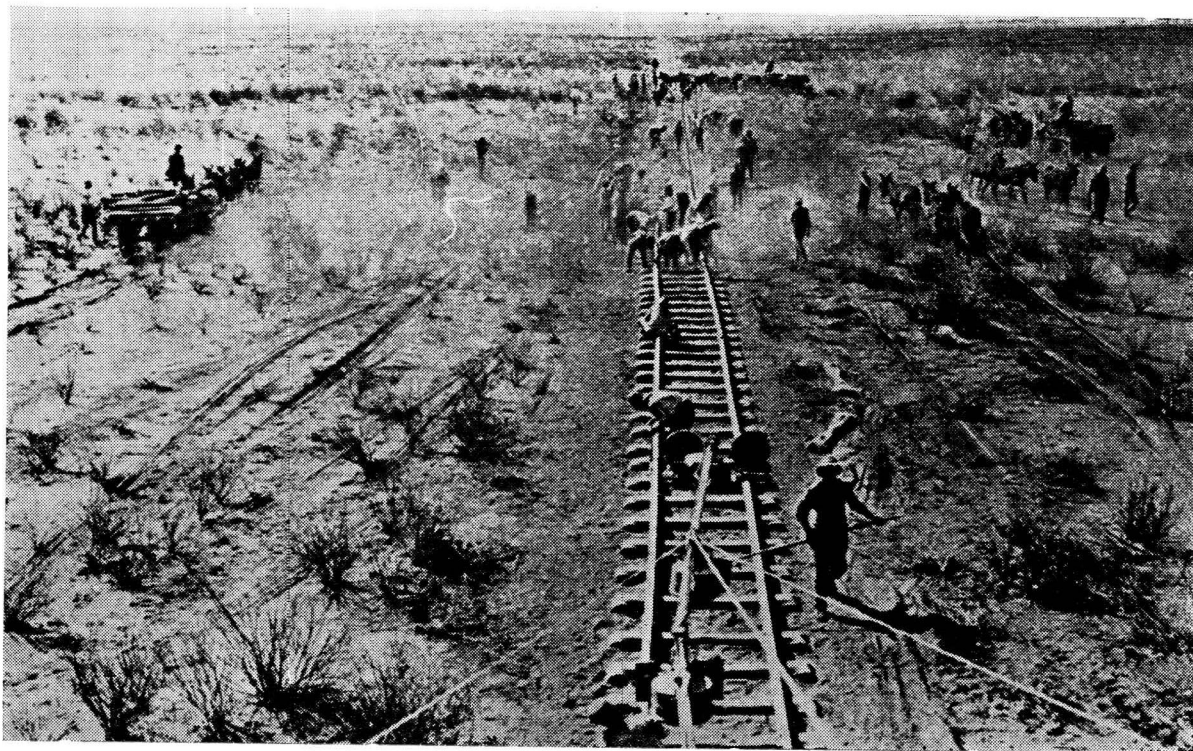




The mobile plant which enabled work on the Prieska-Upington line to proceed at night

The Prieska-Upington line was not yet complete when the Government decided to continue it to Nakob, on the German border, and thence to Kalkfontein. From there the German-built lines could be used as many of them were built to the standard 3 foot 6 inch gauge of the Union lines. Work commenced on a temporary bridge across the Orange River at Upington but was interrupted by floods. To deal with this a ferry service

was instituted to convey supplies over the river for military forces operating to the north. Several small vessels were provided for the ferry service, and a large ferry pontoon with cradles, slipways and docks was designed and built at the railway workshops in Cape Town. With this locomotives and other heavy equipment were floated across the river so that construction of the Upington-Kalkfontein line could proceed. The line reached Nakob



Construction of the Prieska-Upington line

on 17 May 1915 and linked with the German system at Kalkfontein on 25 June.<sup>20</sup> The Prieska-Upington-Kalkfontein line was by far the most involved and extensive construction operation undertaken, but there were also three other new construction tasks. In addition to these great stretches of line had to be rebuilt in the wake of the German retreat. The Germans seriously damaged the lines and either took rolling stock with them or destroyed it. Railway ancillary services were left unusable. Construction and reconstruction work undertaken was as follows.<sup>21</sup>

