



By Frank Gervasi

From smug Bermuda to bewildered Siam, war in many lands throughout the world shows many faces to a Collier's correspondent on a remarkable journey

I'VE just returned from 36,000 miles and eight months around the world. I've returned to Suburbia. I live in that particular expression of Suburbia called Bronxville, in Westchester County, New York. It was a village when I left it eight months ago. It still had its old town hall. They've torn it down and now the place is merely another suburb, quiet, smug, income-tax conscious and worried whether the Community Chest drive will reach its quota this year. When I left it was Bundles for Britain. At the local movie they used to play *The Star-Spangled Banner* after the shows. They don't do it any more. They don't even play *Pomp and Circumstance*.

It is a shock to come out of the darkness into the light, to move from privation and death into abundance and life. Eight months is a long time. Those last eight months were longer than all of the seven years I'd spent before in Europe, watching this war being made. They were longer than all the previous months of watching the war being waged or anticipated in England and France, Holland, Portugal, Spain, Italy and then in Hungary and the Balkans and the Near East. In eight months of almost constant travel your perspective changes. Things that weren't in focus before sharpen. Things you merely suspected become realities. You become aware, in 36,000 miles of journey by land and sea and air, of forces you

didn't dream existed. You learn, in that time, that this war has seven faces and as many moods.

In Bermuda the war had a smug visage. There was abundance, although you wouldn't believe it to hear Bermudians complain of the difficulty of obtaining gin and the better brandies. But there was plenty of everything. Only the Bermudians' tolerance of Americans was rationed.

Bermuda is a crown colony, a simpler form of British imperial life. Its emotions are uncomplex. American tourists no longer come in tens of thousands with money to unfold. And Bermudians, logically, complain. They resent the "invasion"—the quotes are theirs—of American engineers and surveyors who came to build a naval base for the U. S. A. They miss tourist money.

Bermudian houses grow with scrubbed white and coral countenances out of the green land. They grow with the trees and shrubs. Bermudians are loath to see steam shovels gnaw the earth where their homes had stood. They express their resentment over teacups and cocktail glasses. They envision hamburger and hot-dog stands and billboards. They are certain their horse carriages will be replaced by "smelly motorcars." They see their bit of England, their quiet respectability and, therefore, their major commodity, threatened by the invasion of the Continentals. You feel sorry for them.

You learned that they'd arrange matters so that all the materials Uncle Sam would use in the construction of the base would have to be either local or imported at a high duty and handled by local brokers at fat commissions. Bermudians told you that "We don't want you in the war, old boy, just make us the airplanes and tanks and guns." You didn't like being reminded Uncle Sam was just an old Uncle Shylock and then, in a second breath, being vehemently told that America must enter the war. But that's the way it is with people. They're slightly mixed up about this war.

Six or seven "tools of war" wallowed like winged whales on the incredibly

blue waters off Darrell's Island. They were the big Consolidated PBY flying boats England needed to patrol her coasts and the North Atlantic. I was to have departed in one a day or two after my arrival in Hamilton by Clipper from Baltimore. But I didn't get off on the appointed day. I waited three weeks for the big bomber to be groomed and for the crew to be trained. The long delay was due to two deficiencies in the British approach to war. One was lack of organization and the other was low-grade mechanical aptitude. I learned in Bermuda what Labor Minister Ernest Bevin meant when he told the House of Commons that England lacks a double-purpose army and that the German army has a higher mechanical ability than Britain's. Months later, on the road to Alexandria from Cairo, Corporal Smythe gave me a practical demonstration, too, of what Bevin meant. And Captain James Roosevelt in his capacity of military observer received an object lesson in the same highly important subject in the Iraq desert. But about those bombers, in Bermuda. . .

They Call It Tradition

The Canadian Pacific Railroad Company and the British Overseas Airways Corporation contracted to ferry the PBY bombers from Bermuda to England. They hired crack American fliers like Clyde Pangborn and expert navigators like Bernt Balchen to handle the job, at good salaries and large expense accounts. But Pangborn and Balchen didn't fly a single one of those boats. The Royal Air Force stepped in and said they'd handle this. The Royal Canadian Air Force moved in, too. The snarl of orders and counterorders was so bad the Air Ministry in London was obliged to intervene. If it hadn't the planes would have remained there until the Gulf Stream changed its course. But this was only part of the story. We call it red tape. The British call it tradition.

