A Bell for Adano

By John Hersey

W. N. U. FEATURES

THE STORY THUS FAR: The American troops arrived in Adano, with Major Joppolo, the Amgot officer in charge. Sergeant Borth was in charge of security. The Major was determined to hold the confidence of the people and to replace their bell stolen by the Nazis. Despite orders issued by General Marvin, barring carts from the city, Joppolo recalled the order, to permit food and water to enter the city. Lord Runcin, high British official on the Amgot, approved of Joppolo's plans. The Major found out that the American generosity was responsible for a troublesome black market. To stop this condition he placed a ceiling on all prices. He also barred troops from the city.

CHAPTER XVII

The Lieutenant said: "Sure he was. It's easy to see he was. And if General Marvin ever lays eyes on this Information copy, it'll be just too bad for the Major."

"Yes, sir," said the Technical Sergeant, to be on the safe side.

Lieutenant Butters said: "Here, you file these. I'll take care of the Information copy."

"Yes, sir," the Technical Sergeant said, taking the copies.

The Lieutenant said: "That Marvin trimmed me down once for something I didn't do. I never have liked him. I don't know this Major, but I think it would be a shame if he caught a trimming just for this."

"Yes, sir," the Technical Sergeant said. Then he frowned and added: "You aren't going to get me in trouble, are you, sir, like when that letter to Colonel Norris from the P.R.O. got 'lost'?"

"No, don't worry," the Lieutenant said.

But the Technical Sergeant did worry for several days, until he got up the courage to ask the Lieutenant: "Sir, what did you ever do about that Information copy I made for General Marvin? You didn't throw it away, did you? Colonel Norris is liable to ask me about it."

"I wish I had thrown it away," Lieutenant Butters said. "I didn't have the guts. I put it in the courier pouch for Algiers. You know how much stuff we've been losing on that run. I thought maybe—"

The Technical Sergeant, relieved of his worry, smiled and said: "It might get lost accidentally on purpose?"

Mayor Nasta had just come out from his daily repentance before Sergeant Borth. He walked across the way to the broad sidewalk in front of the Palazzo. Every day knots of people gathered on that sidewalk, some just to pass the time of day, some to air their perennial complaints, some to get in touch with the town's mean little lawyers, whose office was that sidewalk.

Mayor Nasta walked up to one such knot. There were about ten people, and he found that they were discussing the war.

He waited for his chance, and said: "I got some news from the interior yesterday afternoon."

Mercurio Salvatore the crier was so far gone in boldness that he said: "We have no desire for news from the one who is no longer Mayor."

Mayor Nasta remembered the time when he would have put the crier in jail for a whole year for saying something like that, but now he said: "This news came from the son of your friend Afronti, the noisy cartman. The boy deserted on the first day of the invasion and he is now here. Perhaps you know him. He is an honest boy."

The Mayor's poison was beginning to take hold. "If that is the case," said the lazy Fatta, who was to be found on this stretch of sidewalk every morning, "if that is the case, what did he say that was so interesting?"

"He said that our friends the Germans are mounting a counterattack."

"There is nothing new in that," said Father Pensovecchio. "They have counterattacked before. They counterattacked near Vicinamare and it did them no good. They were thrown back. They will be thrown back again."

"Not this time," said Mayor Nasta. "This time they will employ five fresh divisions. They have the crack 29th Panzers and the Pilsener Division. These are good troops. This time they will not be thrown back. They intend to push the Americans into the sea."

The lazy Fatta, who had no sense about the news, said: "When will this attack come? I think I will go to the hills."

Mayor Nasta looked very important, as he used to in the old days. "I should not tell you this," he said, "but the attack will begin on the morning of the twenty-third, at four o'clock in the morning. You can expect the Americans to be pushed into the sea between the twenty-fifth and the twenty-eighth."

The impressionable ones were beginning to believe him. Laura Sofia, the unmarried one, who stood about on this sidewalk in the belief that she might catch a husband that way, said: "The twenty-third, that is next Wednesday."

But Mercurio Salvatore, who had been treated well by the Americans, refused to believe that they were leaving. "I do not believe it," he said. "The Americans will stop the attack." Even the crier was now willing to believe that there was going to be an attack. All he would not believe was that the Germans would succeed.

Mayor Nasta said: "The Americans will not stop it. The Americans may be friendly, but they are not good fighters."

Margherita, the formidable wife of Craxi, said with a threatening look: "Liar!"

But Mayor Nasta said: "This is not my opinion. This is the opinion of the son of Afronti, the noisy cartman. You know the boy. You know that he is honest. He says that the Americans are timid in battle. He says that our own troops could even beat the Americans."

Mercurio Salvatore, the crier, was reduced to saying: "I do not believe it."

Mayor Nasta said: "It is true. This boy fought in Tunisia. He says that at the place called El Guettar the Americans did not press their attack, he says that they behaved like frightened men and were defeated. The British can fight, perhaps, but not the Americans."