New Construction	Miles
Prieska-Upington-Kalkfontein	315
Walvis Bay-Swakopmund	22½
Kranzberg-Karibib (Deviation)	12
Deviation at Garub	5
	354½

#### Converted to 3 ft 6 in Gauge

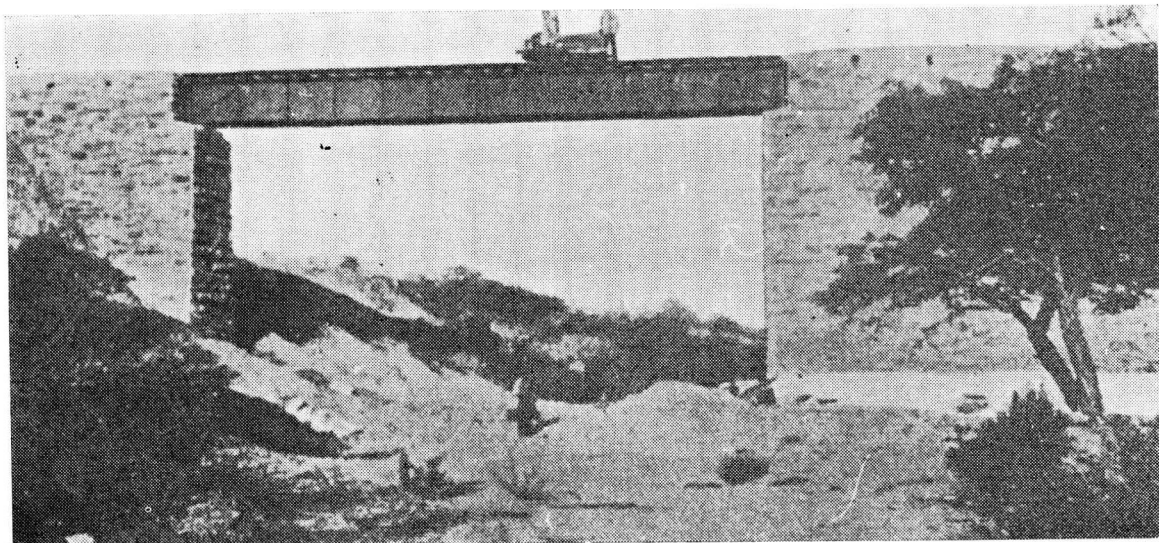
Swakopmund-Usakos	94
Usakos-Kranzberg	7
	101

Reconstructed	Miles	Bridges damaged or destroyed
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Lüderitz-Windhoek	542	67
Seeheim-Kalkfontein	122	20
Rossing-Karibib and Jakalswater-Riet	104	—
Usakos-Tsumeb and Grootfontein	316	35
	1074	122