After we'd waited a week, a Canadian pilot friend tipped me off that we were getting away the following day. But the next morning he said it was all off. A generator had burned out. Somebody

had forgotten to oil the bearings. It would take at least two weeks for a new one to come out from the Consolidated factory in Los Angeles. There wasn't a maintenance shop in Bermuda. There were no spare parts. Delays followed one upon the other. Once it was because the radio receiver was asnarl. Nobody knew how to repair it. Several ships were damaged by inexperienced pilots who practiced crash landings with the boat, as though knowing how to crash-land on the North Atlantic in winter would have done anyone any good. But it was written in an instruction book that crash landings must be practiced—and Britain didn't get the bombers.

Finally, one rain-lashed morning, I crawled, cold and slightly scared, into the belly of one of the PBY's. Just before the take-off somebody shoved a paper under my nose saying I wouldn't write anything about the flight to England. I knew more sensible censors in England would revoke it and let me write about the flight, so I signed the paper. I wasn't so sure I would see England anyway.

We bounced heavily on the black water of Hamilton Bay. We had 400 gallons of spare gas inboard, in long, round tanks, trussed on two-by-fours. We strained into the air with all the reluctance of a teakwood log. Twenty-three hours and ten minutes later we



were in England. We landed "somewhere in Wales" and it was snowing and a red-faced captain of the Scots Guards and a pleasant little officer of the R.A.F. Intelligence filled us with hot tea, brandy and then lamb stew. We'd made it, and Lloyd's of London had bet Collier's heavy odds, as insurance rates go, that I wouldn't.

To be in England again was to be back in reality. The Welsh are sturdy people, close to the earth. They are thick-bodied, with large workers' hands and large, honest faces and sturdy feet. They were good to see after the snobbish colonials of Bermuda. You could see the Welsh were working harder in their mines and factories and in their fields than ever before. You could see their quiet happiness, feel their joy in work. They were grim, yes, and quietly determined, but they smiled readily enough and they joked about Woodbines (cigarettes) being hard to get. There was a shortage of tobacco. They missed their chocolate. Newsstands had signs: "No Chocolate. No Candy."

As the train to London moved through Wales you looked out the window at every station and you couldn't tell where you were. Everywhere in England it was the same. The English have adopted a national anonymity to befuddle the possible invader. They re-

moved the signs from railroad stations or blacked them out. They've taken down road signs and all traffic indicators that might identify towns, villages and crossroads. You would need to know England well indeed to find your way about. You would need to have lived in England nearly all your life to distinguish Tunbridge Wells from a hundred other Tunbridge Wellses. Parachutists would have a tough time of it in England. Tailors', apothecaries', fishmongers' and greengrocers' shops have removed signs bearing their towns' names. Village inns have changed their identities or become anonymities. It will be useless for the Germans to look for the Golden Swan. They wouldn't know the old pub.

England Discovers Itself

I hadn't been in England since the winter of 1939. That was when they called this the Phony War and the dispatches of correspondents reflected a profound disappointment that nobody was being killed. It was a strange England then. A social revolution had begun when they siphoned the school children out of the slums and into the provinces. Mayfair learned then how miserably Lambeth lived. You heard Englishmen promise themselves that the misery many of them were seeing

for the first time in their lives would be remedied. We'll build a new England, they said. Let's hope the war lasts long enough, they said, and we'll rebuild our social system and banish the dole and want and hunger. And boys from the slums were returning to the land and liking it.

But there was also disunity then in England. There was a tendency to discuss the peace rather than a will to work to win the war. They said they would muddle through and they argued about what Britain's war aims should be. All this had changed by the winter of 1941.

Lambeth and Mayfair were in the ARP together. Charlie Brickett and Lord Portdowner belonged to the same fire brigade. They dragged each other out of the debris the bombs left of their homes and they frequently messed and slept together in the community feeding centers. Each discovered in the other qualities they hadn't suspected. Old Etonians and old Harrovians learned that wars aren't won only on the playing fields by wearers of the old school tie. They discovered that lathes and drill presses and assembly lines have considerable to do with winning wars. I heard many of the landed rich say they knew the day of the shooting box and the fox hunt was gone. And there was

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SUCH AS I HAVE

By Hugh
MacNair Kahler

ILLUSTRATED BY C. C. BEALL

For a moment, as her eyes looked into mine, she had been afraid. Then the trapped, desperate look was gone and she was smiling

I WAS sorry that I'd let a silly, sentimental impulse prod me into stopping over between trains and looking up Jim and Milly Tucker. Old friends unseen since youth, I told myself, were better kept as unamed memories.

