



With the British armed forces in Egypt—Frank Gervasi, correspondent for Collier's in the Middle East, makes his bed before going on the day's story

BRITISH INFORMATION SERVICE
BY FRANK GERVASI
RADIOED FROM KHARTOUM

FLIGHT FROM

Fear is a weapon against which there is no defense, and this is what it does to a city when the enemy is knocking at the gates

AT DAWN the big Douglas rose from the airport at Heliopolis, a suburb of Cairo, with forty passengers. They jammed the aisle and sprawled on the floor and in the baggage compartment—wherever they could find leg room in a ship built for twenty-three. The passengers were U. S. Army officers, legation secretaries, airplane mechanics and American Red Cross field workers. Five were women; one was a three-year-old boy. For the first time in their lives, all were experiencing the humiliations and heartbreaks of flight before an enemy. It was July 3d and, ironically, they were to celebrate Independence Day in Luxor, Assouan, Khartoum and Asmara, tagged and shipped and about as independent as so many head of cattle.

The Americans were experiencing what the Poles, Czechs, French, Yugoslavs, Greeks and others have known before them—hasty farewells to families and friends they might not see again, abandonment of homes and familiar things with which they'd lived,

and the multitude of problems of people suddenly uprooted from jobs, separated from property and become refugees overnight.

You quietly hoped this wouldn't happen to other fellow countrymen. You prayed calmly that Americans at home would never know roads crowded with cars piled with hastily gathered belongings; airports, railroad stations and docks filled with men and women and children in flight. It isn't a pleasant sight.

Upward of four hundred Americans fled from Cairo during the crucial three days preceding Auchinleck's stand at El Alamein, where the Egyptian desert narrows to a bottleneck between the sea and the edge of the Qattara salt marsh fifty miles to the south. Most of the large British population remained in Cairo. They had far more faith than the Americans in Auk's ability to cork the bottleneck at the edge of the Delta of the Nile—which meant Egypt, for there's no Egypt but the Nile.

Those weird days during which Cairo lived from rumor to rumor, oscillating violently between profound pessimism and the heights of optimism, demonstrated again the power of propaganda. The enemy bombarded Egypt with broadcasts.

"The Axis isn't making war on the Egyptian people," shouted Radio Roma. "It means merely to liberate Egypt from the domination of the British.

Don't worry! Lay in a week's supplies and remain indoors—no harm will come to you. But see that the Jews and Greeks don't get away—"

Egyptians paid remarkably little attention to the Italian and German broadcasts; they remained calm. The effect of propaganda wasn't visible on them. But the Jewish and Greek refugees were disturbed. On the first day the Ministry of the Interior ran out of stamps for exit visas; banks couldn't cope with the withdrawals and were obliged to reissue pound notes previously recalled from circulation for replacement.

Symptoms of Panic

Automobiles which had become scarcer than new ones at home and sold at fantastic prices—such as \$3,000 for a secondhand low-priced make—suddenly swamped the market. I could have bought a year-old car in excellent condition for \$500 and I almost did for the tires—only I couldn't figure out a way of putting the transaction into my expense account.

Hysteria spreads in an endangered city much as a disease must spread throughout the circulatory system of a human body. The virus of fear enters the streets and buildings of a city, and gradually the city's heartbeat quickens. People's voices grow louder. The volume of traffic and the noise it

makes increase in the streets. People's movements quicken and their gregarious instincts assert themselves strangely. They want to be together, to find out what others know about the "situation," but they make their plans for escape alone. Self-preservation dominates love and hate and the primary rules of friendship. The instinct for self-preservation asserts itself so strongly it enables acquisitive, property-loving people to abandon all they own.

The first symptoms of fear in Cairo—that had seemed so safe, so remote from war—were felt upon the fall of Mersa Matruh. It had been the popular notion that the British armies would make a major stand there instead of drawing the enemy as far eastward as El Alamein. Nobody had told the people that, but everyone believed Egypt would live or die on the defense position that reached southward from Mersa Matruh.