20. SAR & H Archive, 'History of War Services rendered by the Union Railway and Harbours Administration' (Draft).

21. South African Railways and Harbours Magazine, Nov 1918, p 663.

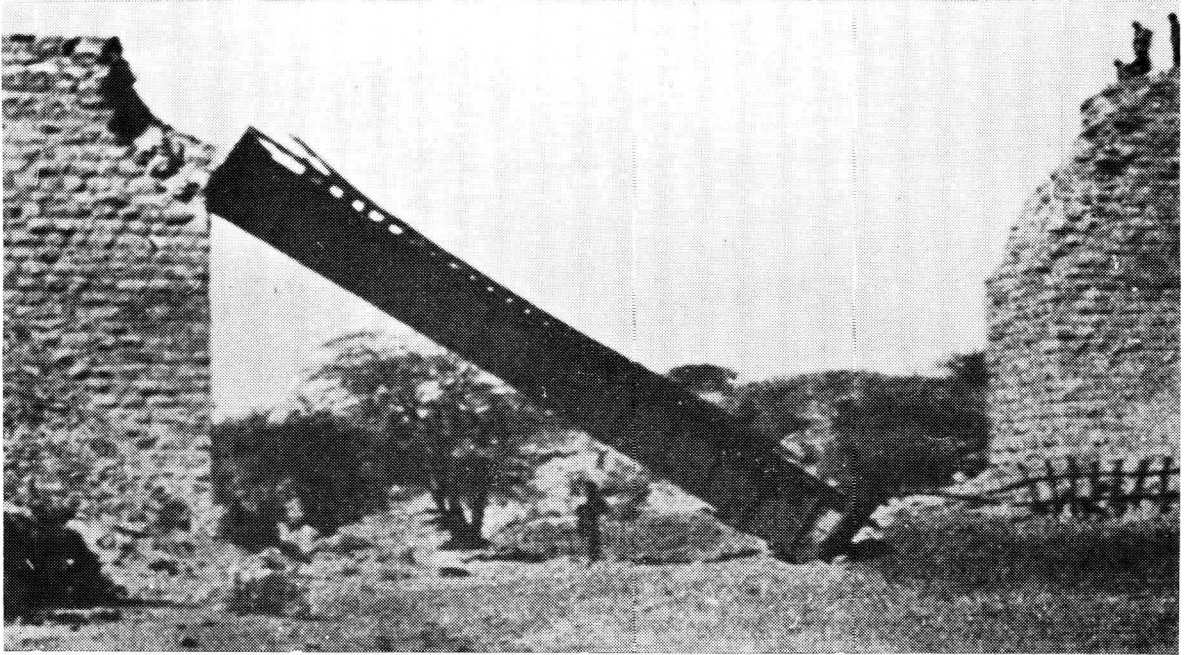


German wrecking party, Tsanichas River bridge

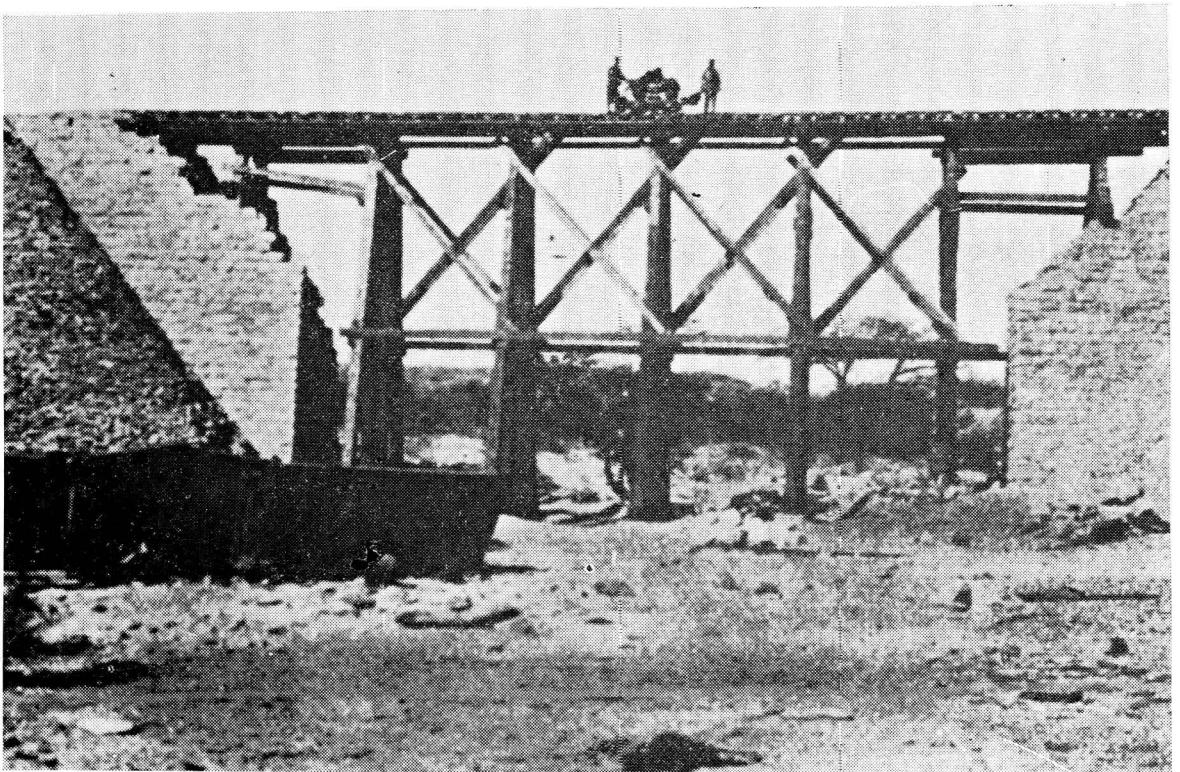
Railway Staff Officers were appointed in terms of the scheme explained previously. When Brig Gen Lukin's force landed at Port Nolloth on 1 September 1914 it was accompanied by Mr R. R. Perrott, a Divisional Superintendent, in the capacity of Director of Railways. He was responsible for running the Cape Copper Company's railway and harbour in Namaqualand in terms of Clause 89 of the Defence Act. This involved supervision