The formidable Margherita said: "It is a dirty lie," but there was no anger in her voice, it was nearly drained of conviction.

This man Nasta was a very persuasive man. He had persuaded himself into office, and he had persuaded the people into fear of him, and now it was easy for him to persuade them to mistrust the Americans.

Mayor Nasta said: "The son of Afronti told me that in the interior

This man Nasta was a very persuasive man.

the Americans behaved themselves very badly. They were generous to us along the coast because they had to have a beachhead, but in the interior they have been different. Negro troops have raped seven Italian girls. There has been much looting."

The lazy Fatta said: "I hear that the Americans looted the beautiful house of Quattrocchi right here in Adano. They did much damage."

Mayor Nasta said: "Yes, that is true, I talked with Quattrocchi yesterday."

The formidable Margherita said: "What happened?" This was something close to home, and she considered anything that happened in Adano more or less her personal property, to use as gossip.

Mayor Nasta said: "The American vandals destroyed four hundred and seventy thousand lira worth of stuff in Quattrocchi's house. Heirlooms, paintings, sculpture, glassware. They said that Italian art is degenerate; they did all this because they wish to impose American ideas of art on Italy. That is what Quattrocchi told me the American Major had told him."

Mercurio Salvatore, the crier, said: "That I will not believe. The Mister Major is our friend." The crier was annoyed enough to say this in very nearly his crying voice. He spoke loudly enough to be heard inside the Palazzo.

"Quiet," Mayor Nasta said. "He will hear you and punish you."

"Why should he punish me?" Mercurio cried. "I am defending him."

"He is unpredictable," Mayor Nasta whispered. "You will see. I must be going now," he said, bowing to the circle, as if the fact that it was beginning to grow embarrassed him. "Good day," he said, "do not forget the twenty-third."

Each day when he came out from his repentance before Sergeant Borth, Mayor Nasta would go across to the sidewalk in front of the Palazzo, and he would approach a different group, and he would tell them pretty much the same thing.

Sergeant Borth allowed this to go on for several days, because Sergeant Borth was a careful worker. He waited until he was sure of all his facts. He had his informers trap Mayor Nasta into new exaggerations and accusations. He made sure that the son of Afronti the noisy cartman had not deserted. He checked with Intelligence at IX Corps to make sure that the Germans were not expected to counterattack on the twenty-third. He even went so far as to check with Captain Purvis.

When he was ready, Sergeant Borth went to Major Joppolo. "Major," he said, "we've got to put Nasta away."

The Major said: "What's he done?"

"He's been planting rumors against us. I hate to admit it, but he's done it very systematically and very skillfully."

"What kinds of rumors?"

"Oh, all kinds. He has quite a few people thinking that the Germans are going to put on a major counterattack next week. He even has some of them believing that you haven't been doing right by certain young ladies in this town."

Major Joppolo blushed. "That isn't true," he said.

"I know," Borth said. "I checked into it. But they tell me the Mister Major could make time if he wanted to."

"Cut it out," the Major said.

"That's what they tell me," Borth said. "They say these particular girls don't smell of fish, but their old man knows a good fish when he sees it."

"Cut the kidding," the Major said, and that echo was in his voice. He changed the subject quickly. "When are you going to arrest Nasta?"

"In the morning, when he comes in for his daily worship."

"Okay," the Major said. "Let's keep him in the prisoners of war cage for a few days, and not send him to Africa till we've questioned him a bit. I'm sort of glad to have him put away."

The next morning Mayor Nasta was somewhat surprised to see, besides Sergeant Borth in his office, two other men wearing brassards marked M.P. He said, as suavely as ever: "Good morning, Mister Sergeant."

"And what crime would Mayor Nasta like to repent this morning?" Borth asked.

"Is it not the Mister Sergeant's turn to pick a crime?" the Mayor asked.

"Perhaps it is, perhaps it is. Well, let's see. This morning I think Mayor Nasta will repent the crime of not having made good use of his freedom. He will repent the crime of having talked against the Americans."

Mayor Nasta turned pale. Borth stood up.

"He will repent the crime of having invented false rumors, of having told the gullible people here in Adano that the Germans were planning a counterattack for next week."

Mayor Nasta turned his head and looked at the door. Borth motioned to the M.P.'s to step into it, and they did.

"He will also repent having said slanderous and false things about Major Joppolo. Also he will be very sorry that he lied about the son of the cartman Afronti."

Mayor Nasta was white as a sheet. "Lies! They are lies!" he said.

Borth said: "Mayor Nasta is excitable this morning. And he had grown so calm about his repentances. Why is he excitable this morning?"

Mayor Nasta was excitable because he knew he was caught. "Lies," he shouted. "My enemies have been lying against me."