When that town fell, refugees and evacuees began arriving from Alexandria, the obvious target of Rommel's advance. Well-dressed women held onto the leashes of spaniels and terriers with one hand and clutched jewel boxes with the other. Jewel boxes are always a dead giveaway.

For Americans, the most significant straw in the wind was word from the legation that it might be wise to evacuate. They had been warned repeatedly for the past two years that unless they

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An Apple for Eve

By Kathleen Norris

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The Story Thus Far:

LIVING with her mother and her grandmother, in a rambling old house near the California town of Indian Hill, Loveday Gurney often hears the story of her grandfather's lost fortune. The old gentleman, it appears, had stipulated in his will that two thirds of his estate be used to found a hospital for crippled children; he had died, and no trace of his holdings—no cash, no collateral of any sort—had ever been found! Another story to which the girl often listens revolves around her brother, Hugh, who had wandered from home when he was five and, lost, had died of starvation and exposure. . . .

When Loveday is twenty, she meets, and falls in love with, Lawrence Ingersoll, who lives in Bakersfield. Larry, attracted to her from the first, tells her that he is going to Florida to attend an aviation school. When he leaves her, they are engaged. . . .

Loveday's mother and grandmother both die. Realizing that she will be lonely in the old Gurney home, Warren St. George, a friend of the family, takes her to his home in San Francisco where he lives with his wife and children.

Among those whom Loveday meets, and likes, are the St. Georges' sons, Christopher (Chris)—a young married man whose success as a playwright has made him famous—and Rodney; and a young Frenchman who is a guest of the family—Doctor Marcel (Marc) Villard, who, an orphan at an early age, had been given an education by a generous American woman.

All three men are attentive to Loveday. But, when a month passes and Loveday gets no word from the man she loves—no letter, no telegram, nothing—she turns to Chris for advice.

Chris listens to her story. When she has told it, he says that he is going to Hollywood, and that Rodney, Nini (his sister) and Marc Villard are motoring down to join him. He suggests that Loveday go to Bakersfield with them, have a talk with Larry's mother (with a view to learning what his intentions really are), rejoin the party after the interview, and go on to southern California.

Loveday follows the suggestion. She finds Larry's mother and his sisters in a dilapidated little cottage. Astounded, she listens as they tell her that Larry is with them—that for two weeks he has been at home, desperately ill!

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HE GOT typhoid, and he didn't know what it was," Marge explained. "They think he must have had a light run of walking typhoid down in Florida, and then he started home and got a relapse, and when he got here it was all we could do to pull him through!"

"I don't want to live through those days again," Mrs. Ingersoll said fervently. "We've got him out here in the shed; he fixed it up when he came back from his trip around the world. It's really the back half of the garage, but he made it into a real nice room. And wasn't it a blessing that we had it for this sickness! It quarantined him perfectly, the doctor said."

While they were talking they had crossed through a small hot kitchen, darkened and orderly, but with an unappetizing odor of tomatoes and peaches—both slightly past their prime—permeating it, had traversed a narrow back porch and descended three steps to a back yard furnished with a garbage barrel, a clothesline upon which girls' silk underwear was pinned, and various brooms, ladders and rakes set against a plank fence. A path across the yard led to the open door of a room that backed against the garage, and in this room Larry was lying in bed.

Evidently a hasty effort to put the place in order had been made; a pyramid of detective and confession magazines was heaped on the floor in the corner, the bed had been straightened, and Larry's hair was freshly combed. His father, a lean, old, mustached man, rose from the baggy armchair that faced the bed as the women came in, cleared his throat, and said pleasantly, "Here's comp'ny for ye, son."

Larry looked shockingly thin to Loveday's eyes; his eyes were sunken and he wore a beard of several days' growth. She went straight to the bed

They went to the big studios and wandered through half-built villages and miles of scenery. It was all such breath-taking make-believe