of the disembarkation of approximately 3 000 men, 4 000 animals, and 6 000 tons of supplies, munitions and equipment. At the end of October 1914 Perrott returned to the Union due to the suspension of the campaign. On 29 November he was selected for the similar post of Assistant Director of Military Railways at Lüderitzbucht. Col Hoy, in terms of the powers vested in him, empowered Perrott to take local control of the working of rail-





After the explosion



Temporary repair by the SAEC

ways at and near Lüderitzbucht. He was responsible for the passing of requisitions for all material and stores for railway and harbour purposes, and the water supply, armoured trains, and their crews also fell under his jurisdiction.<sup>22</sup> The Quartermaster General instructed the DAQMG at Lüderitzbucht on 4 December that Perrott would hold the rank of Major and

will be an Administrative Officer on your Staff and will refer to you on matters of principle. In routine matters he will conduct the business of his Department . . . The Director of Railways and Harbours will, however, make direct arrangements for and obtain any railway material or harbour plant that may be necessary . . . This procedure will prevent any unnecessary circumlocution, as Major Perrott is the only officer able to gauge requirements.<sup>23</sup>

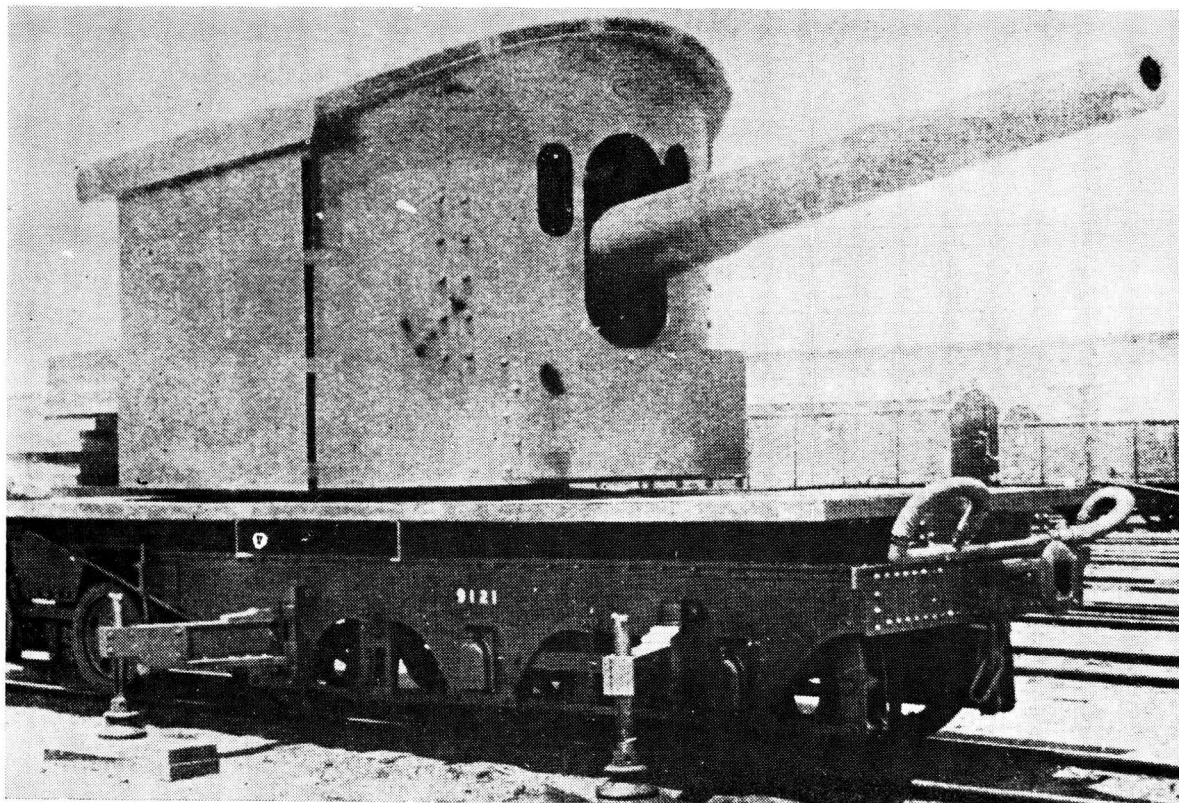
The function of the armoured trains in GSWA is not very clear. It seems that four were sent here ('Trafalgar', 'Karoo', 'Scot', and 'Schrikmaker') and that the 'Erin' was retained in the Union in case of an emergency.<sup>24</sup> Their application in GSWA would in all likelihood