Not that Jim Tucker had changed so much—he'd only middle-aged into the pudgy, stoop-shouldered, complacent insignificance I might have expected. Even Milly wasn't very different—outwardly.

She'd kept her clear, vivid beauty; she was still slender and straightly, confidently erect, still—my old secret word for her was in my mind again—still queenly. But for a moment, as her eyes looked into mine and recognized me, she had been afraid.

Only for a moment. Then the trapped, desperate look was gone and she was smiling, calling my name in the cool, clear, quiet voice I hadn't forgotten, giving me both her hands. But I knew that I would never stop remembering that I had seen her eyes when there had been fear in them.

Of course I could guess why it had been there. She knew that I must know why she'd married Jim,

and she was afraid that I might say something that would let him find out why.

It made me angry, sick. I'd thought of her as a queen, brought low like other queens before her, but it had never crossed my mind that she could have learned to set value on cheap, vulgar things about her, on this smug little house, this smug, smirking little man—so much value that she could be frightened at the thought of losing them.

It was like Jim Tucker to drag Larry Winship's name out into spoken sound, so that Milly and I couldn't go on pretending to each other that it wasn't in our minds. He hadn't quit pounding my shoulder before he was asking, eagerly, about good old Larry.

I said carelessly that I never saw Larry any more and tried to turn the talk, but Jim wouldn't let me.

"No, I suppose not," he said. "Climbed too high for all of us, Larry has. Often wonder if he's got over being down on me. Can't blame him if he hasn't. They say everything's fair in love and war, but I can see that Larry had a right to be sore at me, stealing his girl the minute his back was turned."

Somehow his smirk didn't seem so silly, now. He was looking at Milly and he sucked in a slow breath that squared the stoop out of his shoulders. He was a man seeing a miracle, marveling and yet utterly persuaded of its realness.

I knew that his faded, nearsighted eyes were watching Jim Tucker play Lochinvar. He was seeing himself ride up to the church door, sweep Larry Winship's love up to his saddlebow and gallop off to a midnight Greta Green.

"Never blamed Larry for not answering the letter I wrote him," he said. "I could guess how hard he was taking it."

I was remembering just how Larry had taken it. I was seeing him wave Jim's letter, listening to him laugh. He'd expected me to laugh with him, to congratulate him because Milly was off his hands and there was no danger, any more, of her trying to make trouble for him when his engagement to his boss' daughter was announced. I was remembering how, just before I hit him in the mouth, he'd given me a sly, sniggering hint that Milly might have had a more urgent reason than wounded pride for being in such a hurry to marry somebody, anybody.

AND I was thinking, too, about lies, and finding out that there could be something splendid and terrible in them. In lies like this one of Milly's, cheap and cowardly and shabby in its first telling, maybe, but not now, told and retold, hour after wary, guarded hour, year after year, in every speech and every silence, in things done and left undone, never forgotten, kept momentarily in mind against the nag of pain, the drug of tiredness, the heat of sudden, blinding anger. With all my heart I hated Jim Tucker, hated him because all the shining wonder of that lie had been spent on him, spent to keep that smirk on his silly face, to feed his vanity, to let his pygmy soul swell up and strut!

"Yes," I said. "He took it hard."

It was easier to look at Jim's delighted grin than to see Milly's eyes trying to thank me. Thank me! I got away from them, somehow, as quickly as I could, but I didn't get away from Jim. I had to let him drive me to the station in his car, a car that might have been created in his image, as small and cheap and smugly commonplace as he was. He drove through empty streets at twenty miles an hour with an air of high, desperate adventure, too intent for talk. I was glad of that. Having to listen to him would make it worse for me, I knew, whenever I thought of Milly.

I got out quickly when we stopped in front of the new, ugly station, but as I shook hands something in Jim's face kept me from hurrying away. He wasn't smirking now.

"Guess you know why I talked that way about—about Larry." His voice checked on the name, as if there were grit in his throat. "Wanted to make sure you wouldn't accidently say something that would let Milly catch on that I knew about—about—"

His face had changed again. Somewhere else, not long ago, I had seen that same look—wistful, frightened.

"I don't know if I could stand it if Milly was to find out that Larry answered that letter I wrote him and told me—told me—" he stopped. "When there's only one thing you can give a woman like Milly—only one thing that's good enough to give her, I mean—it—it kind of scares you to think of not being able to—to keep on giving it to her."

"I know," I said. And I did know. I could even understand, suddenly, how Milly might have been afraid, not of losing, but of not having gifts, worthy gifts, to give.

