

A Bell for Adano

By John Hersey

THE STORY THUS FAR: American troops, taking part in the invasion of Italy, arrived at the seaport town of Adano. Major Victor Joppolo, from Brooklyn, New York, was in charge as the Amgot officer. With him was Sergeant Leonard Borth, to serve as M.P. in charge of security. The Major immediately began to interview the citizens of Adano, in order to determine their needs. He was determined that nothing would be left undone which would improve their conditions and make their lives more pleasant. With Borth, Major Joppolo inspected the former Nazi headquarters, which he was to use as his office. He spent his first hours getting acquainted.

CHAPTER II

Major Joppolo said: "Do not bow. There is no need to grovel here. I am only a Major. Borth here is a Sergeant. Are you a man?"

Little Zito was getting very mixed up. "No sir," he said cautiously. Then he saw by the Major's expression that he should have said yes, and he did.

The Major said: "You may greet me by shaking my hand. You will greet Sergeant Borth in the same way."

Borth said, and his expression showed that he was teasing the Italian: "First I will find out if he's a dangerous Fascist."

Little Zito did not know whether to laugh or cry. He was frightened but he was also flattered by these men. He said: "I will never lie to you, Mister Major. I am anti-Fascist, Mister Sergeant. I will be usher here."

Major Joppolo said: "Be here at seven o'clock each morning."

"Seven o'clock," said Zito.

A brief burst of machine gun and rifle fire echoed from distant streets. Zito cringed.

Borth said: "You are perhaps a man but you are also frightened."

Major Joppolo said: "Has it been bad here?"

Zito started jabbering about the bombardments and the air raids. "We are very hungry," he said when he had cooled down a little. "For three days we have not had bread. All the important ones ran away and left me here to guard the Palazzo. The stink of dead is very bad, especially in the Piazza San Angelo. Some people are sick because the drivers of the water carts have not had the courage to get water for several days, because of the planes along the roads. We do not believe in victory. And our bell is gone."

Major Joppolo said: "Your bell?"

Zito said: "Our bell which was seven hundred years old. Mussolini took it. It rang with a good tone each quarter hour. Mussolini took it to make rifle barrels or something. The town was very angry. Everyone begged the Monsignor, who is the uncle of the Mayor, to offer some church bells instead. But the Monsignor is uncle of the Mayor, he is not the sort to desecrate churches, he says. It meant we lost our bell. And only two weeks before you came. Why did you not come sooner?"

"Where was this bell?"

"Right here," Zito pointed over his head. "The whole building tingled when it rang."

Major Joppolo said to Borth: "I saw the framework for the bell up on the tower, did you?" Then he added to Zito: "That is your reason for wanting us to have come sooner, is it?"

Zito was careful. "Partly," he said.

Now Major Joppolo said in English more or less to himself: "It's a nice picture, I wonder how old it is, maybe it's by somebody famous."

The Major went to the desk, pulled out the high-backed chair and sat in it, carefully putting his feet on the scrollwork footstool.

Borth said: "How does it feel, Duce?"

The Major said: "There is so much to do, I hardly know where to begin."

Borth said: "I know what I must do. I've got to find the offices of the Fascist Party, to see if I can find more records. May I take the Mister Usher and look for the Fascio?"

"Go ahead, Borth," the Major said.

When the two had left, Major Joppolo opened his brief case and took out some papers. He put them in a neat pile on the desk in front of him and began to read:

"INSTRUCTIONS TO CIVIL AFFAIRS OFFICERS. First day: Enter the city with the first column. Cooperate with C.I.C. in placing guards and seizing records. Place all food warehouses, enemy food dumps, wholesale food concerns, and other major food stocks under guard. Secure an estimate from local food distributors of the number of days of food supplies which are on hand or available. Make a report through channels on food situation in your area. See that the following establishments are placed under guard or protection: foundries, machine shops, electrical works, chemical plants, flour mills, breweries, cement plants, refrigeration plants, ice plants, warehouses, olive oil refineries, sulphur refineries, tunny oil mills, soap manufacturing plants, and any other important establishments. Locate and

make available to port authorities all known local pilots. . . ."

And he read: "Don't make yourself cheap. Always be accessible to the public. Don't play favorites. Speak Italian whenever possible. Don't lose your temper. When plans fall down, improvise. . . ."

That was the one he wanted. When plans fall down, improvise.