have been to escort advanced troops and patrol the line.<sup>25</sup>

In addition to the armoured trains, several gun trains were sent to GSWA. These were essentially a means of transporting heavy guns — 12 pounders, 2.5" howitzers, and 4.7" naval guns loaned by the Imperial naval authorities at Simonstown. It was neither practicable nor in some instances possible to fire the guns from the train. There appear to have been seven such trains. 'B' Battery (No. 4 gun train) was composed as follows:

- One extended tender frame for 4.7" gun
- Two armoured trucks
- One armoured van
- One armoured water tank truck
- One armoured stores truck
- Ons armoured caboose
- One armoured flat bogie.<sup>26</sup>

22. SAR & H Archive, 'History of War Services rendered by the Union Railway and Harbours Administration' (Draft); SAR & H Archive, File DX 153.
23. Archive of the Secretary for Defence (DC 9199 series), Box 73, File A.274/9199.
24. SAR & H Archive, Files DX 10, DX 158.
25. Archive of the Secretary for Defence (DC 9199 series), Box 55, File A.188/9199.
26. Ibid; SAR & H Archive, File DX 10.



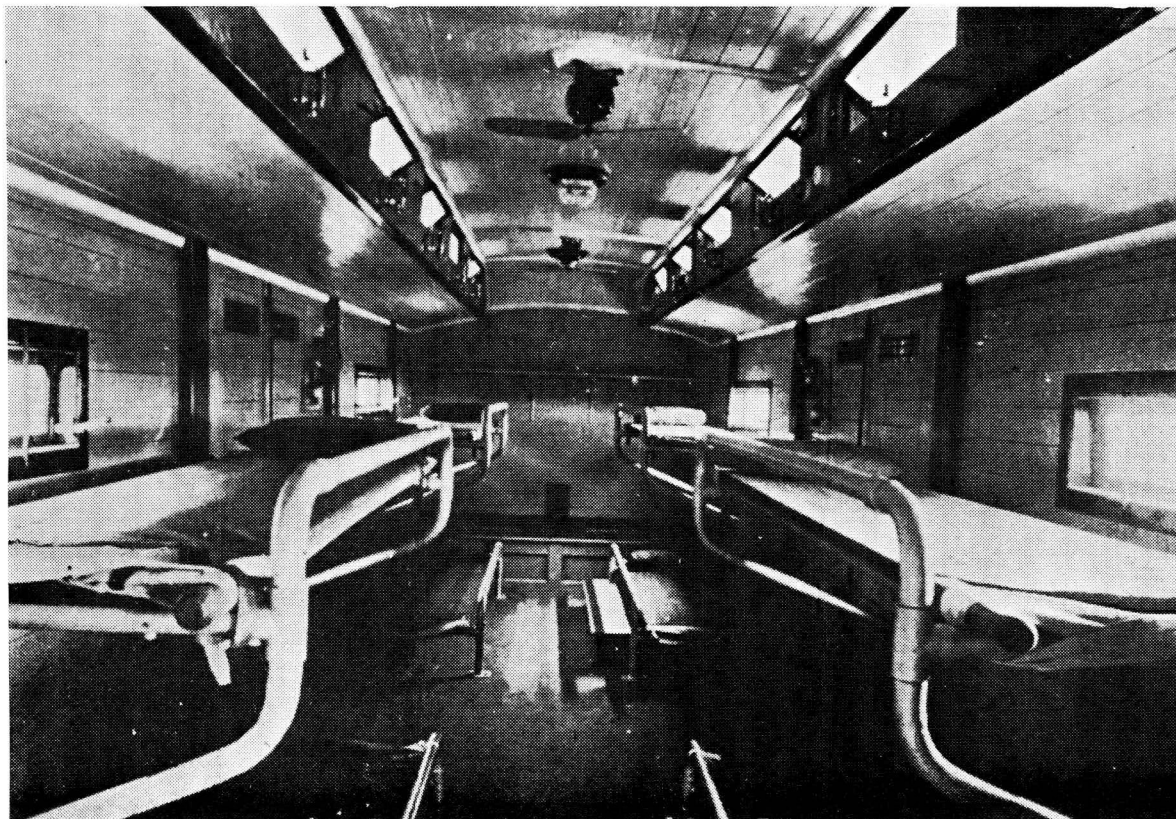
Six-inch gun mounted in running position