Borth said: "Is this a lie? Is it a lie that you said yesterday morning, before fifteen people on the sidewalk in front of the Palazzo: 'The Americans are such cowards that they had to be pushed from their transports into landing barges when they came here'? Is it a lie that you said . . ." And Sergeant Borth repeated word for word ten sentences that Nasta had said, as informers reported them. Sergeant Borth had a very good memory, and he enjoyed deflating this man, and he made a very terrifying show of it for Mayor Nasta.

Then Borth said to the two M.P.'s in English: "Take him away, boys. He's getting noisy."

The M.P.'s took Nasta by both arms. Borth said: "I'm going to miss your daily visits, Mayor Nasta. I hope you will come to see me when you get out, I mean if you get out."

Mayor Nasta said stubbornly: "You will be sorry."

The M.P.'s took Nasta away to the prisoner of war cage.

Mayor Nasta did not make a very good start in the cage. The Americans had a forty-year-old, Italian-speaking Top Sergeant in charge of the guard. The first time Mayor Nasta saw the Top Sergeant walking in the enclosure, he rushed up to him and said: "This is a mistake. I should not have been imprisoned. It was all a mistake."

"Is that so?" the Top Sergeant said in a slow, Brooklynese Italian. "You are another mistake? We have several mistakes here. All mistakes here must clean the latrine. You are our newest mistake, so you will have the privilege of cleaning the latrine this week."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

News Behind the News

By Paul Mallon

Released by Western Newspaper Union.

HOW PRESIDENT MEETS HIS PROBLEMS

WASHINGTON. — Mr. Hannegan is taking nothing for granted. The political pal of the President actually sent skilled scouts out into various sections of the country to ascertain how the new moves from the White House are regarded. He did not trust polls, even his own, but wished detailed reports.

From all sections the answer was about the same. In effect, they amounted to an enthusiastic go-ahead sign on the line Mr. Truman is hewing with his cabinet changes, legislative suggestions and foreign policy.

Mr. Hannegan was told by his selected agents the nation had warmed up to methods of the executive, although the leftwing crowd, embodying the stereotyped New Dealers, was a little restless and inclined to indulge in a few carom shots. As a matter of observable fact the CIO, for a prime example, did not endorse the Schwellenbach appointment to labor, possibly because the new cabinet man is a northwest political associate of AFL boss Dave Beck. They did not like Mr. Biddle's invited exit as attorney general either. But Mr. Truman evened it up by presenting the unemployment pay maximum of $25 a week which CIO devised and lost at the last session of congress, further by asking the dictatorial government reorganization powers Mr. Roosevelt wanted and failed to get, by having his Mr. Vinson go out for the New Deal peace-planning program, by pushing successfully in the house for the Bretton Woods agreement, which the CIO and Mrs. Roosevelt have been promoting as if to put bankers in their place—and some other steps.

Indeed, there has been nothing for the radicals to complain about. Nothing upon which they could lay their restless fingers in accusation, although a target may be provided shortly when the wage increases fail to measure up to their demands. In bulk, however, Mr. Truman's program is the one they devised. Indeed, while Frankfurter and Mrs. Roosevelt have lost their appointive influence, Mr. Truman has insisted upon keeping their best friends, Treasury Secretary Morgenthau and Judge Rosenman, domestically, while also holding on to Harry Hopkins and Mr. Stettinius internationally.

Different Spirit.

Mr. Truman has simply been doing the same things in a different spirit, following the same line but in a different way and evening things up a little. You can see it in the reorganization proposal. While Mr. T. demanded the power Mr. R. wanted, he did not want to write the bill himself but would leave it to congress. He has sent up no prepared bills on any important subject, but is respecting the position of congress.

The carom shots have so far developed from the Russian problem. The country shows signs of breaking into two schools of thought on this. Most people seem to feel Moscow has treated us obscurely, if not badly, on practically every late issue of the war and peace, except Argentina, the one point we have won—and they do not like that either. The radical journals in New York have generally become so one-sided that they defend every Russian interest and attack every American step, bitterly assailing the state department at every opportunity. This shows a rather thoughtless and purely political enthusiasm. Yet even on this problem, the President is being backed by a strong majority in the country as a whole.

Mr. Truman has thus managed to achieve popular unity, which the methods of the Roosevelt regime prevented. A heavy majority of people have been found willing to forget past differences and to close the ranks of this nation before the world in order to maintain its prestige and smash the Japanese.

The Anti-New Deal Democrats well know Mr. Truman is supporting Roosevelt policies and personages but are not criticizing him here or elsewhere, in their relief over the way he has been trying to even things up.

It is a remarkable job when you stop to think about the difficulties with which he was faced.

* * *

COMPLETE VICTORY

It was a hard war program which Mr. Truman put before congress. His primary point was that we must drive the Japs to unconditional surrender.

While recognizing the sincerity of those who oppose this "tough" policy, I believe that any procedure except the Roosevelt-Truman policy of unconditional surrender is not only impractical but impossible—and the hope of many people to save lives by offering conditional surrender.

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