The door opened. A man came in whose appearance was vaguely familiar to Major Joppolo. The Major realized later that he had seen, not this man, but several who looked just like him, in bad American movies. He was the type of the second-rate Italian gangster, the small fellow in the gang who always stood behind the boss and who always took the rap. He had the bald head, the



"I could do a good job for you."

weak mouth. He had a scar across his cheek. His eye was furtive and he had the appearance of being willing but in need of instructions.

He said in English: "You pull up a flag. War's a finish here in Adano, huh?"

The Major said: "Yes, who are you?"

The Italian said: "I'm from a Cleveland, Ohio. I been here a three year. You got a work for me?"

Major Joppolo said: "What's your name?"

The Italian said: "Ribaldo Giuseppe. In a Cleveland, call a me Joe."

Major Joppolo said: "What can you do?"

Ribaldo said: "I'm a good American. I'm a hate these Fascisti. I could do a good job for you."

Major Joppolo said: "If you're such a good American, why did you leave the States?"

Ribaldo said: "I'm a kick out."

"Why?"

"I'm a no passport."

"How'd you get in, then?"

"I got a plenty friends in a Cleveland and a Buffalo."

"What did you do in the States?"

"Oh, I work a here, work a there."

Major Joppolo was pleased with Ribaldo for not trying to lie about his illegal entry and repatriation. He said: "Okay, I'll hire you. You will be my interpreter."

"You don't speak Italian?"

"Yes, but there'll be other Americans here who don't, and I may need you for other things, too. Do you know these people well, do you know who's for us Americans and who's against us?"

"Sure, a boss, I help a you plenty."

"All right, what did you say your name was?"

"Ribaldo Giuseppe, just a Joe for you."

"No, we're in Italy, I'll call you Giuseppe here. Just two things now, Giuseppe. You've got to be honest with me; if you're not, you'll be in bad trouble. The other is, don't expect me to do you any favors I wouldn't do for anyone else, see?"

"Oh sure, a boss. You don't a worry."

"Now tell me, what does this town need the most?"

"I could a go for a movie house, a boss."

"No, Giuseppe, I mean right now."

"Food, a boss. Food is a bad now in Adano. Three days a lot a people no eat a nothing."

"Why is that, because of a shortage of flour?"

"No, everyone been a scared. Baker don't a work, nobody sell a pasta, water don't a come in a carts. That's all, a boss."

"How many bakers are there in town?"

But before Giuseppe could answer this question, there were two simultaneous knocks on the door, one strong, and one weak.

"I open 'em up, a boss?" Giuseppe was at least eager.

"Please, Giuseppe."

Giuseppe hurried down the long room and opened the door. Two men almost tumbled in. Both were well dressed, and had neckties on. One of them was quite old. The other was very fat and looked forty. They hurried down the room, and each seemed anxious not to let the other get ahead of him.

The old one said in English, with a careful British accent: "My name is Cacopardo, at your service, Major. I am eighty-two. I own most of the sulphurs in this place. Here Cacopardo is sulphur and sulphur is Cacopardo. I wish to give you advices whenever you need of it."

The fat one, who seemed annoyed with Cacopardo for speaking first, said in English: "Craxi, my name. I have a telegram."

Major Joppolo said: "What can I do for you gentlemen?"

Cacopardo said: "Advices."

Craxi said: "Telegram."

Cacopardo said: "The Americans coming to Italian countryside need some advices." The old man looked straight at Giuseppe the interpreter and added: "I wish to advise you to be careful, in Adano are many men who were illegal in America, some men too who were condemned to the electrical chair in Brooklyn of New York."

Major Joppolo, seeing Giuseppe's embarrassment, said: "Giuseppe, I want to speak to the priest of the town. Will you get him for me?"

Giuseppe said: "Which priest, a boss?"

Cacopardo said: "In Adano are thirteen churches, Major, and in some, like San Angelo and San Sebastiano, are two or three priests."

Major Joppolo said: "Which church is best?"

Cacopardo said: "In churches ought not to be good and bad, but San Angelo is best, because Father Pensovecchio is best of all."

Major Joppolo said to Giuseppe: "Get him for me, will you?"

"Yes, a boss," Giuseppe said, and left.

When he had left, Major Joppolo said to Cacopardo: "Is this Giuseppe fellow not to be trusted?"

Cacopardo bowed and said: "I mention only the electrical chair, I am not one to name the names."

Major Joppolo spoke sharply: "You said you came to advise me. I must know about this Giuseppe. Is he to be trusted or not?"

The old man bowed again and said: "Giuseppe is a harmless one."

The fat Craxi was growing very annoyed that Cacopardo was getting all the attention. He said: "I have a telegram. Please to deliver."