To transport troops and supplies the Railways and Harbours Department chartered 15 steamers. These, along with the ex-German **Rufidji**, taken as a prize, represented a tonnage of 57,479. Eleven tugs were provided for harbour work; five of these were the property of the SAR & H. Several launches and lighters were obtained to help with disembarkation.

Active prosecution of a campaign in a dry arid area of operations depended on an assured supply of water. Under the German regime a condensing plant was installed at Lüderitzbucht, but it was deliberately damaged when the Germans retreated. There was also a plant at Walvis Bay, but both plants together

were unable to meet the demands of an army. Responsibility for the water supply was relegated to the SA Engineer Corps, and by enlarging the plants at Lüderitzbucht and Walvis Bay, and erecting equipment at Swakopmund, an extra 168,000 gallons per day were supplied.

Ambulance vehicles were provided. Two bogie vans were converted into fully equipped ambulance coaches, each accommodating 16 patients, and ran between Cape Town and Wynberg. A third similar coach operated on the Upington line. Two travelling post office vans were converted into ambulance vans in the Railways' Pretoria workshops.



Ambulance van

Searchlights, bought from local mining companies, were fitted to the armoured trains and two motor buses.<sup>27</sup>

Statistics for rail transport for the entire campaign are not available, but from the following,

covering the period August-December 1914, it will be seen that the task was one of real magnitude.

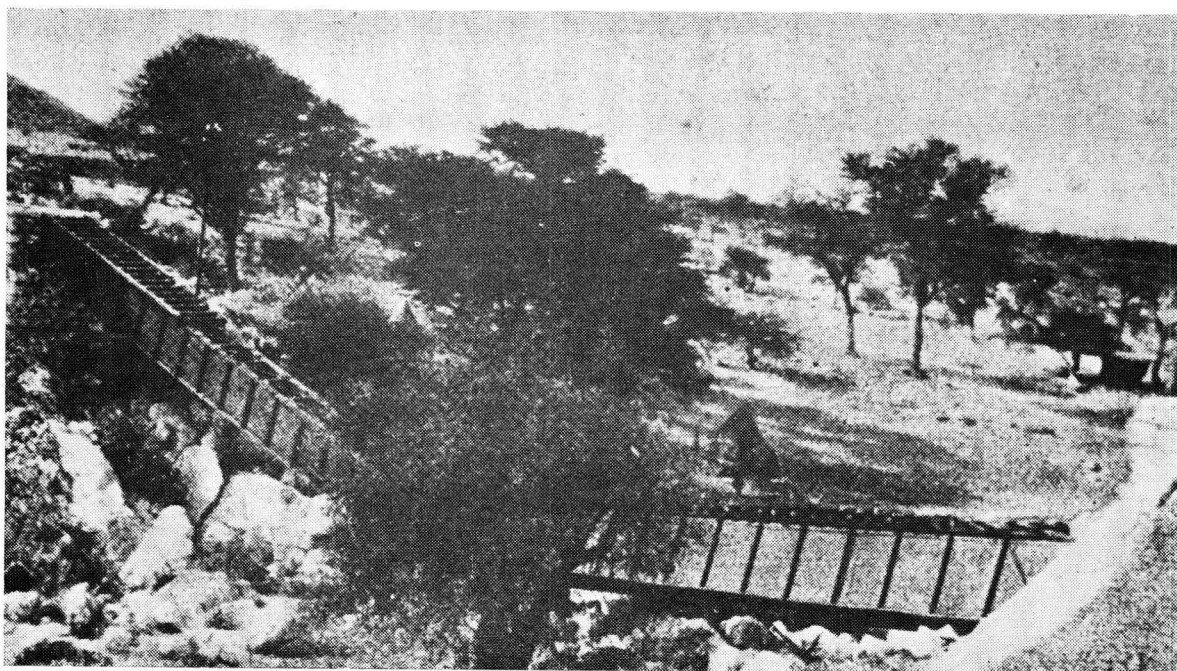
27. UG 25 — 1915, SAR & H Archive, File DX 158.