Major Joppolo said: "This isn't a telegraph office. There's a war going on. Do you think we have nothing better to do than deliver telegrams?"

Craxi was apologetic. "I am anti-Fascist. I have a telegram. You are the one who can deliver it." And he pulled out from his pocket a piece of ruled paper, folded four ways and pinned shut with a safety pin. He handed the paper to the Major, who put it down on his desk, to the disappointment of Craxi.

The Major said: "You say you've come to advise me. Then tell me, what does this town need the most right now?"

Cacopardo said: "It needs a bell more than anything."

Craxi said: "Foolishness, a bell. More than anything, to eat is necessary."

Cacopardo said: "The town needs its bell back. You can always eat." Craxi, who had been rather slighted in the conversation anyhow, now became quite angry. "You can always eat, you Cacopardo," he said. "You have a million lira, you sulphur. You can eat, but not all the people here can eat." And he turned to the Major: "To eat here is most necessary, more necessary than any bell."

Cacopardo broke into furious Italian: "Fat one, you think only of your stomach. The spirit is more important than the stomach. The bell was of our spirit. It was of our history. It was hung on the tower by Pietro of Aragona. It was designed by the sculptor Lucio de Anj of Modica."

Craxi said in Italian: "People who are very hungry have a ringing in their ears. They have no need of bells."

Cacopardo said: "By this bell the people were warned of the invasion of Roberto King of Naples, and he was driven back."

Craxi said: "People with malaria also have a ringing in their ears."

Cacopardo said: "The bell warned the people when Admiral Targout brought his French and his Turks to this place in 1553 and burned many homes and churches, and all that was left in the Church of Our Mother was the little silver crucifix which you will see now in the Church of San Angelo."

The Major said in Italian: "We have no time for this recital. I wish to know what things are pressing and must be taken care of at once."

Craxi said: "I have spoken. Food is the first thing."

Cacopardo said: "The bell must be taken care of at once. The bell did not warn us of this invasion, or we would have been in the streets with flowers to welcome you."

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A tombstone in a cemetery near Washington, Ind., bears this curious inscription: "In memory of Eli McCarty . . . killed while notifying drafted men."

Wounded in one of the early battles of the Civil war, Captain McCarty left the Union army in March, 1862, and became a government agent enrolling men for the draft. Aroused by the news of the draft a group of southern sympathizers vowed to shoot a government agent on sight. McCarty was their unfortunate victim.

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A MESSAGE TO AMERICA ABOUT AMERICAN SOIL

THE SOIL is the very foundation of American prosperity and progress. Our independence and our opportunities are deeply rooted in it.

For years, people thought our soil was inexhaustible. New land was plentiful. New farms could be carved out of the wilderness cheaper and easier than old farms could be maintained. So when a farm lost its fertility, the farmer and his family simply moved to a new piece of land.

Today, it is a different story. Most of the good land has been cleared and is being farmed. When a farm loses its productive capacity, there may not be any place to move. And the nation's supply of food and fiber is reduced. That is why soil conservation has become so vitally important.

More than one hundred million acres of land have been seriously damaged by wind, water erosion, incorrect farming practices and other causes. Each year millions of acres more are being damaged, some beyond redemption.

Soil conservation methods are efficient, effective and easy to practice. Contour farming, terracing, strip-cropping, fertilizing and crop rotation are the principal methods used. Every farmer can get complete information and specific recommendations from his local Soil Conservation Service Representative, his County Agricultural Agent or his Vocational Agriculture Teacher. The land that each farmer cultivates is a national heritage. It should be passed on to the next generation better than it came to him. That is a trust which each man assumes when he makes his living from the soil.

Firestone believes that soil conservation is fundamental to the welfare of our country and its people. We believe soil conservation is everybody's business. That is why we are conducting extensive experiments on the 141-year-old Firestone Homestead Farm near Columbiana, Ohio, where our founder, Harvey S. Firestone, was born. That is why we are sponsoring soil conservation contests through the 4-H Clubs, cooperating with the Future Farmers of America and promoting the exchange of ideas through the Firestone Champion Farmers Association.

We have also recently published a new booklet on soil conservation entitled, "Our Native Land, a Trust to Keep," which you may obtain without cost. Simply send your request to the Firestone Farm Service Bureau, Akron, Ohio. I feel sure that you will find this booklet interesting and instructive.

John W. Thomas
Chairman
The Firestone Tire & Rubber Co.

(TO BE CONTINUED)