Number of troops conveyed : 69 000  
 Troop mileage : 22 000 000  
 Number of animals conveyed : 45 600  
 Animal mileage : 25 928 000  
 Number of transport vehicles conveyed : 5 380  
 Transport vehicle mileage : 1 974 000  
 Supplies, ammunition, etc.

conveyed (tons) : 36 500  
 Supplies, ammunition, etc. (ton miles) : 11 832 000  
 Number of special trains : 247<sup>28</sup>

How may one assess the effectiveness and value of the Railways' contribution to the war effort over the period of the Rebellion and the campaign in German South West? In all



A frequent sight: demolished bridge, GSWA

the Railway documentation studied by the present writer, not one single item was found wherein any railway official analysed or critically examined the work of the railway administration. The tone is of pride and occasional self-satisfaction in a good job well done. From the Defence documentation it is clear that the Defence authorities did their utmost to co-operate with the Railways. Due to pressure of other factors, and the need to react to unexpected situations, it was however not always possible to meet railway schedules or to warn railway authorities in advance. In official Defence correspondence there is no substantial indication of displeasure with the Railways, and so the following, written by General Botha to General Smuts during the GSWA campaign, is of particular interest:

Karibib  
 23 May 1915

. . . Hoy with all his engineers has caused chaos . . . I have already made all sorts of plans, but it is now becoming clear to me that our forward movement is being delayed by the clumsy feebleness of a bunch of engineers, and because of these Collins<sup>29</sup> and Beaton<sup>30</sup> should never be in such a responsible position, and I fear that Hoy listens to them too much. However, it is damned discouraging and has a bad effect on the burghers and gives the enemy every chance to make the already difficult positions before us still more difficult<sup>31</sup> . . .

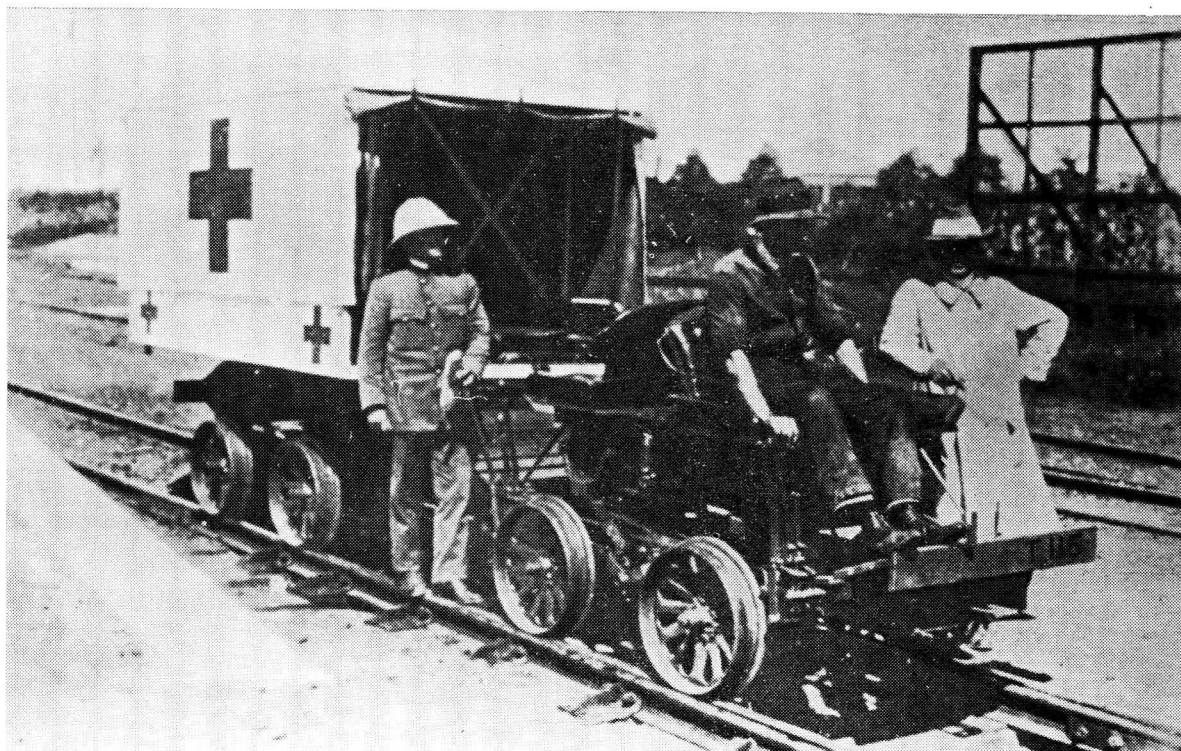
28. UG 25 — 1915, p 76.

29. Officer Commanding the SA Engineer Corps, with the rank of Lt Col.

30. Second-in-command to Collins, with the rank of Major.

31. W. K. Hancock and J. van der Poel (eds): *Selections from the Smuts Papers*, Vol III, pp 635, 636. (CUP, 1966).





Motor rail-lorry equipped for ambulance purposes

Apparently the Commander-in-Chief would have welcomed greater authority over the temporarily uniformed railway staff, but his powers were circumscribed by the terms of reference granted to Col Hoy in December 1914. Botha was probably referring to a delay caused by local problems; in other words, a situation which could not be resolved through the established arrangement of War Section, Railway Transport Officer, and Railway Staff Officers. But if Botha felt that the railway administration had too much of a free hand, he would have encountered opposition from those men. After the GSWA campaign Hoy drafted, but did not submit, a series of proposals for co-operation with the Defence Department in time of war.<sup>32</sup> In them he argued strongly for an independent railway organization. And in 1917 Hoy sent a memorandum to the defence authorities with these remarks:

[The Department of Defence's] methods have been most exasperating at times during the past three years and have resulted in much avoidable inconvenience and expence . . .

Now that the more urgent military de-

mands have been met, I deem it my duty to refer to some of the many avoidable difficulties . . . in the hope that a knowledge thereof will yet result in a better understanding and in an endeavour, on the part of the Defence Department, to avoid the mistakes of the past . . .<sup>33</sup>

The Secretary for Defence personally described the memorandum as a 'diatribe'; he regarded parts of it as 'nonsense'; and noted, 'I cannot for a moment understand what on earth Sir William Hoy means by his frequent references to "interference."' The Secretary sent his comments on the memorandum to the Minister of Defence, and his reaction is shown in the endorsement: 'Seen by Minister. No action: file.'<sup>34</sup> The Defence authorities were not prepared to concede any further degree of control.

The value of the Railways' contribution was immense. It was true indeed that the

32. SAR & H Archive, 'Relationship with Defence Dept and organisation to be arranged in time of War.'

33. Archive of the Secretary for Defence, (DC series), Box 113, File 2395/Z.

34. Ibid.

SAR & H rendered unique services without which the suppression of the Rebellion and the advance into GSWA would have been enormously complicated. But it is also true to say that the efficiency of each party was called in question by the other and that the

elaborate liaison structure was unable to handle all contingencies. In retrospect it is possible to see in the melting-pot of 1914-1915 the first stages in the evolution of the Railways and Harbours Brigade as an Active Citizen Force unit after the war.